

KENT FREE LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2012-2014

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Board of Trustees, the library's staff, and I have been hard at work planning for the future of the library. Thankfully, in November 2011, the community overwhelmingly supported a levy to offset state budget cuts. This increase in local funding will enable the library to plan and prepare for the future. As a result, in early 2012, the library began a period of inquiry in which staff teams researched and investigated current trends, best practices and emerging technologies in libraries across the state and the nation. Our goal was simple. We were hoping to find and evaluate the best possible services, materials, programs, and equipment that award-winning libraries of the 21st century are providing to their customers. We also wanted to find out what's on the horizon as libraries continue to face budget cuts, come to grips with the digital revolution, and make necessary enhancements to traditional library service. In addition to this research period, staff teams also interviewed library leaders, visited and toured state of the art library facilities, and participated in continuing education opportunities to ensure that our staff would be successful in identifying, recommending, and implementing 'top shelf' services here at Kent Free Library.

When you visit Kent Free Library, our goal is for you to have an experience that is so good that it makes you want to return. You should be able to find what you are looking for, but also be surprised to find something you weren't expecting. We want you to look forward to your daily, weekly or monthly visit. Most importantly, we want our customers to be delighted by our service, impressed with the collection, and satisfied with the simplicity of using the library. When we are able to accomplish this successfully, we believe that that the quality of life in our community will be enhanced and that the library will be a destination for people of all ages.

If it has been awhile since you've visited, I extend an invitation for you to try us again. Our library is not your grandparents' or parents' library any more. We don't shush, we don't lock away resources that you need, and we want you to feel comfortable spending time here. As a growing, 21st century library we encourage you to meet your friends, gather with your neighbors or play group, learn something new, be entertained by a local musician or speaker, and connect to the community around you. We are part community center, part neighborhood hang out, part learning commons, part people's university, and it's all for you!

The following plan details how we will work toward providing a modern library for the Kent community. I am thrilled to be a part of this process and hope you will join us on the journey.

-Stacey Richardson, Kent Free Library Director

MISSION

The mission of the Kent Free Library is to meet the educational, recreational, informational and cultural needs of the community and citizens of Kent.

AREA OF FOCUS #1: CREATE EXCEPTIONAL USER EXPERIENCES

Our library is a worthwhile destination in the community. We warmly welcome and efficiently serve anyone that walks through our doors, visits us online or meets us outside library walls. Our quality service together with the materials and programs we offer will generate customer satisfaction and enhance our reputation in the community.

GOAL #1: DELIVER PRODUCTS THAT DELIGHT LIBRARY USERS

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

- ACTIVITY: Implement express collections for popular fiction, DVDs and magazines to increase the amount of popular material available to check out and eliminate wait times for items on hold.
- ACTIVITY: Install furniture and shelving that merchandises popular collections effectively and allows for face-out displays of material to create more browse able collections.
- ACTIVITY: Establish a method for lending e-readers or other tablet devices to level the playing field so that all community members have access to digital literacy technologies and digital collections.
- ACTIVITY: Investigate software solutions to monitor collections, circulation trends and customer demands to better direct expenditures on library materials.
- ACTIVITY: Monitor and stay current with the beta testing of HOOPLA, a streaming movie product similar to Netflix, to determine if the product will be a good fit for library users.

LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY

- ACTIVITY: Embrace mobile technology by implementing a mobile app for the library and allowing wireless printing in the building.
- ACTIVITY: Consider solutions to allow online program registration.
- ACTIVITY: Research and recommend 'cloud' computing solutions for the public computer lab and investigate equipment upgrades.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- ACTIVITY: Provide users with the ability to pay overdue fines and fees with a credit card at the Check-Out Desk to increase percentage of fines recovered and add customer convenience.
- ACTIVITY: Install "Tell Us How We're Doing" boxes around the library and consider adding Counting Opinion survey software to the library's website to obtain customer feedback and evaluation of services and products year round.

GOAL #2: CREATE WELCOMING, COMFORTABLE, AND FUNCTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROVIDE SPACES TO GATHER AND ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT.

- ACTIVITY: Expand 'living room' spaces to provide additional soft seating, especially in the first floor lobby area, and furniture that encourages gathering, connecting laptops, and provides space for beverages.
- ACTIVITY: Re-purpose the former café space to create a collaborative technology center offering technology for business solutions (copying, scanning, faxing, smart boards, and conference space) and creative media stations that allow content creation.
- ACTIVITY: Build a centralized customer information desk on the first floor to provide individualized, hands-on interaction with library staff and serve as a hub for library professionals serving the public.
- ACTIVITY: Add food, hot and cold beverage, and office supply vending services for customer convenience.
- ACTIVITY: Explore possibilities of automating the Main Street entrance doors to provide easier access for handicap, pedestrian and biking customers.
- ACTIVITY: Add new design elements to first floor foyers and lobby areas to provide visual interest, color, whimsy and fun to create a more friendly environment that welcomes customers to the building and invites them to stay, spend time and return.

GOAL #3: INVEST IN THE LIBRARY'S STAFF TO ENSURE 'WOW' SERVICE IS DELIVERED CONSISTENTLY TO ALL CUSTOMERS

- ACTIVITY: Hire an IT Manager to oversee all technology in the building, to train staff, and to assist the library in adopting and implementing emerging technologies.
- ACTIVITY: Establish standards for customer service and train staff accordingly.
- ACTIVITY: Determine the most effective method for rewarding outstanding achievements in work performance, including periodic staff appreciation events, outings or community service projects.
- ACTIVITY: Update job descriptions and performance evaluation tools to reflect the standards for customer service. Institute a salary schedule for each position and transition to merit-based pay increases.
- ACTIVITY: Initiate and train staff to offer roaming reference service to increase positive interactions with customers who do not approach the information desk for assistance.

AREA OF FOCUS #2: SHARE THE LIBRARY'S STORY

The library understands that to remain relevant in the 21st century it is necessary to visit our customers where they need us, when they need us, and how they need us. This will not always be inside the library's walls and does not reflect traditional library service. The library will embed themselves in the community and maintain a presence throughout Kent, connecting to a variety of populations and diverse users.

GOAL #1: ADOPT A BRAND IDENTITY THAT REFLECTS A CONTEMPORARY IMAGE OF THE LIBRARY AND IMPLEMENT IT ACROSS ALL LIBRARY OPERATIONS

ACTIVITY: Work with creative professionals to incorporate a unifying brand identity. Completed project will produce a new logo, letterhead, business cards, library cards, custom brochures and brand standards that will be adhered to for all future library publications.

ACTIVITY: Update the website, newsletter, print materials, exterior signs, and staff identification badges to display a cohesive graphics system based on established brand standards.

GOAL #2: REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

ACTIVITY: Restore and update homebound service to deliver library materials to customers that are unable to visit the library.

ACTIVITY: Obtain a library vehicle, branded to represent the library, to deliver staff, services, products, and smiles as needed to meet the needs of the community.

ACTIVITY: Develop an outreach program and speaker's bureau that takes the library to various community locations for programs, material delivery and pick-up, and speaking engagements to promote library products.

ACTIVITY: Identify community events and organizations in which library staff can participate and encourage staff to do so by including it in job descriptions.

ACTIVITY: Invite the community to engage in their library by designing opportunities for volunteers. This includes the creation of tech tutors, volunteens, friends, or a signature event unique to Kent Free Library.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategic plan is the result of a collaborative effort by the library's Board of Trustees and the entire Kent Free Library staff. Wayne Piper, former Director of Professional Development for the Ohio Library Council, consulted on this project and facilitated many meetings and planning sessions with staff research teams. Early in 2012, these groups worked together to visualize the future of the library. As a result, this document came to life and will guide the library's services in the immediate future.

Kent Free Library would like to acknowledge and express gratitude to those who contributed to this process, all of whom value and embrace the library's mission, programs and services to the Kent community. This process would not have been successful without their support.

Library Board of Trustees

John Ryan, *President*
T.N. Bhargava, *Vice-President*
Pam Petrus, *Secretary*
Karen Beck
Richard Bissler
Gordon Keller
Ralph Kletzien

Staff Research Team

Stacey Richardson, *Library Director*
Shelley Herron
Anna Hood
Kristen Pool
Erin Siciliano
Sarah Wilsman
Melissa Ziminsky

Library Staff

Anika Aberegg, Liz Bracher, Alena Burroughs, Shelby Cowles, Chris Cowles, Dave Daniels, Kayla Davis, Mike Davis, Sarah Deisler, James Freeman, Margaret Hall, Victoria Heeter, Robert Hemmerling, Quinn Hull, Kevin Kelsey, Michael Lopick, Matt Lostoski, Andrew O. Martyniuk, Billie Paulus, Dorothy Peachock, Prabha Rajamohan, Eric Roland, Adrienne Savoldi, Rayna Shilling-McCallum, Alexandra Smith, Melissa Smith, Maryjayne Stone, Alex Ward and Lauren Wynn

Adopted on October 18, 2012 by the Kent Free Library Board of Trustees