

OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY 2022-2026 LIBRARY SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN

Background

The Omaha Public Library (OPL) Board of Trustees wanted to develop a three-to-five-year library services strategic plan in 2021. This plan would assess OPL's current state, envision its desired future, and formulate a new strategy with achievable objectives. This comprehensive long-range plan's intention is to achieve excellence and efficiency while fulfilling OPL's mission in alignment with its values.

The process and writing of a strategic plan ensure that all the key leaders are on the same page and in alignment to:

- Provide a sense of "ownership" at all levels
- Give clearer direction and greater meaning to staff work
- Improve communication
- Provide guidance for future decisions
- Establish milestones for long-term organizational goals

A facilitator was selected¹ to support OPL leadership and staff in a community collaborative process to develop the plan after the Strategic Planning Team² was formed.

Mission, Vision, Values

At the Strategic Planning Team's first meeting, OPL's Mission, Vision, and Values were revisited as they are the foundation for all work done to develop the plan.

Mission: Omaha Public Library strengthens our communities by connecting people with stories, ideas, information, and innovative services.

Vision: Omaha Public Library is a catalyst, collaborator, and connector to foster a vibrant community for all.

Values: Service Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, Community Engagement, Equal and Inclusive Access, Staff Talent

The Mission, Vision, and Values were repeatedly revisited throughout the planning process.

Process Design and Steps

¹ Susan Ann Koenig, JD, is an executive coach and strategic planner with experience facilitating citywide public forums.

² Strategic Planning Team Members included Laura Marlane, Executive Director, Rachel Steiner, Assistant Director, Theresa Jehlik, Strategy and Business Intelligence Manager, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Senior Manager of Operations, Stacy Lickteig, Senior Manager of Branch Services, Amy Mather, Adult Services Manager, Nancy Novotny, Youth and Family Services Manager, Emily Getzschman, Marketing Manager, Jason Goossen, Technology Services Manager, and Jody duRand, Outreach & Partnerships Manager

The strategic planning process was designed to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders through a variety of methods. The steps in the process were:

1. Reviewed preliminary data: past library user surveys, priority service areas identified by internal OPL teams, and assessment of current goals.
2. Performed a SWOT Analysis of service needs in areas that included operations, branches, adult services, youth and family services, marketing, technology, strategy and business intelligence, and outreach.
3. Designed, promoted, and distributed online and paper public surveys regarding eight service areas.
4. Surveyed OPL staff.
5. Promoted and facilitated five public forums over a period of three weeks at the Willa Cather Branch, Millard Branch, South Omaha Library, Milton R. Abrahams Branch, and Charles B. Washington Branch. Every attendee was offered an opportunity to speak.
6. Obtained input from three boards: Omaha Public Library Board of Trustees, Friends of the Omaha Public Library, and Omaha Public Library Foundation.
7. Analyzed and summarized survey responses. The analysis showed that the services valued by more than 60% of the respondents were materials (94%), library events (65%), and staff assistance (61%). See: *2021 Strategic Plan Survey Executive Summary and 2021 Strategic Plan Survey Detailed Report for more details.*
8. Empowered small teams of OPL managers to create draft goals and objectives³
9. Drafted, reviewed, edited, and finalized the strategic plan collaboratively with the Senior Administrative team and facilitator.
10. Forwarded the strategic plan to the OPL Board of Trustees before the March 17, 2022 board meeting.

Planning Amid Facility and Community Developments

³ Our working definitions were:

Goals: A broad statement about what the program or initiative intends to accomplish. It is also intended as a long-term outcome.

Objectives: Expected achievements that are well-defined, specific, measurable, and derived from the goals.

The planning process took place after the development of the OPL Master Facilities Plan in 2017 and amid a series of community developments involving the library.

The Master Facilities Plan concluded that the Dodge Street corridor between 72nd and 90th Streets was a possible location for a new central library. In September 2021, the public became aware that the City of Omaha was in discussions with Heritage Services, a local nonprofit with a history of philanthropic building development in the Omaha community. Under consideration was a new central library at 72nd and Dodge Streets, the demolition of the current W. Dale Clark (Main) Library, and the establishment of a new downtown branch library.

In November 2021, it was announced that Do Space, a digital/technology library at 72nd and Dodge Streets, could be demolished to make way for a new central library. Mayor Jean Stothert, also in November 2021, announced that the downtown library's public service functions would move to 1401 Jones Street and the administrative and distribution center functions would move to 84th and Frederick Streets. In January 2022, the Omaha City Council approved the plans for the 1401 Jones Street and 84th and Frederick Street location moves. Ongoing developments from these facilities changes will necessitate staff flexibility in the execution of this plan on an annual basis.

OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY 2022-2026 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Champion the Importance of Reading

Goal 1: Create a collection that reflects our community's needs and wants.

- Objective 1: Build a community-based collection that preserves and promotes local content.
- Objective 2: Analyze and use diversity audit data and community circulation statistics to build collections that are intentionally inclusive.
- Objective 3: Increase the quantity of high demand materials.
- Objective 4: Align collections and spaces to support early literacy.

Goal 2: Increase staff's knowledge and engagement with the collection to enhance the patron experience.

- Objective 1: Implement a consistent introduction and basic knowledge of what the collections are and the staff roles associated with the collections.
- Objective 2: Evaluate and adjust collection expectations regularly (e.g., follow system procedures, emphasize a system-wide, not branch-specific, collection).
- Objective 3: Create a framework that includes tools, checklists, and staff coaching.
- Objective 4: Provide more staff access to collection use data.
- Objective 5: Share collection data more widely with the library system.

Goal 3: Increase programs, outreach, and services for readers of all ages.

- Objective 1: Increase programming that encourages reading and celebrating authors.
- Objective 2: Develop library events that celebrate and advance cultural understanding and diversity through reading and stories.
- Objective 3: Launch a mobile pop-up library to bring more library awareness and access to the community.

Goal 4: Increase opportunities for outreach and support in early childhood literacy efforts in the community

- Objective 1: Conduct a community needs survey for early literacy efforts.
- Objective 2: Expand early literacy services to low-income households/areas.
- Objective 3: Build more literacy-based engagement activities in the community.

Increase Equal and Inclusive Access for All

Goal 1: Expand self-service technology opportunities for patrons.

- Objective 1: Implement and maintain wireless printing.
- Objective 2: Implement and maintain self-service options for new and renewed library cards.
- Objective 3: Update/upgrade self-serve technology equipment and software.
- Objective 4: Add adaptive technology furniture and upgrade as technology changes.

Goal 2: Become a reliable, accessible source of basic technology services for the community.

- Objective 1: Increase staff knowledge of the public service technologies OPL offers.
- Objective 2: Create a community technology resources referral list of technologies not available at OPL.
- Objective 3: Create more public awareness of library technology services.
- Objective 4: Survey the environment, staff, and community to determine what technologies to add or change.

Goal 3: Expand technology offerings for in-person and virtual meetings.

- Objective 1: Add/upgrade technology in study rooms.
- Objective 2: Standardize/update meeting room equipment.
- Objective 3: Create a timeline to update/upgrade meeting support technologies.
- Objective 4: Provide video conferencing options.

Goal 4: Foster a strong internal culture of teamwork, diverse ideas, and inclusion that focuses on the mission.

- Objective 1: Work as a team to promote system thinking.
- Objective 2: Empower staff to do their job with communication and trust among all levels of the organization.
- Objective 3: Diverse ideas are invited, welcomed, and championed.
- Objective 4: Staff are passionate, enthusiastic, and engage with their colleagues about books, resources, and services.
- Objective 5: Staff are flexible, adaptable, and resilient.

Extend Capacity to Create and Share Stories

Goal 1: Explore and pilot technologies that connect patrons with our resources and content.

- Objective 1: Determine emerging technologies that work well in a public environment.
- Objective 2: Scan the local environment to see what other public-facing agencies are doing with emerging technologies.
- Objective 3: Determine any gaps we can fill in the local, emerging technologies arena.
- Objective 4: Explore the feasibility and sustainability of OPL's participation in emerging technologies.
- Objective 5: Implement emerging technologies that meet unfilled community needs.

Goal 2: Connect people with more of what they need and want.

- Objective 1: Increase consistency for loan periods.
- Objective 2: Increase the findability of materials in person and online.
- Objective 3: Create engaging displays that promote more use of the entire collection.
- Objective 4: Evaluate how collections are organized in the buildings to increase easy patron use.
- Objective 5: Evaluate and expand access options for collections beyond the library buildings.
- Objective 6: Increase community awareness that OPL is the place that collects, preserves, and creates access to local materials.

Goal 3: All staff promote library materials to increase awareness and use of the entire collection, resources, and services.

- Objective 1: All staff are competent and enthusiastic about promoting materials to patrons.
- Objective 2: Develop comprehensive and ongoing staff training about readers' services.
- Objective 3: Increase opportunities for patron engagement with the collection.
- Objective 4: Connect/partner with experts, patrons, and community groups to share library resources.

Goal 4: Intentionally invite non-library patrons to use library services.

- Objective 1: Reach out to lapsed card members to invite them back.
- Objective 2: Identify audiences not receiving library service and make them aware of OPL resources.
- Objective 3: Get library cards in more school students' hands.
- Objective 4: Increase buildings and materials to support patron growth.