

Duluth Public Library 2011 – 2015 Strategic Plan

Adopted by the Library Board:
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THE PLANNING PROCESS:

The Duluth Public Library completed a comprehensive strategic planning process between May and December 2010. This process was made possible through financial support from the Arrowhead Library System. Composition of the Planning Team included representatives from the library board, city officials, library staff, Friends of the Library, Library Foundation and Duluth Public Schools.

A community-based process was utilized, which centered on answering the questions: 1) *What are the pressing needs in our community?* and, 2) *What is the library's role in helping to address those needs?* Major steps included conducting a focus group with community leaders, reviewing community demographic data and library statistics, discussing organizational values and mission, identifying service priorities, and developing detailed action plans for the first year of implementation. In addition, preliminary indicators were established to track progress toward achieving the library's new goals.

The resulting strategic plan is intended to guide the library for the next five years, with action plans to be revised annually.

BACKGROUND / WHAT WE FOUND:

The City of Duluth is by far the largest community served by public libraries in the Arrowhead Region. Like the region's small towns however, Duluth has continued to experience a gradual population decline in recent decades. In addition, the city has a disproportionately high rate of poverty.

The Duluth Public Library currently operates from three locations: downtown ("Main"), and branches in West Duluth and at Mt. Royal. Downtown is a full service library, including a reference department. Library-sponsored programming is focused on children and is well received by the community, but is only available at the downtown site. The Main building, however, faces a long list of physical plant challenges. At the branch locations, patron usage is concentrated on adult fiction reading and children's materials. In addition, all locations have public access computers which are heavily utilized. Technology is a growth area, but the Library lacks adequate technical support for this priority.

Duluth residents value the public library as an important community asset; a fact that was confirmed by the results of last year's city-wide survey. Despite a declining number of residents, library utilization remained steady prior to 2008. At that time however, hours of operation were drastically reduced (44 % overall) as a result of funding cuts. This decrease in service hours has had a significant, negative impact on the ability of citizens to access library resources, with branch access being the most limited.

Several themes emerged as a result of our community input process. The top priority identified by local leaders was public access to the online world. In fact, the growing reliance on electronic resources in all facets of modern life is transforming the role of public libraries. Local leaders recognize especially that the library is the core provider of technology access for low-income residents. In addition, emphasis was placed on investing in the community's children. Children's services lay the foundation to become readers, to succeed in school, and to engage in a lifetime of learning. Finally, the community was clear in its desire for services to be available when and where the people are - in their neighborhoods.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

Customer Service –

We ensure equal access for all, and we welcome people and treat them with friendliness and respect.

Intellectual Freedom –

We provide information representing all points of view in books and a variety of other formats; we recognize each individual's right to access information; and we respect the privacy of library users.

Community Service and Partnerships–

We work together as a team to provide resources and services to meet community needs; we work with other organizations to leverage our local resources; and we are a vital and indispensable part of our local communities.

Creativity and Innovation–

We use state-of-the-art technology to provide access to information and other resources, to work more efficiently, and to find new ways of being a better library.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Duluth Public Library enriches our community life by helping people at every age connect with the digital world, enjoy reading, continue lifelong learning, and explore creative pursuits in a welcoming environment.

LIBRARY GOALS (In order of priority):

1. Everyone has access to and assistance using state-of-the-art digital resources.
2. Children birth through third grade and their caregivers get excited about reading, writing, and learning.
3. People at every age explore their interests and become knowledgeable about a variety of subjects.
4. Youth and adults find enjoyment and enhance their creative and cultural lives.
5. Individuals and organizations find connections to local history, tradition, and culture.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

In addition to standard usage measurements such as circulation count, library visits, number of hits to library databases, etc., the following indicators will be used to measure progress toward the goals:

Goal 1 (Connect to the Online World)

- ✓ Public access computer utilization figures – wired and wireless (e.g. machine saturation, number of unique users, hours of use per day per machine).
- ✓ Measure change/increase in staff technology skills following training.
- ✓ Survey of computer lab users regarding level of support received.

Goal 2 (Create Young Readers)

- ✓ Circulation of juvenile materials, including toy lending.
- ✓ Utilization of designated children's computers (see Goal 1).
- ✓ Number of participants in the Summer Reading Program components (independent readers and Read-to-Me).
- ✓ Number of story times and attendance at branches and Main location.
- ✓ Annual feedback survey of story time participants (adults) regarding impact on their and their children's level of excitement about reading, writing, and learning.

Goal 3 (Satisfy Curiosity)

- ✓ Attendance and participant evaluations of lifelong learning-related Legacy events.
- ✓ Museum pass distribution figures; before and after branch implementation.
- ✓ Number of participants in History Day event.
- ✓ Number of reference requests via text and chat.

Goal 4 (Stimulate Imagination)

- ✓ Circulation of e-book readers and MP3 players.
- ✓ Utilization of download stations.
- ✓ Number of participants in downloadables training, and survey.
- ✓ Program attendance (Kaleidoscope, Legacy live performances, One Book/One Community, annual author visit), and feedback survey regarding impact on finding enjoyment and/or enhancing creative and cultural life.

Goal 5 (Discover Your Roots – Local History)

- ✓ Number of reference inquiries requiring local history materials (sampling weeks).
- ✓ Utilization figures for Duluth News Tribune historic online resource.
- ✓ Staff survey regarding change/increase in local history resource knowledge and skills (following training).
- ✓ Number of hits to obituary and other local history-related databases.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

<i>Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Present strategic plan to Library Board and City Council for adoption.	January 2011
2. Communicate the new plan to other stakeholders and the public.	February 2011
3. Review strategic plan progress as a regular agenda item at Management Team and staff meetings; make mid-course corrections.	Monthly
4. Discuss strategic plan progress as regular agenda item at Library Board meetings.	Monthly
5. Compile progress indicator data for annual review.	Annually 2011 - 2015 (January)
6. Board/staff annual 'retreat' to review implementation successes and challenges (including indicator data), review goals, revise strategies, and project budget needs.	Annually 2011 - 2014 (June)
7. Staff develop action plans for the next year.	Annually 2011 - 2014 (July - September)
8. Full round of strategic planning.	Fall 2015 (New plan in place by January 2016)