

Curating Connections

Pueblo City-County Library District's 2015 Strategic Plan

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Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees

Letter from the Executive Director

Mission, Vision, and Motto

Mission

We serve as a foundation for our community by offering welcoming, well equipped and maintained facilities, outstanding collections, and well-trained employees who provide expert service encouraging the joy of reading, supporting lifelong learning and presenting access to information from around the world.

Vision

Books and Beyond

Motto

Ideas, Imagination & Information

Executive Summary

The last few years have been exciting for the Pueblo City-County Library District (PCCLD). From million-dollar automation projects to building three new buildings, not a month has gone by where the Library has not aggressively pursued an agenda of expansion and impact. As evidenced by 2014's Key Results (see Key Results Discussion below), the metrics by which the Library measures its success, there has been a pattern of behavior at work that has brought the Library to new levels of operational standards and use. The question is, "Where do we go from here?"

In late 2014, the Library began a rigorous investigation into its future. From focus groups to district-wide surveys, the Library actively sought input from the public, Library staff, and Library stakeholders as to current and future priorities for the Library. Without the community's support, the Library would find itself hard-pressed to continue providing quality resources, spaces, and services in a fast-changing, dynamic world.

From this process emerged six themes, described below, which will become the Library's strategic focus for the coming years. These themes are founded on the thoughts and labors of many individuals and reflect sentiments of connection, growth, and curiosity that arose in nearly all activities the Library undertook when developing this plan.

ONE: The Community's Priority for the Library is Improving Early Literacy by Creating Young Readers

TWO: Partnerships are Essential to the Library's Continued Relevance to Pueblo County

THREE: The Library Should Focus on the Whole Family, at All Stages of Life, through Specific Library Programming and Collections

FOUR: The Library Has a Vital Role in Bridging the Digital Divide by Promoting Access to the Internet and Providing the Best Current Information Technology

FIVE: Data-Driven Planning is Critical to the Sustainability of the Library's Organizational Health and Creates Maximum Community Impact

SIX: PCCLD's Staff is Crucial to the Library Successfully Fulfilling Its Mission

These themes are the framework for the Areas of Strategic Focus detailed in this plan. The Library will work within these Areas with the full understanding of its mission to encourage the joy of reading, support lifelong learning and present access to information from around the world. These Areas are founded on the community's needs

and the expertise of Library staff. They were written under the guidance of the Library's Board of Trustees and with critical input from key stakeholders in the Library's effort to continue providing high-quality collections and services to Pueblo County.

The Strategic Planning Process

The Library initiated this planning process in December 2014. Interviews with individual members of the executive team and preparation for planning began at that time. The Library contracted with Richard Male and Associates to facilitate five focus groups held over two days in early March, the report for which was presented to the Board of Trustees at their regular meeting that month. The Library then conducted a community-wide survey during April 2015, receiving over 600 responses. In May, Library staff and stakeholders gathered at one of two retreats held to solicit their feedback and brainstorm ideas through a guided process led by a facilitator. A 10-year financial forecast for the Library was reviewed by the Board in December 2014 and updated in June 2015. Research for the Library Trends report, also presented to the Board in June, began in December 2014 and continued through May 2015. An analysis report of community-related data was presented to the Board at their special work session in June. Individual reports documenting these efforts are included in the appendix to this plan.

Key Results Discussion

In 2013, the Library began a project to identify specific, quantifiable metrics that would measure its performance as it worked to fulfill its mission. A rigorous review of national benchmarks for comparable libraries and a study of other ranking and rating programs led to the creation of the Library's Key Results, four metrics designed to illustrate Library's commitment to lifelong learning through collections and programs that engage community members in reading, listening, viewing and exchanging ideas.

Since that time, the Library experienced significant progress toward internal goals set for each metric: Circulation, Program Attendance, Visits and Digital Use. Among Colorado libraries serving populations over 100,000, PCCLD has established itself as a clear leader. In output measures such as visits per capita, circulation per capita, and program attendance per capita, PCCLD is at or near the top of the rankings among the 13 peer libraries. The Library is first for visits per capita in 2014, a gain of two positions from 2013. The Library is also first for program attendance per capita, moving ahead from position two in 2013. PCCLD is fourth for circulation per capita, a sharp rise from ninth position last year.

Nationally, libraries have seen annual decreases in circulation per capita since 2010, an average of -1.25% per year. PCCLD has experienced an average 11.89% yearly gain in this measure during that same period – an average 10.15% increase from 2010-2013 and a 49.30% spike in 2014.

Nationally, visits per capita peaked in FY2009, and while the average of all reporting libraries to the Public Library Data Service (PLDS) survey showed a 6.7% increase last year, the recent upward trend continues to slow. PCCLD, however, has seen an 8.14% average yearly increase since FY2009, which includes a slight decrease (-5.35%) in FY2011 and a substantial gain (18.31%) in FY2013.

Of the 251 libraries nationwide with Legal Service Populations between 100,000 and 499,999 reporting to the PLDS survey, PCCLD ranks 15th for program attendance per capita. Many of the libraries listed ahead of PCCLD are in major metropolitan areas, so the Library's position in this category is remarkable.

The final Key Result for the Library, Digital Use, is not available for peer comparison due to lack of national digital use tracking standards. Nonetheless, the PCCLD's locally devised digital use data tracking indicates a rapid increase in computer and online database use in recent years.

Area of Strategic Focus: Create Young Readers

The Library's extensive research during the strategic planning process found that the community's desire for creating young readers is very strong. From focus groups and through surveys, across ages and races, PCCLD understands that the community is committed to early childhood literacy and believes this should be a top priority for Library services, partnerships, programs and collections in the future.

As it has for many years, the Library recognizes significant value in encouraging the joy of reading in children. PCCLD's award-winning Summer Reading Program and annual Read Out Loud author event for elementary school children are but a few of the ways the Library invests in early childhood literacy. In May 2015, the Library was awarded a grant to participate in the Colorado State Library's Supporting Parents in Early Literacy through Libraries (SPELL) program, which allowed PCCLD to extend early childhood literacy services to four local daycares. Library employees provide monthly story times and literacy kits as well as lead literacy-focused parent nights as part of the program. The Library is well-known for its research-based story times and hosts an annual storytelling workshop where professionals from across southern Colorado come to learn from and model Library staff and to use PCCLD's robust collections.

PCCLD's interest in creating young readers goes beyond programming. Like the Library, The Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) Pueblo chapter identifies early childhood literacy as the most important factor contributing to school success for the children of Pueblo County. As a long-term Library partner, this group is instrumental in engaging community business leaders in its quest to create healthy, Kindergarten-ready children through affiliations, advocacy and programming. And in early 2015, the White House approached the Library with a literacy challenge: to participate as a seminal partner in a program to provide an opportunity for every Pueblo child in school to receive a library card. As part of the ConnectED: Library Challenge, Pueblo will become one of 30 major cities and counties across the nation taking the first steps toward creating universal library card use for public school students.

It is through partnerships with groups like EPIC Pueblo, through programs like SPELL and by participation in initiatives like ConnectED that the Library creates opportunities for strategic growth in the area of early childhood literacy. The Library will strive to become the leader in creating young readers in Pueblo County by capitalizing on these established relationships and services, compounding their impact on children, as well as seek ways to grow its literacy-focused partnerships, programs and services.

Area of Strategic Focus: Strengthen Community Partnerships

Institutions and individuals in the arts, education, government, the business sector, healthcare and many others have become integral to PCCLD's efforts of encouraging the love of reading, supporting lifelong learning, and presenting access to information for all of Pueblo County. In the past, the Library has formalized partnerships with government and schools to acknowledge the contributions all parties make when they work together. However, PCCLD acknowledges the need to systematically assess and approach potential partner agencies. Through an active partnership program, the Library intends to strengthen these new and long-standing relationships through cooperative agreements that recognize each organization's role in leveraging access to Library and community resources.

Further, the Library recognizes the significant contribution partnership-building can have on a community. From word-of-mouth marketing to research for capacity building, the Library understands its relationship with businesses, non-profits, government and schools not only multiplies the Library's reach but also affects its Key Results. As such, PCCLD intends to create programs for community-based organizations' use of Library services and resources. The Library will also seek to build on this targeted programming by coordinating annual opportunities for organizational members to participate in community-building discussions and workshops. By gathering these organizations, the Library will create useful opportunities for community feedback about Library services as well as establish itself as the local leader in facilitating dialog among disparate community groups.

The Library has long held the belief that partnering with local organizations, connecting to companies through sponsorships and collaboration with non-profits are key to fulfilling its mission. These relationships have impacted nearly all areas of Library services, and indeed, impact nearly every Area of Strategic Focus found within this plan.

Area of Strategic Focus: Serve the Whole Family, at all Stages of Life

PCCLD acknowledges it is not the sole contributor to the success of students in school, of adults writing resumes or of toddlers learning the alphabet. Instead, there are many factors affecting the impact of Library services and collections, be it hunger, health, transportation or other areas of life. For parents in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations, as many are in Pueblo, being able to afford food, housing and child care can prove to be so difficult that they turn to extended family and others for support. During the Library's focus groups, several community members spoke of the large numbers of children being raised by grandparents and other extended family members in Pueblo County. They vocalized the importance of family networks in the practice of literacy and learning; in fact, one theme of the focus groups suggested by the facilitators was, "Youth reading is family reading."

Currently, the Library offers many opportunities to both children and adults seeking to become more literate. These include weekly story times for young children, one-to-one mentoring for adults to practice reading and an English Language Learners program for adults that conducts classes on language acquisition and mastery. However, the Library recognizes there may be opportunities for cross-generational literacy programming and collections which support caregivers and children as they read, or learn to read, together. PCCLD believes that family literacy programs can prepare cross-generational participants for more literate lives. The Library understands that family literacy programs are one natural extension of all parts of its mission and will seek to provide such programs to parents and caregivers in Pueblo County.

The Library recognizes that literacy and learning, core to its mission, can take many forms. PCCLD commits considerable resources to public programming and educational and cultural events in support of lifelong learning. From All Pueblo Reads to the launch of a weather balloon, these free and open programs for all ages bring the community together to learn, explore and share ideas. PCCLD seeks to continue providing these high-quality educational and cultural programs and events to both individuals and groups throughout the community.

As the Library strives to provide the best services, programs and collections to the people of Pueblo County, it recognizes the impact its spaces can have on delivery and use of Library resources. PCCLD believes that providing comfortable places that are conducive to exploring, studying and working can powerfully impact the success of someone trying to read, learn, or find and use information. The Library is committed to maintaining and improving its facilities, from security to cleanliness and beyond, to ensure that all people feel welcome and excited to use their Library. In addition, the Library will investigate new or alternative spaces in which families and individuals, at all stages of life, can thrive in their pursuit of knowledge and betterment.

By providing support for family literacy, offering cultural and educational programs and events for all ages, and maintaining the Library as a place to read, study and exchange ideas, PCCLD will continue to serve the whole family, at all stages of life.

Area of Strategic Focus: Bridge the Digital Divide

For many years, inequalities between groups of people based on economic or demographic conditions have drawn a line between the Haves and the Have Nots. When it comes to information technology, this divide can become a gaping crevasse that prevents people from having access to and being able to use the vast resources available online.

This digital divide is significant in Pueblo County and thus the Library has worked diligently to not only provide free and open public access to cutting-edge digital collections but also provide the devices and other technology used to connect to them. The Library believes that increasing the community's access to personal computing

devices and free Wi-Fi underscores its vision and values. As such, PCCLD will identify new areas within the community where access to free Internet is limited or otherwise not currently being covered by current Library facilities and establish Wi-Fi technology access points.

Bridging the digital divide by providing technology and Internet access is but one side of the issue; the other is confirming that content created via analog means is available for use. The Library's Special Collections contain a wealth of these types of materials, many with historical and cultural significance to the community. PCCLD's Special Collections has also partnered with local churches, government and non-profit organizations to evaluate their own historical materials, many of which remain inaccessible to the public at large, and to provide preservation and archival expertise. At the same time, PCCLD believes that Pueblo County's unique cultural history is unlikely to be transferred to digital formats by commercial agencies. The Library acknowledges the rich cultural traditions and history of the growing Hispanic community and of the legacy of the people of Pueblo and will continue its efforts to collect and preserve them. The Library thusly accepts the honor and challenge of providing access to this content to the community.

As the City Librarian of San Francisco Luis Herrera writes, "[Technology] is a tool, not the end of our mission. We have used it to advance access to information and resources. Technology is an ally for accessibility." Recently, the Library invested in a burgeoning trend in technology: makerspaces. Makerspaces are common areas for sharing ideas and learning from peers about making things. The Library's Idea Factory is an example of this, equipped with powerful computers, 3D printers, virtual reality gaming technology and other tools to which the community may not otherwise have ready access. While making and makerspaces can focus on a variety of topics, computer programming to crocheting, they share a common element: learning by exploring and doing. PCCLD will continue to push the maker movement forward in response to community interests with the intention of supporting lifelong learning and narrowing the digital divide for all of Pueblo County.

Area of Strategic Focus: Data-Driven Planning

As it has in the past, the Library employed several data analysis tools as part of the planning process. From Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to public technology assessments, PCCLD believes that using objective evidence from reliable sources is critical to understanding the needs of the community. The Library recognizes the power of data in its decision-making and values the privacy of individual citizens of Pueblo County, and thusly closely adheres to its own privacy policy, the laws that govern all libraries in Colorado in the Colorado Revised Statutes and to the ethics of the library profession.

Using GIS tools and data sets from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey, as well as research from previous planning efforts, the Library identified two opportunities for expanding Library services in Pueblo County. The first is the area north of Highway 50 and west of Interstate 25, which incorporates the community known as Eagleridge as well as the north side of Pueblo West. This area not only appears in the top five growing areas in Pueblo County but also contains substantially growing numbers of children ages 0 to 9. PCCLD also identified a census tract southeast of Pueblo Boulevard and Highway 50 extending to the Arkansas River, commonly known as Pueblo's West Side. Specifically, the data show the area to the south and east of the tract around the Cesar Chavez Academy to be underserved by the Library at the Y location, which exists to the north and west near the intersection Highway 50 and Pueblo Boulevard. In addition, the Library understands that this unique part of the community may benefit from closer proximity to Library facilities and resources, as has been evident by the overwhelming success of the new Patrick A. Lucero library on the city's East Side. The Library will seek to investigate these areas for expansion of Library services through new or repurposed facilities as appropriate to each community and its residents.

In addition to statistical data, the Library utilized standards and best practices tools for public libraries. This includes the Edge benchmarking tool, the Digital Inclusion Survey and the Colorado Public Library Standards, which allowed the Library to compare itself against its peer libraries across the country and within the state. As a result of this analysis, the Library recognizes that public library best practices include the creation of a Marketing

Plan in support of a Public Relations Program that reflects community needs. PCCLD may evaluate the community's needs through an annual survey which can determine the effectiveness of Library services and their potential impact on Pueblo County. In addition to this, PCCLD will work to conduct periodic assessment of the community's interests and will regularly solicit the community's feedback on Library services, programs and collections.

The Library is committed to its continued practice of evidence-based planning. PCCLD believes that accountability in operational performance directly impacts organizational capacity and sustainability of Library services in the future. In addition, PCCLD acknowledges that many libraries are developing tools that allow them to assess the outcomes of their services and programs and determine their contributions to the success of their communities. As such, the Library will seek to create a central repository for Library-generated data to allow more flexible and meaningful analysis that supports data-driven decision-making. Further, PCCLD understands that data produced by all functional areas of the Library can be useful in determining how each area contributes to the overall success of the Library in meeting its mission, and will therefore identify specific benchmarks for accountability and performance for all functional areas as appropriate to the nature of their work.

Area of Strategic Focus: Lifelong Learning Begins with Staff

Aristotle said, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." This was true for the ancient Greeks and it is true of the Library today. The term 'synergy' comes from the Greek for 'working together,' and its presence in the research and results of the Library's strategic planning process has considerable impact on the PCCLD's next chapter.

When Library stakeholders gathered for a planning retreat, they identified synergy of staff and service as a vital component of the Library today and far into the future. The Library Board of Trustees also noted, in a later facilitated gathering, that they value the role high-quality staff plays in the success of the Library. PCCLD will continue to provide resources to attract and retain employees of the highest caliber in its effort to be a vibrant, community-leading organization.

PCCLD also recognizes the value in 'growing its own' and has established a Career Pathing program for employees interested in pursuing ongoing development in librarianship or other fields of value to the Library's mission. PCCLD will continue to support staff as they model lifelong learning strategies in their community through participation in this program. The Library will also continue to invest resources in ongoing on-the-job development and training. PCCLD will further inspire staff by developing an internal campaign that encourages and recognizes those who continue their personal pursuits of knowledge, regardless of the method or institution chosen.

As evidenced by a recent peer comparison, the Library could not continue its recent phenomenal performance without actively maintaining a competitive marketplace within which staff can thrive. Through ongoing evaluation of organizational structure, and by conducting periodic salary surveys and assessments of employee job descriptions and benefits packages, PCCLD will become the Library of the future the employees and Board of Trustees envision it to be.

Next Steps

The results of the 2015 planning process demonstrate the Library's deep connections to the community and its strong commitment to its mission. The appendices to this plan reflect the extent of the Library's pursuit of information during the process and include reports on demographics and related statistics, community and employee feedback and trends in the library profession. These reports, in addition to interviews with key Library stakeholders, are the basis for the development of six themes that will strategically focus the Library's work going forward.

ONE: The Community's Priority for the Library is Improving Early Literacy by Creating Young Readers. PCCLD will expand Library resources and services targeted to Pueblo County's youngest citizens.

TWO: Partnerships are Essential to the Library's Continued Relevance to Pueblo County. PCCLD will coordinate and collaborate with its strategic partners to meet shared goals related to the Library's mission.

THREE: The Library Should Focus on the Whole Family through Specific Library Programming and Collections. PCCLD will broaden the reach of services and collections appropriate to all aspects of family life.

FOUR: The Library Has a Vital Role in Bridging the Digital Divide by Promoting Access to the Internet and Providing the Best Current Information Technology. PCCLD will reinvest in its motto, Books and Beyond, with particular emphasis on wireless technology.

FIVE: Data-Driven Planning is Critical to the Sustainability of the Library's Organizational Health and Creates Maximum Community Impact. PCCLD will use statistical and data analysis to drive ongoing planning and strategic thinking.

SIX: The Library's Staff is Crucial to the Library Successfully Fulfilling Its Mission. PCCLD will capitalize on the learning skills and expertise of employees.

The responsibility for affecting the changes described herein lay with the Library staff and stakeholders, the Library Board of Trustees, and with the Executive Director. The Areas of Strategic Focus documented in this plan will be integrated into the Library's annual planning process. They will also be shaped by the Library's 10-year financial forecast, which predicts limited additional revenue. PCCLD realizes this may require reallocation of the Library's existing funds or an investigation of additional funding, through an increased mill levy or otherwise. Moving forward, the Library will both guide and be driven by its relationship with the community, and will remain vigilant regarding how Pueblo County changes and grows. As PCCLD looks forward to the future, these efforts will ensure the Library's continual evolution and its sustainability for the long term.

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Appendices

Focus Groups Report

Survey Report

Staff and Stakeholder Retreat Report

Community Data Report

Library Trends Report

Financial Projection

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