



Message from the Library Director

Libraries are transformational places. When you come into your library you should feel welcome, comfortable, engaged and empowered. The Library should be a reflection of the community that we serve - the City of Huntington Beach.

The Huntington Beach Public Library wants to make sure that we continue to be a destination and a core community institution as we move forward. Recognizing that we live in a time of rapid and somewhat unpredictable change, the Library has engaged in a Strategic Reality Check process over the past year, to try and look ahead for the next few years.

By engaging key stakeholders in conversations about Huntington Beach and the needs of our residents, along with a thorough service review and assessment, the Library was able to gather information to craft a strategic work plan to guide us as we move into 2014.

I would like to thank all the library staff and the members of the public that helped us craft this work plan and have helped us chart our direction for the near future,

Stephanie Beverage
Director of Library Services

Huntington Beach Public Library
Strategic Work Plan 2014 – 2016

Executive Summary

Near the end of 2012, Library Administration recognized that it was again time to review the accomplishments and services of the Library and to step back and try to look ahead, and set a strategic direction for the Library in our community.

Building on the success of the Library's previous Strategic Plan from 2010, a Staff Committee was formed to conduct a Strategic Reality Check, talking to members of the community and key stakeholders. By conducting a review of services, communications and through informal interviews and discussions with key community members, the Committee was able to chart some strategic priorities for the next Year, identifying the programs and outcomes that we hope to realize for our City.

This Strategic Work Plan is a living document, designed to be reviewed at regular intervals, taking into account the rapid changes that confront us and the City of Huntington Beach. The following represents our strategic direction for 2014- 2016.

HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING

Back in 2010, the Huntington Beach Public Library engaged in a strategic planning process, building on the methods and planning used by the City of Huntington Beach. A committee of local stakeholders and library supporters was brought together to talk about the city and how the Library can help the City achieve the goals of the community. Through facilitated meetings, these stakeholders used elements of the Public Library Association Planning for Results process to identify key priorities that they felt would make a difference in our city.

The process led to the creation of the Library's 3 year strategic plan, identifying 3 strategic priorities for goal setting and focus. These three priorities, Public Access to the Internet, Early Childhood Literacy and Support for Students, have helped the Library maintain key services for the community during the past few years of economic stress and reduced budgets. The strategic priorities helped with budgeting decisions and allowed the Library to continue supporting programs and services that were highly valued.

The following Mission and Values were identified in the previous planning process:

Library Mission

The Huntington Beach Public Library and Cultural Center welcomes, empowers and enriches our community by providing innovative and traditional library services that inspire and encourage transformation and growth

Library Vision

The Huntington Beach Public Library and Cultural Center will be the transformational place at the heart of our City, where families come to share experiences, read, experiment and grow

Library Values

The Huntington Beach Public Library as an organization is dedicated to these core values:

- Quality Customer Service
- Honesty and Integrity
- Communication
- Open Access and Intellectual Freedom
- Knowledge

Service Response Priorities

Success in School – Homework Support
Access to the Online World – Public Internet access
Creating Young Readers – Early Childhood Literacy

Over the past 3 years, the Library has been able to maintain and enhance programs in all of these areas. We have accomplished a lot – all the Library public computers have been replaced and upgraded; the Library's Internet speed has been increased, and the access to public computing and the Internet has been enhanced. We have been able to maintain our story time schedule at the Central Library while adding story time offerings at our branch locations. We have expanded our Homework support, and added an online Live Tutoring service for students from K through college. And this has been done during a period of budget and staffing reductions.

The time has come for the Library to revisit our strategic priorities, and to consider the direction for the Library over the next few years. We live in an increasingly busy world, with change coming rapidly. Members of the community are pressed for time, and some traditional methods of strategic planning can prove to be cumbersome and take too much time, to create an effective and workable plan for growth.

As an alternative to the previous planning process, the Library chose to conduct a more informal strategic planning process, to engage members of the community at their convenience, looking at both the internal and external issues for the City and the Library moving forward in the 21st Century.

Library Service and Communication Assessment

The Library Strategic Reality Check working group did an assessment of Library services and communication efforts. All library publicity materials, signage, web page documentation and other communication avenues were compiled and analyzed for their effectiveness and overlap. In the course of the review, the working group determined that though the library produces a lot of communication, there is lots of overlap and inconsistency. A coherent message about the Library and library services is hard to discern in all the various communication pieces that have developed over time.

Signage has a tendency to be confusing and unclear. The architecture of the building presents some challenges and was not originally designed with a strong way finding plan. Way finding has therefore been somewhat haphazard and organic in development and has created challenges for both patrons and staff.

Brochures, flyers, handouts and other publications from the Library have improved, but again, there is a wide range of material and some is more effective than others.

The Library website is part of the City website, and has a consistent structure and look, but keeping the Virtual Library up and running in concert with the on ground Library has proven to be a challenge due to staffing shortages.

The Library has developed a standard look and feel for most communication pieces, tying things into the architectural design and style of the original Neutra building. Standard fonts and colors have been integrated into most flyers and other paper marketing pieces. There is more to do, to firmly establish the brand and the brand look.

The Library's Social Media presence is solid – with Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest accounts all up and running. All of these resources are regularly updated and help advertise programs and activities. Marketing efforts to make the community aware of our online virtual library and the services available has been intermittent. We have had some successes and some failures.

Part of the communication challenge is getting the Library staff all up to speed on the range of resources and services available both on ground and online. Staff Development programs have helped to address this, but more work needs to be done.

Streamlining, and further work to make communications more effective needs to continue. Additional policies and procedures for monitoring social media and the Library's social media presence need to be formalized, to ensure effective use of the new online tools.

Community Trends and Concerns

The Library engaged in a series of one on one interviews with key stakeholders throughout the community. Council members were interviewed, along with small groups of key constituents. The following groups shared their thoughts about Huntington Beach and the issues for the City.

All participants were asked the same series of questions about Huntington Beach (see appendix). Huntington Beach is a beach community, so there are lots of reasons people choose to live here. The open space, the beaches, the parks, the activities in the community are all important for residents. People want support for all of the activities that interest them. Family activities are highly valued and education is seen as very important. The community is seen as “safe” but there is concern about sustainability, and environmental issues are important for many.

The community has a positive view of the library, and sees us as an important part of the cultural and educational opportunities in the City. We need to do more to make things easier for our residents – they expect us to keep up with things, and they expect us to be able to provide the resources they want and need for the community. At least one city council member thinks the Library can play a role in sustainability, providing resources for the community in support of these efforts. There is also a strong sense that the library needs to be open as much as possible, to meet the needs of the community.

The Central Library continues to be the focal point for most library supporters, evoking a great deal of admiration and appreciation for its architecture and resources. The 4 smaller branch locations are popular and highly valued, and there is some support for expanded facilities, especially in the Southeastern section of the city. 5 years ago, preliminary needs assessment work was done to look at the need for a new facility to replace the existing Banning branch. Plans did not proceed due to the onset of the recession, and the lack of funding.

A consistent theme in all conversations is a lack of awareness of what the Library does now – everyone appreciates the Library for its programming, support for children and students, and collections. The Central Library is a destination, with a definite wow factor. However, most residents don't seem to be aware of the wide array of services available, especially digital services. Most respondents were not aware of the library's eBook collection or of the other digital resources, such as Help Now, an online tutoring service. When hearing about these services, everyone expressed surprise, followed by appreciation for the library.

This information, along with local and national trends, both with the library field and society in general can help us set our course over the next few years. We need to continue to “check in” with the community, to track changes in needs, interests and services.

Strategic Goals for 2014 – 2016

- All preschool aged children in HB will have access to programs and activities designed to develop early literacy skills
- All Huntington Beach residents will have the capacity to achieve basic digital literacy, so they are able to engage and participate in the online community
- All Huntington Beach residents will be able to participate in an active community of readers
- The Library will foster a culture of innovation and exploration, both internally and for the City's residents