myLIBRARY 2020:
Connect, Inspire, Enrich

Connect

Inspire

Enrich

"...libraries are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education (which is not a process that finishes the day we leave school or university), about entertainment, about making safe spaces, and about access to information.

"...If you perceive a library as a shelf of books, it may seem antiquated or outdated in a world in which most, but not all, books in print exist digitally. But that is to miss the point fundamentally."

– Neil Gaiman, award-winning author
(Source: www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/
neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming#)

The Public Library
of Youngstown & Mahoning County

HISTORY

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County (PLYMC) is an institution with origins in Mahoning County dating back to the 1840's. On Oct. 27, 1880, the signing of Articles of Incorporation made the Youngstown Library Association official. The association's name was changed to the Reuben McMillan Free Library Association on March 5, 1898, in honor of the Superintendent of Schools, who also became the president of the Library's Board of Trustees. He was committed to the intellectual development of the city's youth, a key element of public library service even today in 2014. The Library at the time had 186 volumes, was controlled by the school board, and was housed on West Federal Street until 1898.

In 1891 the first true public library was made possible by support from the first tax appropriations, and was housed in a remodeled home on Market Street. In 1907, the sale of that property, as well as a gift from Andrew Carnegie, enabled the Library to relocate to the corner of Wick and Rayen avenues, where the Main Library remains to this day. The original historic building was extensively remodeled in 1954 and again in 1994-1996 with a major expansion.

The Library became a free county-wide system when the Ohio Legislature reorganized the tax laws giving public libraries support through the intangibles tax and denying them any fixed share of the real estate tax without a special vote. The first county branch opened in Poland in 1935, with others following in rapid succession.

Under the direction of different Directors, the Library has seen growth, change and shrinkage as the population of Mahoning County has changed, diminished and shifted. As a public library which serves a geographically diverse region ranging from rural to urban, the Library must consider factors that impact delivery of services, such as the placement of buildings to most effectively serve the population, the economic and social issues that impact its service areas so that library services can be most responsive, and the changes in society, as well as the industry as a whole.

As the Library industry and the world change, it is important for PLYMC to maintain a focus on "why" – a focus on the heart of what the institution is about. It may seem easy to say "books," but as author Neil Gaiman points out, "that is to miss the point, fundamentally." Because the "why" for public libraries has always been access: to information, to books in whatever form – eBooks or print—to research, to information that can entertain and enlighten, to inspiration, to technology, to learning opportunities, to civic engagement, and to the world around us. Public libraries deliver public access and freedom to learn— they always have. Everything else is just the how.

MISSION OF PLYMC

 The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County connects people and communities to reliable resources that inspire learning and foster enrichment. To simplify: Connect. Inspire. Enrich.

MY LIBRARY 2020: DATA COLLECTION

In 2013, the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County worked to collect a variety of information for the purpose of creating a six-year strategic plan. The information gathered was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, with both data and public opinions being considered as a part of the overall information-gathering process. It is the philosophical belief of the Library that good decisions require good data, but as a community-based organization, the Library mus weigh, alongside the data, public knowledge and public themes. It should be noted, however, that decisions are not usually made on one factor or one piece of information alone. As a public agency that serves such a broad audience, often with very different viewpoints, the Library makes decisions by pulling in information from a variety of sources and weighs more factors than can be discussed here. The data collection methods utilized to prepare this report are discussed below.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

PLYMC contracted with the Youngstown State University Center for Urban and Regional Studies to assist with GIS pin-mapping of active library card holders, so that the Library could better understand usage patterns for the libraries, and define areas being serviced by each branch library. This data, compiled in a complete report by YSU, overlaid those usage patterns with census tracks, and presented visual maps that will allow the Library to see areas of heaviest usage for each location, areas where there are gaps in service in the form of buildings, and areas of overlap. It also presented demographic information for each area, along with community information such as vacant housing rates.

Additionally, the Library requested GIS pin-mapping of community gathering places such as schools, churches and other social service agencies. The purpose of this was to allow the Library to see at least a partial picture of what other community assets may exist in each area.

The information gathered by the Library assisted with informing decisions about services, particularly the need for services that are taken outside of the Library walls, and will assist with decisions regarding building projects. The information in this report showed that there are heavy overlaps in certain service areas, which may indicate the need for building consolidation, as well as certain areas that receive less service and may be in need of outreach or some form of mobile service. This is reflected in the focus areas of community presence and collections and spaces particularly in this plan, and will influence the decisions presented in the follow-up facilities plan.

QUALITATIVE DATA

During the planning process, the Library utilized three ways to gather public input. The first was a public survey available in an online and print version that focused on user interest in services and resources of value, and also allowed for general public comments. This survey received slightly over 1,800 responses. The majority of these responses indicated that residents are interested in programmatic and life-long learning opportunities, especially for older adults, with topics ranging from healthy eating to language and computer classes. Respondents also indicated an expectation that children's learning opportunities continue. In addition, survey responses indicated that customers place a high value on books and access to materials as a core library service. This information is reflected in many of the areas of this plan, but particularly in the focus areas of learning opportunities and collection and spaces.

The Library also engaged the community in open input sessions facilitated by HandsOn Volunteer Network of the Valley. Although these sessions were sparsely attended, the sentiment was echoed that people value and would like more library programming for all ages, and also value access to books and services such as computer access, WiFi, copiers and scanners.

In general, people expressed a desire to see welcoming buildings with open floor plans and cost efficiencies being mentioned, as well as the desire for longer hours and an appreciation for customer service and a friendly staff.

The importance of strong library communication and marketing was mentioned. Additionally, the idea of mobile services, such as bookmobile was mentioned multiple times. This input is reflected throughout the plan, but particularly in the focus areas of learning opportunities, community presence, technology and staff.

The Library also held community conversations in a "kitchen table" discussion format. Conversations in small groups that focus on aspirations for the community and the Library were held with the following audiences: all levels of our library staff and with community members from the Austintown, East Side, West Side, Boardman and Struthers areas.

The Library learned that people wanted a community that was safe and one in which they knew their neighbors. People wanted the Library to remove barriers to access and get services to more people throughout the community. Smart partnerships, particularly those that involve other public entities and supporting the schools and children and families, were emphasized multiple times.

The Library also heard tensions around buildings, with some communities wanting a "meaner and leaner" library with fewer building projects and some communities wanting improvements in their branch libraries. The idea of mobile services was again mentioned, as well as the need for the Library to be engaged throughout the community. It was desired for libraries to have community gathering spaces. Programming was mentioned multiple times.

These themes are carried throughout the plan, as well. This knowledge was utilized particularly in the focus areas of learning opportunities, community presence, and collections and spaces.

Focus Areas:

Through the strategic planning process the Library data that was gathered was shared and analyzed in staff work groups and in strategic planning committee meetings. After careful analysis and consideration, themes emerged regarding what areas the community and the Library staff could see should be addressed in the next six years.

Those themes are broken down in to the following six focus areas:

1) **Learning Opportunities** (programs and services)
2) **Community Presence** (communication, outreach and partnerships)
3) **Collections & Spaces** (facilities and materials)
4) **Technology** (public and internal – future focused)
5) **Staff** (Internal Development)
6) **Fiscal Stewardship** (budget and development)

Within these focus areas goals were created to strengthen the focus or improve that area of the Library. Following the goals are actions for implementation, along with indicators of success. It should be noted that one of the focus areas – Collections & Spaces—will have a more detailed plan that follows. The purpose of the strategic plan is to address directional goals for the next six years, whereas this area also needs a plan that is more tactical. A detailed Facilities Plan will be released in 2014. The Facilities Plan will address specific building and construction plans. It will address anticipated high cost repair items such as roofs and boilers. In addition, it will address specific actions needed for long standing issues of building replacement and mergers, notably, the older locations in our system: Brownlee Woods, Campbell, West, and Struthers. A separate assessment, including a Feasibility Study for the West Library location, will be issued as a companion piece.

Focus Area: Learning Opportunities

GOAL 1: Strengthen and create new learning support and opportunities for students K-12 and their families, during and after school hours

Why: The changing learning landscape is challenging for educators, students, and parents. At all grade levels, new initiatives for evaluating student success are being implemented, leaving teachers, students, and parents struggling to find appropriate resources that will meet educational requirements and help students successfully complete their education. The number of children and teens who are homeschooled or who attend a virtual school is increasing. The Library is in a unique position to support and provide resources all students can use to enhance achievement. Libraries throughout Mahoning County are open evenings, weekends, and summers. Digital resources make the library available 24/7. Library programs are open to all, without cost. The Library is the sole county resource able to provide the same level of quality resources to all demographics, regardless of income.

Actions:

1. The Library will hire an employee dedicated to working with schools throughout the county to identify needs. This liaison, under the direction of the Manager of Programming and Youth Services, will create services and programs that support student achievement, explain educational initiatives to Library staff, and help make parents aware of the role the library can play in their child's education.
   a. Educators will recommend services and collections that will enhance student achievement; library staff will work to make these recommendations a reality, tailoring services to each school as much as possible.
   b. Library staff will participate in meetings with school leaders whose schools are located in their service area, help develop programs and resources specific to the needs of each school, and create a partnership that will make the Library a key to student success.
2. Under the direction of the Manager of Programming and Youth Services, the Library will expand its programming efforts for homeschooled and virtual-learning students.
   a. The Library will increase the number of programs offered for homeschooled and virtual-learning students by offering the program at more locations.
   b. With input from the newly formed teen homeschooled group, librarians will develop programs on topics of interest to this group.

3. Under the direction of the Library's Programming and Youth Services Department, the Library will expand offerings and services that are available to students during non-school hours.
    a. The Library will address the opportunity and challenge of children in Library buildings during after-school hours by developing a program that engages them in participatory learning, developmentally appropriate for their age, and that engages a multitude of community partnerships and takes place off of the public floor. The programming will be regularly occurring with some structure at locations with high after-school usage 3-5 days per week.
    b. The Library will host or present educational programs that relate to the Common Core Standards and are available during non-school hours.
    c. The Library will provide an academically sound and professional online tutoring service for all students in Mahoning County. Additional online learning services will also be continually investigated.
4. The Library will aggressively promote its resources to all schools in Mahoning County.
    a. The Library website will include a page highlighting resources for students.
    b. Librarians will communicate regularly with school contacts and promote any services that are beneficial to the student population.
5. The Library will explore creative ways of bringing Library services to children and teens, especially children in schools with low achievement scores.
    a. The Pop-Up Library will expand to other schools in the Youngstown City Schools and will be considered for other school districts.
    b. The Library will evaluate services and create opportunities that remove barriers to service.

Indicators of Success:

1. Outreach efforts to schools and parent groups will increase. Implemented services will be evaluated regularly, and adjustments will be made to increase effectiveness.
2. Use of library resources, both print and digital, related to learning support will increase.
3. The number of programs offered for homeschooled and virtual-learning students will increase, and the number of programs held outside of school hours related to the Common Core standards will increase. Methods of data collection such as program surveys will collect both quantitative evidence of attendance and qualitative stories that illustrate the outcomes of the programs. There will be collected evidence that students learn or are enriched by the programs they attend or the services they use (including virtual services).

GOAL 2: Expand learning opportunities for older adults

Why: As a result of the demographic analysis of Mahoning County and Library users, and because of the majority of survey respondents who wanted to see more programs for older adults, the Library recognizes that this is an active user group which would benefit from higher levels of programming. The Library has learning as a core value, and because we strive to connect, inspire and enrich our community, expanding the offerings for this age group will benefit both the Library and the community as a whole. Older adults will be connected to resources for their needs, inspired to learn new skills or subject matters, and enriched by the offerings.

Actions:
1. The Library will create programmatic offerings for older adults on topics to take place inside the Library. The Library will offer programs on subjects of interest to older adults from technology to health.
    a. The survey responses will be used to guide the subject matter of these programs.
    b. Continued evaluation from customers at each program will allow the library to gage quality and keep abreast of interests.
    c. Book displays will be presented in each program to scaffold learning.
2. The Library will expand the way in which older adults can receive technology training.
    a. The Library will attempt to offer computer skills classes again at the large library locations.
    b. The Library's "Book-a-Librarian" program will include technology and computer training for adults who cannot make class times, need specialized help on a specific topic, or need more personalized interaction for learning.
3. The Library will continue to expand, promote and provide training for digital learning services for adults.
    a. Virtual services such as Gale Courses will continue to be investigated for the purpose of promoting adult learning in a virtual setting. They will also be communicated well to the public, easy to find on the webpage, and staff can be trained on how to use them.
    b. On-line tutorials will be created by Library staff or through a Library vendor service.

4. The Library will partner with agencies that serve this population to expand program offerings, locations, and audiences.

Indicators of Success:

1. The number of programs and "Book a Librarian" sessions the Library offers for adults will increase, and the topics will reflect the expressed interest of that community demographic.
2. Methods of data collection, such as program surveys, will collect both quantitative evidence of older adults attending library programs (attendance), and qualitative stories that illustrate the outcomes of the programs. There will be collected evidence that adults learn or are enriched by the programs they attend, the sessions they have with our staff, or the services they use (including virtual services).
3. Partnerships focusing on this age group will increase, and community agencies will understand that we are a resource and will actively promote our services. In return, the Library will be able to share the vast resources of community partners with this population.

GOAL 3: Evaluate effectiveness and accessibility of preschool learning opportunities and create new avenues for parents and caregivers to become their child's first teacher

Why: The Library has devoted considerable time and resources to developing an effective early literacy program. Librarians share early literacy tips with parents at all story times and model developmentally appropriate techniques for sharing books with children. At workshops for preschool teachers, librarians demonstrate traditional and nontraditional ways of sharing books with children. However, workshops designed to train parents were cancelled due to lack of participation. Many preschool children are not enrolled in daycare or preschool, and the Library has not been able to impact those children. Many children often go to school without kindergarten readiness skills. By expanding its reach and its scope, the Library will become an important partner in connecting parents to resources that will help them prepare their children for school success.

Actions:

1. The Library will broaden its early literacy program to encompass early learning.
   a. Library story times will incorporate developmentally appropriate activities that correlate to the Ohio Department of Education's Early Learning and Development Standards.
   b. Promotional Library materials and handouts used in Library programs will reflect this new focus.
2. Partnerships with agencies and programs that serve parents and children in home settings will increase.
   a. Working with groups such as Help Me Grow and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, the Library will identify families who do not participate in formal educational settings, and will create services, handouts, and programs that will benefit this audience.
   b. The Library will develop partnerships with local offices of state agencies serving young children and explore opportunities for offering needed services in libraries throughout the county.

3. The Library will help children enter kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed.
   a. The Library will include information about kindergarten readiness skills in story times for children ages 4-6.
   b. The Library will develop informal learning programs designed to acquaint preschool children with the kindergarten experience.
   c. The Library will develop informational handouts for parents on kindergarten readiness.
   d. The Library will develop partnerships with local offices of state agencies serving young children and explore opportunities for offering needed services in libraries throughout the county.
4. The Library will develop circulating kits containing library materials and educational activities for children of all ages (smaller than the Baby Brilliant kits). These kits, especially those for children ages 3-5, will include tips for parents on how they can prepare their child for kindergarten.

Indicators of Success:

1. Methods of data collection, such as program surveys, will collect both quantitative evidence of adults and children reached through in-house library programming and outreach programs (attendance), and qualitative stories that illustrate the outcomes of the programs. There will be collected evidence that parents and children learn or are enriched by the programs they attend, and that parents and caregivers are connected to resources that better prepare them to help children enter school ready to learn.
2. The number of partnerships with agencies serving children in Mahoning County will increase.

3. Patron satisfaction surveys will be included in circulating library kits and modifications will be made to contents as needed.

GOAL 4: The Library will strengthen its role as a community resource for families by expanding learning opportunities for parents, grandparents and caregivers; by helping those groups find the resources they need to improve their quality of family life; and by presenting more programs designed to offer families a place to interact and learn

Why: The Library understands that a key factor in children's lifelong success is their home environment, and the Library believes that every family wants the best for its children. Supporting the learning needs of families so that they are prepared to be their children's best teacher will enrich the community as a whole and lead to a more effective early learning strategy.

Actions:

1. The Library will develop programs and resources which focus on parents understanding the developmental phases of children, and which connect parents with expert resources from the collection and from the community.
a. The Library will develop family literacy nights and parent/child workshops that emphasize the role of the caregiver as the child's first teacher, and that connect parents, community experts and resources in a relaxed, informal, but educational setting.
2. The Library will develop family literacy programs that address the literacy needs of adults in the family, as well as the children.
a. The Library will engage with partners already working in this field to discover the best way to create or strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships to serve these families.
3. The Library will train staff in the best practices of family literacy, child development, and parent education.

Focus Area: Community Presence

GOAL 1: Create a visible, mobile presence in the community that takes services and programs to places beyond our physical buildings. Provide communities without a physical branch an opportunity to have access to collections and services.

Why: The Library recognizes the need to provide access to library service to communities that are underserved either geographically or demographically. In reaching new communities and new demographics, the Library recognizes that it must meet customers where they are, and adapt services to be beyond Library walls. The Library recognizes that a visible, mobile presence can assist with heightening awareness of its services throughout Mahoning County.

Actions:
1. Deliver innovative services to targeted locations within the community, particularly in communities where there is not a building or where the population is traditionally under-represented as library users.
    a. Strengthen and further develop the Pop-Up Library service model, targeting locations and audiences within a specified time period, connecting new customers to our services with the goal of making them new library users.
    b. Connect with users in non-traditional locations throughout the community, utilizing traditional outreach methods, as well as the Pop-Up Library.
    c. Use new technology, such as Overdrive Media Stations, and the opportunities they present, to heighten awareness of and to connect users with digital resources.
    d. Under the direction of the Manager of Public Services Operations, Work towards embedded librarians and library services in the community, to further strengthen the recognition of PLYMC as the lead institute for research in the area. This may involve, for example, providing a librarian to assist with research and instruction for a local business, educational institution, social service, or a group with special needs.
2. Investigate the possibility of providing 24-hour library kiosks or a bookmobile service to provide services in communities that are currently not served by a traditional building.
3. Using the principles of embedded librarianship, Library administration will find ways to encourage and make possible staff participation in the neighborhood community meetings and functions of their service area, for the purpose of staff being aware of issues in the areas they serve, and being proactive in reflecting on the implications for library service in their unit/ location.

a. Administration will work with frontline staff to develop training about community services and partnerships that cover issues ranging from liability concerns to media concerns, so that they are prepared with full knowledge that is often held only by administration, and they feel empowered and engaged with the organization and community.

Indicators of Success:

1. The community as a whole becomes more aware of the many services we offer, from reference research to online library services, and the number of requests for library services we receive from outside groups goes up according to the awareness. The idea of the Library as a community asset is widely accepted. Surveys, comment cards, and other tools will be continually utilized to gather community information for the purpose of assessment.
2. Staff members become actively and civically engaged in the community they serve, and feel empowered to pro-actively seek out opportunities to serve the community in new, innovative and/or meaningful ways.
3. Educators are aware of the Library's ability to provide students with access to homework help and a diverse collection of books and materials. School visits by staff increase or are maintained at current levels at locations where this is the norm, and visits to the library by groups increase. Usage of online tools (Gale Courses, Know it Now, Mango, databases, etc.) increases to aid learning for all groups, as the community becomes more aware of online 24/7 resources available.
4. New users are attracted to visit the library locations and usage statistics continue to increase.
5. The number of active library cardholders increases.

GOAL 2: Sustain and create meaningful partnerships that support the community and its aspirations, and find ways to evaluate the impact of the partnerships.

Why: The Library needs to focus use of its resources to assure that partners and partner projects fit with the Library's mission, vision, and core values, and to ensure that partnerships are working towards mutually beneficial goals that support the community's aspirations. Furthermore, partner projects need to be consistently evaluated to ensure that outcomes can be demonstrated and that the partnership is valuable long-term.

Actions:

1. The Manager of Public Services Operations and the Public Services Team will work towards library staff being available to participate in community organization events that support PLYMC's mission, vision, and core values.
    a. Staff members in various units of the organization will attend meetings of community partners, civic organizations, and other relevant institutions. Staff will provide resource-sharing to support community partners, civic organizations, and other relevant institutions using principals of embedded librarianship.
2. To ensure that resources are maximized and that partnerships are effective for both the institution and the community, an evaluation method for both entering into partnerships and accessing outcomes will be created and used consistently.

Indicators of Success:

1. PLYMC continues and strengthens its reputation in the community as a community anchor institution, a valuable and knowledgeable resource. Opportunities and requests increase to have Library staff members attend a variety of community, civic, and business events to share knowledge, resources and/or programming.
2. Attendance at civic meetings by PLYMC staff members rise, and staff see themselves as both members of the community and resource providers for the community, and are able to initiate responses to civic need at the Unit level.
3. A method of partnership evaluation will be created, understood, and utilized by staff members at all levels when entering into a partnership and upon completion, or at regular intervals throughout the partnership.

GOAL 3: Find ways to measure and evaluate the impact of the Library's presence in the community.

WHY: The Library is an institution that serves the public and to remain relevant, it must serve the needs and wants of our community. Evaluating and measuring the impact of our community presence will ensure that the Library enhances the growth and strength of our community, and ensures that resources are invested in methods that are most successful, and that new and innovative methods are developed.

1. **Actions:** The Public Services Team and Communications/Public Relations Department will develop vehicles for gathering regular feedback from the public in an ongoing and user-friendly way. Continue offering ways for our customers to provide us with their thoughts, such as community conversations, focus groups, and public input meetings.
2. Develop a feedback method for partner organizations and individuals that helps gauge the strength of the Library's contribution to a partnership.
3. The Communications/Public Relations Department will work with local media sources to continue informing the public about the Library and ensure that the image of the Library is presented in an accurate and positive manner. The Library will engage community stakeholders in actively communicating the Library's value.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library will be included in major initiatives on our community, and the Library will be a sought-after partner for projects of all sizes in our community. The Library will be able to communicate its value as a partner and community asset, as reported by partner organizations and individuals through partnership feedback.
2. The Library will be able to identify, understand, react to the the needs of its customers and the community, and will be able to document and communicate the ways in which the Library responded and contributed to community knowledge.
3. Media coverage of the Library continues to be frequent, and emphasizes the value of the presence of the Library in the community.

GOAL 4: Communicate the presence, the value, and the impact of our services through traditional and new, non-traditional methods, and through a re-branding of the Library using the Connect, Inspire, Enrich theme.

WHY: The Library has earned the respect of the community, its lawmakers, its news media, its citizens, through frequency, clarity and transparency of information-sharing. Broad-scale communication has enhanced the Library's image as an important institution and, as such, it is included in many partnerships and projects within the community. Continuing to share relevant information about the Library's services, materials, programs and events will reinforce the positive image of the Library and ensure that area residents feel good about the Library and what it means to our community.

Utilizing the Library's new mission, "Connect, Inspire, Enrich," as a communication vehicle will strengthen the visual recognition and brand of the Library in the minds of community members.

Actions:

1. Lead by the Director of Communications and the Communications/ Public Relations Department ,library staff will assess new means of communication, especially new forms of social media, for suitability to the Library's goals, mission and demographics and implement these media tools as appropriate, as well as evaluate their use.
   a. The Library will develop a social media policy and guidelines for all staff.
   b. The Library will find ways to increase use and awareness of the Library's mobile app, as well as other mobile forms of communication, such as increase use of texting, as a way of reaching more audiences.
   c. The Communications/Public Relations Department will explore web advertising, as well as other new forms of advertising, and, if feasible, pursue.
   d. The Library will explore software such as WordPress to provide an online experience where customers with specific interests can comment and discuss those interests with others. For example, create an area where book clubs can continue their discussions after attending a Library book club program.
2. A new format for the Library's publication, "Happenings @ Your Library," and for the Library's website will be developed.
   a. Happenings will offer a more streamlined grouping of announcements, including programs grouped together according to the Connect, Inspire, Enrich icons.
   b. The Library will develop a vehicle – either through Happenings or through a new medium--- that will include reinforcing articles and updates that clearly show the level of accountability, responsibility and responsiveness demonstrated by the Library. This vehicle will allow regular

communication with the public to explain how new initiatives were the result of community input (ways the Library says "yes" to its customers), ways the Library is a good steward of public funds, to feature Library and Library Friend's success stories, and to introduce innovative and dedicated staff members and their work.

c. The Library will redevelop the Library's website to reflect the branding of Connect. Inspire. Enrich. The website will be developed with ease of use of the customer as the strongest consideration.

3. The Library will continue to use traditional means of communication such as news releases/media contacts for TV, radio and newspaper coverage and will continue positive relationships with news media.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library will obtain higher levels of customer feedback and as such be able to identify and be responsive to customer needs.

2. A new website, new Happenings, and new forms of social media and advertising are employed under the direction of the Communications/Public Relations Director to reach new users.

3. Statistics of usage of new methods should be viewed frequently to gauge success.

4. The new logos and new branding are easily recognized by the community and associated with the Library.

Focus Area: Collections and Spaces

GOAL 1: The library's physical collections at the neighborhood branches will focus on meeting the demands of their community, keeping collections fresh and with a large popular selection, with emphasis on getting customers the items they want quicker.

Why: A majority of survey respondents want to see more library materials (books—both physical and electronic), media and collections that are relevant to recreational reading and community informational needs, and collections that are readily accessible and easy to use.

Actions:

1. Branch collections will feature current popular materials that are readily available and respond to customer demand, and books will be visually at the center of all of the traditional branch libraries.

a. Branch librarians will seek customer feedback at their locations for popular authors and the broad topics of interest identified in surveys like hobbies, do-it yourself, cooking, health, crafts, gardening, self-help and development. School-age children will find materials to support reading and success in school.

b. The Library will find new ways to organize, market and showcase books and materials, making the collection visually appealing and easy to browse.

c. Regular analysis of the collection by the Public Services Team and front line librarians will assist collection development staff with providing the best items and procedures, such as weeding for a high-usage collection.

2. A collection development tool, which may or may not be a third-party software, will be utilized to assist staff with analyzing the best materials to purchase to meet diverse interests throughout the county while anticipating emerging and future demands.

3. A renewed emphasis will be placed on reader's advisory and creating a community of readers. Library staff will introduce customers to new books and help them find and choose their next book through traditional ways of service (one-on-one customer interaction) and via the Library website, as well as through online reader's advisory tools.

a. Library staff will be encouraged and rewarded for finding ways to increase circulation of materials (including electronic materials), connecting readers and books, and promoting our resources and materials. Staff will be encouraged to share book review resources and suggestions amongst each other.

b. Technology and social media will be utilized to create online book clubs and ways for readers to connect to each other to build a wider local community around books.

4. The Library will find new and better ways to hear what people want in the collection and learn how they connect with books.

a. A request icon will be added to the online catalog so that customers can easily request materials to be purchased for inclusion in the collection.

b. Ways for customers to rate and review books in the library catalog will be enabled, so that customers may share with each other their opinions on books.

5. The Library will purchase library materials quickly and cost effectively to meet customer demand, and will continuously evaluate internal procedures to ensure that, in the most timely and efficient manner, the Library purchases books, places them on shelves and fills holds.

Indicators of Success:

1. Circulation will increase or will experience slighter declines.
2. An online request for materials is created and utilized by customers.
3. An active, connected community of readers will be present online.
4. Reported customer satisfaction with books and materials will be high, with at least an 80% satisfaction rating when collection polls are taken.
5. Materials will turn over more quickly, with newer materials hitting the shelves faster and holds being filled sooner.

GOAL 2: The Library will balance the needs of its more traditional users with those of users who prefer newer forms of access and delivery of books and information by adapting and improving library service with a focus on both current users and the next generation.

Why: As the publishing market changes with the accessibility of eBooks, digital magazines, MP3 audio and streaming video, the Library recognizes that some users will prefer to access materials in traditional print formats, while some users will seek digital access exclusively, and still others will require a combination of the two formats.

Actions:

1. The library will continue to expand and build its digital eBook and audio collection to meet demand.
   a. Library develops relationships with vendors for a wider selection of materials.
   b. The Library will continue to provide programs to enable users to access digital materials through the website and mobile devices.
2. The Library will continue to expand its comprehensive digital resources and databases to nurture discovery, independent learning, and support of educational initiatives in the community.
   a. The Library will evaluate and monitor use while considering cost-effectiveness of the various models and vendors.
   b. Staff at all levels of the organization will understand, market and promote digital resources to a wider audience. Ongoing training will be provided to staff and customers on the use of digital content.
3. The Library will continue to be the community's premier resource for information technology and its digital branch will be strengthened to provide resources to a wide variety of users 24/7 in customer-friendly format.
   a. As the Library's website is redeveloped, additional emphasis will be placed on the digital branch, developing its presence and gathering the resources available into a format that echoes the physical branch experience.

Indicators of Success:

1. The e-collection will grow and be diverse in its offerings, with new titles being continually added and new services that have community benefits offered as they are made available to the library industry.
2. Circulation of the e-collection will increase, to include an increase in usage of our online resources and databases.
3. Customers will report having heard about e-resources from the Library staff, and the number of "Book-a-Librarian" programs on the topic of library e-resources will increase.

GOAL 3: Create spaces that welcome community gathering and interaction, while balancing the needs of the individual user.

Why: The Library seeks to develop appropriate facilities for the community it serves, facilities that are inviting and well-maintained, while using limited resources wisely. The Library conducted a detailed demographic and trend analysis for Mahoning County for the purpose of identifying service areas and levels of use in each of its locations. The Library needs to address and balance a shrinking population and shifting neighborhood centers with an increased need for services and community gathering places.

Actions:

1. Provide reasonable access to meeting rooms and study areas of varying sizes to accommodate the wide-ranging needs of the community.
   a. The Library should examine policies for use that limit access to the meeting room. The policy should balance reasonable access and high use with the need for the Library to still meet its core purpose.
   b. The Library will work towards adapting existing spaces to accommodate community needs, including seeking out low-cost ways to form temporary spaces and incorporate furnishings which are movable to adapt to different uses.
   c. During space-planning in new buildings or renovations, the Library will intentionally include spaces for customers to connect with each other, engage in conversation and participate in civic life separate from formal programs.
   d. Create spaces for students, especially teens, to meet, socialize, and/or study that do not create segregation, but also are not conducive to undue disturbances for other customers.
2. Provide space that nurtures the independent reader or learner by addressing the need for quiet and comfortable reading areas separate from lively areas of the library during renovations, new construction. Consider low-cost ways to adapt existing spaces.
3. Make library spaces flexible and adaptable to new service and delivery models to address the unpredictable changes in the way the community utilizes the Library and in the way the Library operates.
   a. Furniture should be moveable and spaces responsive to changing technology and use.
   b. Newer buildings need less space to house physical materials as more collections become digital.
   c. Newer Library spaces need to be designed to deliver point-of-need services to customers with unified service desks to create a positive user experience.
   d. Adapt services and library spaces that meet community/neighborhood needs.
   e. Evaluate existing buildings to improve the way Library staff encounter and interact with customers.

Indicators of Success:

1. Spaces will have dedicated quiet and dedicated social areas, reducing the amount of customer issues arising from noise and increasing the use of Library space for enrichment activities.
2. Library statistics and usage assessments will reflect that our buildings are the hub of the community and a center of civic activity.

GOAL 4: **Focus our Main Library on being the system's flagship, with a deeper collection and specialized services.**

WHY: With its long history in the community, Main Library is part of the cultural corridor in the downtown area and is the anchor for the library system. It is the memory institution for preserving material of value to the local community. Main Library functions as a branch library for popular materials for its nearby neighborhoods, as a resource library for the entire system and as a research institution serving, for example, the business and nonprofit sectors, YSU students and genealogists. It has a comprehensive current and retrospective collection that today is used differently from the way it once was prior to the advent of the Internet and electronic/digital publishing. It is housed in a building with many physical challenges. A flagship institution is one to which people flock; it is a destination. To ensure that status, attention needs to be given to the collections and spaces for the public within Main Library, balancing both in order to provide a strong, diverse, in-depth collection of resources, yet giving attention to also providing space as a new kind of service.

Actions:

1. Main Library will continue to drive new models for improving access to and delivery of information to the community.
   a. Main Library will serve as a primary testing location for new services and new technology.
   b. The Library will transform the way customers experience the collection through marketing, customer interaction with the collection via social media and a knowledgeable staff who can mediate transactions at the point of customer need.
   c. Staff at Main Library, under the direction of the Manager of Main Library & Staff Development, will enhance methods for delivering reference service (text reference, instant messaging reference, roving reference, outreach reference) and reader's advisory service so that the public can access an information professional whenever needed.
2. Main Library will be the portal to quality information sources on relevant, timely topics both within its walls and outside of its building and its staff will be knowledge navigators for the community.

     a. Staff will judiciously refresh the popular and reference collections to allow for continual renewal of the physical collection while focusing on creating a collection that can meet special needs and that can be shared with branches.

     b. Main Library will continue to be the base for specialist staff, such as the Business and Investment, Grant Center, Genealogy and Local History, and Digital librarians. These staff members will provide connections and outreach for the community as a whole, including providing programs and/or training at the neighborhood libraries.

     c. Main Library will focus on the development of partnerships with appropriate outside agencies to gain staff training in the provision of e-Government services.

3. Main Library will also continue to be an information portal to the past since it houses local collections that are unique and unduplicated anywhere else in the community and that serve to make it a destination place for research and recreation.

     a. Main Library will preserve tangible local historical collections that cannot be replaced.

     b. Ways to digitize physical local collections will be explored, including targeting ways to make them accessible to the community.

     c. Staff will discover ways to enhance service to genealogists and local historians within the confines of a public library setting.

4. With its comprehensive popular and reference collections, Main Library will strive to integrate learning into daily life.

     a. Main Library staff will continue to develop new ways to deliver reader's advisory services.

     b. Main Library staff will establish themselves and the Library as the first source for practical information on commonly shared life challenges such as education, health, aging, personal finance, parenting and job hunting.

     c. Main Library shall be the primary place for information on commonly shared life enrichment activities in lifelong learning. This will be reflected in its programmatic offerings and in its collection.

     d. Main Library will be the primary location in most cases to showcase new opportunities for people to experience and experiment with new technologies.

     e. Main Library will focus on nurturing independent learners.

5. Repurpose space once devoted to extensive print collections that no longer need to be maintained in order to meet the community's desire for space, such as places for quiet study, places to work communally on projects, and places to gather.

     a. Create individual study spaces throughout the building

     b. Create small group spaces where people can work collaboratively on projects with a measure of privacy.

     c. Through a renovation, address issues such as proprietary shelving that limit collection size and space.

6. Undertake a comprehensive renovation of the Main Library building during the life of this strategic plan. The renovation will incorporate the elements needed to create flagship collections, spaces, and resources.

Indicators of Success:

1. Quantifiable measurements will show an increase in public visits to Main Library as well as an increase in use of resources and activities in the public space.

2. Increases will occur in the quantity of "Book-a-Librarian" programs, reference transactions, Business and Investment Center, Grant Center and Genealogy and Local History usage and circulation, with Main Library continuing to lead in reference transactions.

3. Main Library will be recognized in Youngstown as a destination for residents and visitors (as evidenced by the library being showcased in local literature and brochures, by being linked to by partner organizations, by referrals from other institutions, etc.).

4. Main Library will be an asset to Youngstown, with strong partnerships with the City, County, and downtown businesses, residents, and economic and cultural interest groups.

5. Main Library's renovation will be undertaken and completed before 2020.

GOAL 5: Evaluate the number of branches in the system for effectiveness of modern service and cost effectiveness for Mahoning County, and devise a facilities plan that can address long-standing facility issues.

Why: State funding for public libraries has been decreasing each year, with funds being at the same level they were in 1996, while library usage overall has continued to rise. The types of services that public libraries are now expected to provide continue to be more costly.

Additionally, the population of Mahoning County has continued to decrease and shift. With this decrease and shift, library usage has changed. The Youngstown State University Center for Urban Studies presented a demographic analysis to PLYMC as part of the strategic planning process. In this study, user trends were identified through pin-mapping of user residences. This allowed the Library to see service areas defined by usage – indicating which libraries were serving which parts of the county most heavily. Additionally, gaps and overlaps in service areas and census tracts could be identified.

It is clear from the demographic analysis, as well as the Library's internal statistics, that the larger, newer, and more efficient Libraries that are able to offer modern in-demand amenities such as meeting space, computers, study rooms, and a robust variety of programs are better-used and pose a better return on investment over time, in terms of operational efficiency and usage. In addition, PLYMC has operated very lean in terms of number of staff, and this lean operation becomes a strain over time. However, adding more staff would be a strain on the budget. The staffing limits the number of hours of operation The Library offers. Fewer locations would result in longer hours and more efficient staffing patterns.

The combination of factors such as overlaps in service areas, declining population, declining usage at the smaller locations and declining funding makes it difficult to justify the maintenance of 14 full-service libraries (the system has 15 locations including a "popular reading center" in Greenford that is able to be staffed by one staff member). In addition, several different models of offering service to communities have been appearing across the country and bear investigating. Mobile models such as bookmobiles, technology buses and pop-up libraries, as well as stand-alone kiosks and express technology centers, offer lower-cost ways of maintaining service to communities.

Throughout the conversations held during the strategic planning process, community members said that the Library needs to be "leaner and meaner" in operations and buildings, while still others felt that the important factor was maintaining service to communities. Within this tension the Library feels that there may be solutions that allow both of these to occur.

In addition, the Library needs a six-year facility plan to act as a road map for building issues that can be predicted and addressed over the next six years, such as replacement of roofs, boilers, interior renovations, painting, etc. This will allow the Library and the Manager of Facilities and Construction to plan its building and repair needs and allow it to continue to operate debt-free.

Actions:

1. Investigate a consolidation option for the Brownlee Woods and Struthers locations.
   a. The Library will utilize statistical data gathered during the Demographic Analysis, data collected in-house by the Library, and community input gathered to assist with this decision.
   b. The Library will engage the community in the decision-making process through vehicles such as community conversations, community committees, etc.
2. Examine nationwide examples of public library systems that have utilized express and standalone library material kiosks for use in neighborhoods without physical branches. Collect pricing and logistics information on these models.
3. Increase the ability to offer mobile library services, especially looking at the expansion of the Pop-Up Library model, including a long-term direction for the use of this model and considering how it may be used to close gaps of service in the future.
   a. The Library will investigate the creation of a mobile pop-up. as well as a pop-up that can be utilized on a longer term basis, particularly for the use of computers, technology, and WiFi hot spot creation. The Library will consider if this is feasible or relevant for the system.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library will produce a six-year facility plan by the close of 2014 that addresses issues of locations closures and consolidations as well as ways to close gaps in services that arise as a result.
2. The Library will create a mobile services plan that discusses the use of the Pop-Up as well as other mobile library options.

Goal 6: Promote effective stewardship of the built and natural environment.

Why: The beauty of the Library's natural surroundings and its built environment are key assets that must be enhanced and preserved. At the same time, facilities must be allowed to grow and evolve as necessary to support the Library's core mission. Decisions regarding facilities and the physical environment typically involve the complex

interplay of multiple factors and interests that must be recognized and addressed in order to steward effectively the Library's physical resources. These decisions should be framed by and consistent with the Library's commitments to sustainability and accessibility. An integrated planning model should involve the following elements:

Actions:

1. Make environmental sustainability a guiding principle in the stewardship of the Library's facilities and resources and in assessments of its impact on the community and region.
2. Ensure effective financial planning for construction projects, guaranteeing that budget effects, including ongoing facilities operations and maintenance costs are known, understood, and agreed upon, and that a specific and approved funding plan is in place, before they are initiated.
3. Optimize existing space use, and use renovation whenever appropriate as an alternative to new construction and expansion.
4. Determine optimal use of open building sites by considering the full range of possible Library uses.
5. Ensure that resources available for facilities are optimally allocated by a strategic analysis of Library priorities.
6. Allocate sufficient funding for maintenance and renewal of existing facilities, and for Library projects relating to infrastructure, common and shared facilities, public spaces, natural areas, etc.

Indicators of Success:

1. The six-year facilities plan is created and implemented in a manner that reflects the principals of sustainability and stewardship.
2. The Building and Repair Fund is kept healthy in order to provide for building and site maintenance, care of shared facilities, public spaces, etc.
3. All building projects are carefully studied with alternatives explored to ensure maximum stewardship of funds and properties, and all projects undertaken are mindful of ever-changing future needs.

Focus Area: Technology

GOAL 1: Evaluate and upgrade the Library's network infrastructure

Why: As new technology is adopted, its feasibility and practicality may be affected by the speed of the Library's network. Old equipment with a building's internal cabling and equipment may unnecessarily restrict bandwidth and not take advantage of the superior speed and bandwidth of the library's outside internet connection.

Actions:

1. The Library's Information Technology Department will evaluate the network equipment and cabling within each building to determine if it supports the needs of customers and staff, as well as new technology that the Library wishes to incorporate.
2. The Library will evaluate peripheral equipment that may not adequately serve the needs of the Library (i.e. dated security cameras, obsolete computers, etc.)

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library's network infrastructure will be up-to-date with minimal issues.

GOAL 2: Implement and use data-driven technology that staff can use to improve analysis and decision-making in library processes and functions.

Why: As the Library moves to become "leaner and meaner" and more efficient in its operations, hard data about customer types, patterns, usage, and other factors assist with the decision-making process to allow best allocation of resources. Although still relatively new, an increasing amount of software and technology is emerging to assist with collection, analysis, and internal sharing of data as well as to assist with internal communication and procedures.

Actions:

1. The Library will compare and acquire analysis software that allows the Library to collect deeper data about facilities usage trends, collection trends, and programming trends throughout the system. Collection analysis is important, but software solutions that also allow a more in-depth look at overall usage trends will be investigated and considered.

2. The Library will create a staff intranet that will facilitate the exchange of ideas and data among staff.
3. The Library will acquire the appropriate training technology to develop and deliver in-house webinars, web conferences, live streaming events and other training opportunities for staff and customers.
4. The Library will investigate and adopt, when appropriate, the Urban Library Council's The Edge Initiative model of assessing community technology needs.
5. The Library will utilize RFID scanning equipment to implement inventory procedures to make the process less labor-intensive.
6. The Library's Information Technology Director, Information Technology Staff, Manager of Main Library and Staff Development, and Manager of Public Service Operations will work together with front line staff to will develop a hands-on training program to teach staff how to identify and correct problems with technical equipment owned by the Library or brought in by customers.

Indicators of Success:

1. Software to enable analysis and trends is in place, and the data gathered is regularly used when making decisions.
2. A staff intranet exists for the purpose of sharing and communication and is actively used.
3. Staff feels confident in their technology competencies, and it is reflected in the interactions with and offerings for the public.

GOAL 3: Use cutting-edge technology to improve library services to the public and to provide an enhanced "library experience" for our customers.

Why: As technology evolves and customers become more reliant on it, the Library must adopt this technology to provide traditional and new services that meet the expectations of library users.

Actions:

1. The Library will implement technology that is compatible and works in harmony with the technology utilized by the community and customers to create an engaging and customer friendly experience, inside and outside of the Library.
   a. The Library will introduce new services that are compatible with mobile devices. These include text and instant messaging reference service and exploring integration of text reference service into our PLYMC mobile app, as well as exploring mobile checkout of library material via mobile devices that works with its RFID security equipment.
   b. The Library will explore the next level of Discovery technology for integrating all library digital resources and content.
   c. The Library will expand use of social media, as well as user-generated content for readers' advisory and as a means to engage remote users. In addition, it will provide similar services to in-library users. This may range from individualized suggestions to readers on Twitter orFacebook, creating a local photo-sharing space, or online book clubs.
2. The Library will create a dedicated training lab equipped with current technology and software to improve its capacity to offer educational opportunities in technology to our customers.
3. The Library will revamp the Library website for ease of use, better taxonomy, and to incorporate customer interaction into reader's advisory services.
4. The Library will create digital collections of its special local, hard-copy photographs and documents.
5. The Library's Department of Information Technology and the Public Services Team will evaluate and update our meeting room facilities with current technology to make them more appealing and useful. Technology might include equipment that would appeal to teens and tweens for use when the room has not been reserved for outside events. This would involve staff training so they could assist customers as necessary.

Indicators of Success:

1. There is a robust variety of ways for the customer to engage with the Library through technological mediums, and they are well utilized and very active.
2. A dedicated technology training lab exists for the purpose of providing technological access and training to the community, staff, and to local business and non-profit entities. This space is well utilized and in-demand with up-to-date equipment.

3. The Library's meeting rooms are equipped with technology and meeting room policies are reviewed to allow outside groups to utilize this equipment.
4. The Library's website and digital collections assist with the formation of a "virtual branch" and are well-used and current.
5. The Library is responsive to community technology needs and is viewed by the community as a strong technology partner.

GOAL 4: Explore, implement and use new and existing "recreational" and "informational" technology to garner new users and provide out-of-the-box technology opportunities for existing users of all ages.

Actions:

1. The Library's Public Services Team and Information Technology Department will equip librarians with iPads or tablets for point-of-need reference service, both in-house and via outreach opportunities.
2. The Library will design a way to circulate e-readers to customers in the same manner it circulates physical books.
3. The Library will become an early adopter of 3D monitors on computers intended as educational and entertainment terminals for connecting with children and their parents.
4. The Library will implement maker-space and/or creative-space areas that house a variety of technology equipment with which customers can experiment, learn, collaborate, share and develop their own unique designs and products.
    a. Library will explore the feasibility of creating a music lab for local aspiring musicians.
    b. The Library will explore the feasibility of providing "arcade" experiences for teens. Also, it will investigate the suitability of Listening Stations, Creation Stations and Download Stations for customers to immediately meet their educational and recreational needs.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library staff is able to provide point-of-service reference to users wherever they encounter them.
2. The Library offers a variety of ways for users to connect and to create, and the creative options are widely used and enrich the community's experience.
3. The Library is a vibrant and active multi-generational venue for learning.

Focus Area: Staff

GOAL 1: Staff members are active participants in creating a welcoming, positive, innovative institutional culture that is reflected internally with each other and externally with our customers.

WHY: Customer service is the added value the staff brings to all library transactions. It is that special attribute that connects our customers to our collections and spaces and keeps them coming back for more. We see people as a core value of our institution and upholding the highest standards of service is the most basic foundation on which we operate. Through the efforts of the Human Resources and Staff Development teams, PLYMC has a prepared and energetic staff to move the institution forward as collections and spaces change.

Actions:

1. The PLYMC staff provides excellent and exceptional customer service and is proactive in assisting customers and in finding ways to remove barriers to access.
    a. A rigorous customer-service training program led by the Manager of Main Library and Staff Development, along with the Public Services Manager and HR Director, defines the standards of service and helps staff develop the best customer service skills and behavior
    b. Employee committees and teams are established to review and critique customer service and employee working relationships.
2. The staff of PLYMC is committed to professional growth and to continually developing and refreshing the skills needed to deliver exceptional service.
    a. In-house skill-building programs are offered in small group settings
    b. Outside continuing education opportunities are offered to staff in all job classifications.
3. PLYMC staff members work to engage the community to assist with defining the Library's role and its services.
4. The Human Resources Team will survey employees regarding workplace issues to gather staff reports on how employees are responding to and treating one another.

Indicators of Success:

1. Circulation increases.
2. Program attendance increases.
3. Door counts increase.
4. Management receives positive reports from supervisors and patrons about employee interactions with each other and with the public.
5. The majority of staff treats one another respectfully. Work is accomplished in a positive fashion, with a team approach.
6. Customer appreciation increases; patrons report friendly and helpful service from Library staff members.
7. Customer complaints decrease.
8. Surveys of patrons are utilized to gather feedback on satisfaction levels, related to interactions with staff.

GOAL 2: Staff members are recognized for their positive contributions to the organization and feel recognized and appreciated as individual contributors and as teams.

WHY: PLYMC understands that engagement, energy and commitment are best maintained through positive reinforcement and support that demonstrate the high value placed on its employees. The Library expects staff to have a strong stake in carrying out its mission, and through praise and acknowledgment of staff efforts, the Library helps build a stronger and more caring workforce.

Actions:

1. Labor/Management teams will explore how to formalize staff appreciation in the organization.
2. The Staff Development and Human Resources Teams will investigate and implement newsletters and other communication tools to acknowledge customer and coworker accolades.
3. Celebrate institutional accomplishments and the staff's role in achieving them.
4. Management praises staff for positive contributions to the Library through emails, Notes and News (staff newsletter), in-person recognition, etc.
5. Supervisors give recommendations to Management on which types of recognition are best appreciated by staff.

Indicators of Success:

1. Coworkers praise and acknowledge each other within their own teams and agencies.
2. Staff participation and volunteerism at Library events increases.
3. Supervisors report to Management how staff is feeling in respect to recognition through emails, Notes and News, other programs, etc.
4. Management receives positive feedback from staff, through supervisors and all employees, as to their feelings of worth in the organization.

GOAL 3: As experts for the community, staff members understand the needs of the community and customers, is proficient in utilizing all of the Library's resources, and actively uses and promotes the usage of these resources with our customers.

WHY: To be a strong and viable institution in changing times, the Library needs to be flexible—to constantly reinvent what we do to keep connected to our customers and to garner new users. This concept is grounded in the staff's ability to understand the Library's resources and services, to communicate them to the public and to adapt new and innovative resources and strategies to fulfill its mission. The staff is an integral part of the success of the Strategic Plan to keep the Library forward thinking and forward moving to become an essential part of community life.

Actions:

1. Establish effective channels for staff and the public to communicate experiences and insights about ways to improve service.
2. Create a technology enriched environment where all staff keeps pace with advances in library technology and information delivery.
3. Train all staff in library resources and services in order to be better ambassadors for both users and non-users of the Library.

4. Integrate targeted marketing into each customer transaction to personalize and customize the patron experience.
5. Build institutional capacity to innovate; actively experiment to serve customers better.
6. Staff actively engages with the community and each other to implement the strategic plan.

Indicators of Success:

1. Technology proficiency of staff rises.
2. Library card registrations increase.
3. Library programming partnerships increase.
4. Circulation increases.
5. Staff suggests and participates in pilot projects.
6. Community participation increases at focus meetings.

Goal 4: The Library actively seeks to recruit and hire a diverse workforce with good customer service skills and a love for reading, on which to build the exceptional staff necessary to carry out the Library's mission.

WHY: The Library recognizes the need for bringing into the organization people who are suited to the customer service environment and the "brand" for which the institution is known. This is the platform on which an employee's success in the organization is built. The Library recognizes that recruitment also applies inwardly. PLYMC works to establish a workforce that continues to grow with the organization and one in which a person's talents and interests help place him/her in the best position in the organization.

Actions:

1. Integrate an assessment of attitude and personality into the hiring process.
2. Create an effective channel for those in the organization to communicate skills and behaviors needed in potential employees.
3. The Library will follow all criteria established in the Labor Agreements for selecting candidates for vacancies.
4. Work performance measurement and work skill analysis will provide important information on qualifications, talents and abilities.

Indicators of Success:

1. Staff members are selected for vacancies on the basis of qualifications, talents and abilities so that the best candidate will be selected for job openings in the Library.
2. Staff continues to develop and grow.
3. Staff has a passion for helping the public.

GOAL 5: PLYMC is committed to ensuring the future of the organization with a dedicated and capable workforce.

WHY: The Library is a legacy institution whose staff is a key component in innovating services and making the Library flexible and adaptable. PLYMC looks to hire the best employees, nurture them in their jobs, identify the leadership talents among them and cultivate them for succession in future leadership roles in the institution.

Actions:

1. Identify the qualities in job candidates that are well-suited to the organization's advancement.
2. Mentor employees, especially those whose background and capabilities align with leadership in the organization.
3. Ensure appropriate training is available to prepare employees to take leadership roles in the organization.

Indicators of Success:

1. Employees have opportunities to discuss advancement in the organization.
2. Employees' aspirations are conveyed to the organization.
3. Employees well-suited to promotions are identified and selected as openings to advance arise.

4. Outside applicants are identified to fill vacancies for which there are no qualified internal candidates.

Focus Area: Fiscal Stewardship

GOAL 1: Continue history of saving for capital expenditures through reserves.

Why: It is important to recognize that along with having the right mix of library materials and resources and well-trained staff to serve the public , it is also necessary to have the financial resources to not only maintain facilities and equipment but to provide for improved and new facility and technology needs going into the future. Without these reserves, the Library might find itself in a position where the infrastructure would fall into disrepair or it might face having to issue debt to address these needs. These would prove more costly over time.

Actions:

1. Building and Repair Fund budget will be revised upon completion of updated facilities/strategic plans with periodic reviews to indentify funds that will be needed.
2. Technology Development Fund budget will be revised upon completed update of the strategic plan with periodic reviews to indentify funds that will be needed.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library continues its tradition of being debt-free while moving forward on building plans and maintenance and technology plans and purchases.

GOAL 2: Stability in funding through a successful levy initiative.

Why: The Public Library Fund (PLF) which now accounts for only 39% of the 2014 estimated revenues has continued to erode over the last several years. The expectation is that this trend will continue. The Library's other major source of revenue is from two local real estate tax levies that make up 59% of estimated 2014 revenues. Both of these levies are set to expire with tax year 2014 (collection year 2015). Since the local funding has become the Library's main source of revenue, passage of the levy is the key to providing financial stability. As a taxpayer-supported organization, the Library recognizes its obligation to make the best use of taxpayer dollars by operating in the most innovative, efficient and sustainable ways possible as it carries out its mission.

Actions:

1. The Library's Fiscal Officer and Director will update financial forecasts to determine the amount of millage needed to provide adequate financial support during the life of the levy.
2. A timeline will be established detailing the steps and deadlines needed in order for the levy to appear on the November 2014 ballot.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library will successfully pass a Levy.

GOAL 3: Make continual improvements in the stewardship of financial resources.

Why: Rigorous and effective stewardship of the Library's financial resources, with appropriate "checks and balances," is critical to the Library's ability to achieve its core mission. Because of the complexity of the Library's budget and finance functions, it is imperative that such processes be open, transparent, and effective in protecting the Library's fiscal health and in supporting its central and unit-level institutional priorities. Clear areas of responsibility and lines of authority, along with means to ensure accountability, are needed. Resource flows must be clear and predictable, but there must also be sufficient institutional flexibility to allow the strategic pursuit of important opportunities when they arise. The following are actions that should be undertaken by the appropriate administrators or officers of the Library.

Actions:

1. The Library's Fiscal Officer and Director will review existing budget models that determine resource flows in order to revise, simplify, and align these budget processes and ensure support of priorities.
2. The Library will clarify institutional roles and responsibilities related to budget and finance to facilitate effective collaboration and communication between responsible parties and appropriate monitoring of

performance and accountability.

3. The Fiscal Officer and Director, working with the Board of Trustees, will ensure that there are effective internal controls, sufficient transparency, and appropriate "checks and balances" to prevent excessive financial commitments and overspending.

4. Prepare and present operating and capital budgets reflecting complete program and operating costs and sources of funding, and regularly review these to ensure that planned uses of resources do not exceed funds available.

5. Ensure clear and explicit reporting documents for senior leadership and trustees, including reports on in-year operating budget performance, capital budget sources and uses, and a multi-year financial model.

6. Seek to balance the need for purchasing efficiencies through centralization with an allowance for flexibility and individual solutions necessitated by the diverse array of products and services utilized by the Library.

Indicators of Success:

1. The actions detailed above are undertaken by the appropriate parties.

2. The Library continues good financial practices and documentation, always reviewing the budget and spending practices as part of routine operations, and being transparent in its financial reporting.

GOAL 4: Asset inventory tagging and appraisal of Library equipment will be completed.

Why: As a steward of public funds the Library recognizes the importance of the ability to have a system to safeguard and track Library assets. This process will also provide for a replacement cost/appraisal valuation.

Actions:

1. The Library will contract with a vendor to visit all the Library's locations to conduct an inventory of equipment and furniture that will include tagging with machine readable tags. This inventory will also include an up-to-date appraisal of the equipment. Further it is intended that this will provide for a more efficient mechanism for tracking these assets going forward.

Indicators of Success:

1. The above will have taken place, or been investigated and an alternative created.

GOAL 5: The Library's Foundation will be strengthened by donations to already established endowments, and by the creation of new endowments.

Why: Many of the Library's programs and activities, particularly those for children and teens, are bolstered by funds from the Library's Foundation, particularly dedicated endowments. The growth and creation of these endowments is critical to the long-term financial health of the Library, and the Library's ability to offer robust programming for all ages. In addition, many accounts are geared specifically towards a specific library location, and are utilized to offset the expense of long-term maintenance and building and site improvements.

Actions:

1. The Library and Library's Development Director will continue to seek new donations for the purpose of supporting Library activities and programs.

2. The Library will create and launch an annual campaign that educates potential donors about the many endowments and giving opportunities available, as well as what the activities and outcomes of these funds were annually.

3. The Library's Board will take an active role in the Library's fundraising efforts, showing support for the organization and its efforts.

4. The Library's Development Director will continue to grow the Literary Society and will bring well known and acclaimed authors to the community.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library's Foundation continues to be strong and experiences some growth, allowing the Library to continue to offset its public funds with private funds.

GOAL 6: The Library will continue the practice of capital campaigns when building new buildings or renovating existing structures.

Why: The Library must exhibit good stewardship of its Building and Repair Fund, and must ensure that it can adequately sustain each of its buildings throughout Mahoning County.   As new buildings are built or existing structures are renovated, the Library has a history of expecting capital dollars to be invested by the local community. This must continue in to the future to make capital projects possible and to keep the Library operating debt-free.

1. In each community where a Library is built or renovated, the Library will set a capital campaign goal to offset the cost and use of public funds. This will also allow the community to receive specific features that are important to them for their building.
2. The community will be active and engaged with the Library's efforts, and will build good rapport with the Library, as well as a sense of community ownership, as a result.

Indicators of Success:

1. The Library will reach capital campaign goals and will keep a healthy building and repair fund, and in this way is able to address building needs.
2. Communities exhibit ownership and pride for their libraries.

Conclusion

The world of the public library is a rapidly changing industry that finds itself in a position, not of survival, as was so long predicted, but of innovation. More relevant than ever to the communities they serve, public libraries have the opportunity to adapt and strengthen their long respected roles, providing service and services in ways that were not previously thought of or expected. When looking in to the next six years, PLYMC's strategic plan attempts to create broad themed goals , actions to take to achieve those goals, and indicators of success that will propel the organization in to a solid future. These goals , actions, and indicators of success were all formed through careful thought and analysis of the community information gathered as well as the expert data.

PLYMC would like to acknowledge and thank the community members who took the time to come to conversations and those that participated in planning meetings. The community is the heart of our organization.

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The Public **Library** *of Youngstown & Mahoning County*
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