Watertown Public Library
Strategic Visioning Sessions
March 12 & May 14, 2011

Participants

Board of Directors:
Pat Ziwisky, President
Erin O’Neill

Staff:
Peg Checkai, Executive Director
Barb Antonopolous
John Burns
Jeanne Higgins
Sharry Lueck
Sarah MacNeill

Volunteers:
Jan Runge
Mark Stevens
Andrea Turke

Facilitated by:
Kathleen Eisenmann, Associate Professor
University of Wisconsin-Extension, Jefferson County Office
2011
Foreword

The Watertown Public Library has served the information, literacy, and entertainment needs of the Watertown community for over 100 years. Built in 1907, the original Carnegie building not only stands as a symbol of knowledge and enlightenment but graces our historical downtown neighborhood with its distinctive architecture. The library building however, is just one of many factors that influence effective and successful library services. Like many other libraries, the Watertown Public Library is at a crossroads as we strive to determine which library services are essential to the Watertown community.

The Watertown Public Library Board of Trustees launched a strategic planning process to consider the current and future needs of our community. Focus groups provided valuable suggestions and insights that will be used to make informed decisions for maintaining traditional library services and delivering 21st century services that support changing lifestyles. As we move forward with our plan of action, we begin with a strong foundation of library services. Library staff and board members are committed to providing superior customer service and a library focused on the needs of the community.

On behalf of the Library Board of Trustees I want to thank the community members and library staff who shared their time and energy to develop this strategic plan. We are grateful for the candid opinions and conversations that provided us with the feedback necessary to create a 21st century library, prepared to enrich, enlighten, and entertain the Watertown community.

Peg Checkai
Director
Watertown Public Library

“University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.”
Introduction

The strategic visioning process began with a plan for the plan meeting on January 13, 2011 between Kathleen Eisenmann, UW-Extension, Jefferson County; members of the Watertown Library board of directors, and Peg Checkai, executive director. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold:

- provide a planning process overview, plan for the plan and create a draft timeline
- identify and develop the planning team

An executive committee of Ms. Eisenmann, Pat Ziwisky (board president), Peg Checkai, John Burns (Reference Librarian), and Barb Antonopolous was established to guide the planning process. Two board members, key staff and volunteers were selected to form the planning team.

The planning process took place over two sessions. The bulk of the work was done at a six hour session on March 12, 2011. A series of focus groups with key stakeholders was conducted to gather feedback on the initial vision and gauge the performance of the Library. A follow-up planning session was held on May 14, 2011 to discuss stakeholder feedback from the series of focus groups, review and adopt the suggested new vision, and identify and prioritize strategic issues. Ms. Eisenmann facilitated the planning process using a research-based comprehensive framework.

This proceedings report was approved by the board of directors of the organization at a subsequent board meeting. The proceedings of the plan process are included in this report along with the plan itself.
Individual/Organizational Interests

The participants began the process by identifying their self-interests in engaging in planning. Disclosure of self-interests helps the group establish respect, understanding and trust among its members. In addition, disclosure of self-interests builds a foundation for planning because it’s important that the plan developed reflect the interests of those involved.

Why Participate in this Process?

Broad-based historical knowledge of Library’s hopes for the future. (6)

Technology advocate (3)

Stable leadership in Library expansion (3)

Need broad picture and how we move out in community for Library’s value (2)

Active participant (2)

Need broad picture

Am a “super” patron

Usage has increased

Funds

Concern that we keep up with other libraries

Audio/visual expertise and hopes for growth

Library and Director believe in Library and the community wants it done
Mandates

Mandates are formal and informal rules that govern the organization. Formal rules may include but are not limited to bylaws, written policies/procedures, standards, and contracts or other agreements. Informal rules include organizational or community norms and expectations about how the organization will conduct its business and have relationships with its key stakeholders.

Understanding and clarifying organizational mandates is helpful in a strategic thinking process because these mandates are key components of the organization’s purpose or mission. Clarity about what is mandated will increase the likelihood that the mandates will be met. Research on goal setting indicates that one of the most important determinants of goal achievement is the clarity of the goals themselves. (Bryson, 2004, citing Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham 1981; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Boal and Bryson 1987b). Understanding the organizational mandates and what is required also assists the organization in creating a mission that is not limited to just those mandates. The process helps the organization look beyond what is required to what its potential purposes could be - based on what is not forbidden (Bryson, 2004).

State Statutes

Maintenance of Effort – unfunded mandate

Local municipal contracts

Union contracts

Laws

Restrictions on digital licenses

Educational requirements for Director

System agreements

Consortium agreements

Bylaws

Policies

Continued on next page
# Mandates (cont’d)

## Informal Mandates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational credentials for Department Heads</th>
<th>Penalty-free service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education for Staff</td>
<td>High level of customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and accessible as much as possible</td>
<td>Get everything we need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Especially true of Saturday; Friday nights after school</td>
<td>Do more with less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to meet diverse needs</td>
<td>Expectation to unlimited access to digital media and instantaneous access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current materials</td>
<td>WiFi access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrons are respectful and responsible</td>
<td>No waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment in working order</td>
<td>Expectation of remote access to library website update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledgeable</td>
<td>Expectation of technical support for no cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An expectation that we have accurate answers to every question or are able to get it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Live within budget</td>
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The planning committee reflected on both the formal and informal mandates. The group concluded there were significantly more informal expectations of the Library than formal. This is typically the case with most nonprofit or public institutions.
Stakeholder Analysis

Participants identified those individuals or groups that either affect or are affected by Library’s initiatives. Identification of key stakeholders is an important first step of the process because it is these key individuals and organizations that will most influence the Library as it works toward its vision of the future. Stakeholders are first grouped into two major categories—those internal to the organization and those who are external to the organization.

Internal Stakeholders

Employers
Board members
Friends
Patrons
Taxpayers

Finance Committee
System
Youth Activity Council (YAC) – teen interest
Book clubs
Outside organizations

External Stakeholders

Donors
Users
Nonusers
Quirk Foundation
Jefferson and Dodge Counties
State
Federal Government
Patrons
Tax payers
Churches
IRS
Vendors
Professional Library Association

City of Watertown
Schools
Teachers
Watertown residents
Adjacent county residents
Department of Public Instruction
Local businesses
Outside organizations
Other City Departments
Publishers
Local newspaper
Watertown Community Foundation

Continued on next page
Stakeholder Analysis*

Further analysis of these key stakeholders was done to determine their influence on the organization. The planning group identified a number of stakeholder groups who could be comprised of members holding various levels of interest in the Library’s mission or power to influence the Library in achievement of its mission. Those groups are repeated in the grid below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donors</td>
<td>Patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrons</td>
<td>City of Watertown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watertown Residents</td>
<td>Board Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publishers</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Library Associations</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Libraries</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vendors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parochial Schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book Clubs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Organizations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YAC</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTEREST</th>
<th>Crowd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quirk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watertown Community Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Revenue Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Research on organizational development shows the most effective organizations allocate their time between their stakeholders, spending most of their time with the players (those who have most interest and power), less time with the context setters and subjects (those that either have high interest or high degrees of power) and a minimal amount of time with the crowd (those that have low interest or power). This allocation of time increases organizational effectiveness because the majority of time is spent with stakeholders who must be taken into consideration in order to address the organization’s purpose or strategic issues. (Bryson, 2004). Satisfying these key stakeholders will be important to the formulation of strategic issues later in the process.
Mission/Purpose Statement

Visionary or strategic planning is ultimately about purpose, meaning, value and virtue. It is philosophical at its base. (Bryson, 2004) Achieving clarity and common understanding about the organization’s purpose, meaning, value and virtue is a key precursor to developing a meaningful vision/mission statement and identifying strategic issues. This clarity and common understanding provide an influence into organizational identity, a connection to the outside world, define an organization’s relationship to its key stakeholders, provide a basis for identification of strategic issues that are in line with core values and philosophy, and articulate a social justification for the organization as a public institution.

The planning group began the process by considering the library’s purpose and how it might have evolved over time. Before taking on that task, it was necessary for the planning group to learn how purposes are established.

Purpose Hierarchies

A purpose hierarchy is a tool used to develop and examine various possible organizational purposes. It begins with the smaller scope purpose on the bottom rung and expands the solution space to higher level, larger purposes by posing the question “What is the purpose of this purpose?”. It is important to note that every purpose on the hierarchy is a legitimate purpose. The only difference between purposes is their scope. See the diagram below.

![Purpose Hierarchy Diagram](Continued on next page)
Purpose and Purpose Hierarchies

Below is an example taken from a for-profit corporation whose business was to manufacture plastic bags. The packaging department had a machinery breakdown and was trying to create a solution to the problem of the stamping machine failure. Here is the purpose hierarchy this department used to analyze the problem.

The purpose chosen by the department is a higher level one than the one which originally identified the problem located at the bottom of the hierarchy. This higher level purpose assisted the department in expanding the possible solutions to the problem by redefining what the department was trying to accomplish. Of special note is the department’s willingness to define its solutions within the context of what it could accomplish as a department as opposed to the higher level purposes which might more appropriately define the entire organization’s mission.

**This denotes the purpose chosen by the department.**

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Mission Statement

The planning team was asked to review its current mission statements, and in the course of reviewing its mission, respond to a series of six questions in order to assist them in developing a common understanding and clarity as to the purpose, meaning, value and virtue of the organization as a public institution. The board had charged the planning team with crafting a vision for the Library’s future. The first step to creating that vision is to understand the organization’s present purpose. In the course of that discussion, the planning team considered what the purpose said about the organization and what was unique about the library. Those characteristics are below:

For What Purpose Does the Organization Exist?

► All encompassing needs and desires of public; skill sets vary
► Better communicate and disseminate knowledge
► Remain relevant
► Supply information without restrictions

What is Unique about the Watertown Library?

► Teaching role- Education and disseminating information
► Biggest library in County & downtown location
► Carnegie heritage - “People’s university” endowed by the Carnegie Foundation
► Demographics of patrons – broad socio-economic range and age
► Task oriented
► Economic development role – provide access [to jobs and careers]
► Free and available
► Being open and accessible
► We are human
► Third home for a lot of people
► Without discrimination - Everyone can use the library; “universally accessible”

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Mission Statement

What Social Needs/Community Interests does the Library exist to serve?

Socialization opportunities (3)

Educating and trainings opportunities – efficiently

Both need to offer technology information and education “in the moment” and over time

Building capacity for self-education

Information resource

“Face in the community”

Participatory – reciprocal relationship
Library & Community

Accessible for meetings

New technological users’ interests

Destination in community

Supplement to education
Curriculum for home schoolers in particular

Supplement to small business – info-database

Provide volunteer opportunities for more socialization
Easy and successful for them

Entertainment source
Both print and non-print; digital music and video

Internet & Library compliment each other

How should the Library recognize & respond to those needs?

◊ Making the experience comfortable and familiar (3)
◊ Get a coffee shop
◊ Computer lab
◊ Classes - Technology and others
◊ Space to enjoy the library - different types and uses of space
◊ Accessibility - Parking

◊ Keeping up with new trends; being flexible
  • green space
  • coffee shop
  • study rooms

◊ Modern decor
Mission Statement

What are the Library’s core values & philosophy?

Value the written word & the way it can enrich people’s lives
Accessible to all without direct cost
Vital to community; social connection is part of it
Life-long learning
Receptacle for all human knowledge

How should the Library respond to its key stakeholders?

◊ Demonstrate needs; be responsive
◊ Educating City Council Patrons Taxpayers
◊ Build and evolve a relationship with them
◊ Teamwork – work as a team
◊ Library is involved in the community Communicate more often and in different ways
◊ Genuine appreciation
◊ Be a good advocate for the Library
◊ Proactive and passionate leadership
◊ Awareness of long-term funding opportunities
◊ Engage with all schools
◊ Willingness to hand hold and meet them with respect where they are at

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Eisenmann assisted the planning team in developing the new vision and mission by outlining the basic challenges to achieving a vision for the future; detailing the components of a mission statement; and providing the team with an understanding of the eight sequential and critical steps to effective change as determined by organizational development research (Kotter, 1996).

**Challenges to Achieving an Organizational Vision**

- Describing the vision in clear, understandable way
- How do you get from where you are now to where you want to be?

**Mission Components**

- Purpose
- Core function
- Reason for being; “the work”
- Unique service; skill; ability
- Intentions toward clientele

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Eight Steps to Major Change

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create guiding coalition
3. Develop vision and strategy
4. Widely communicate the change vision
5. Empower broad-based action
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor new approaches into the organization’s culture

Mission Statement

A subcommittee of the planning team met and reviewed the above work. The subcommittee generated several possible mission statements from the work, organized the key concepts, and selected from among those concepts the framework for the mission statement below. This statement should be reviewed by the entire board prior to its adoption.

The Public Library is a community supported asset which seeks to enrich, enlighten, and entertain the diverse Watertown area community. We accomplish this by providing access to a variety of resources that contribute to life-long learning. We value the written word as it continues to evolve and give new meaning to our Carnegie heritage whereby our public library can serve as the university of the people.
Vision Sketch of the Future

The planning team considered the purpose hierarchy and engaged in a lengthy discussion of mission and vision for the future. The consensus of the planning team was to adopt the following sketch for the vision of the Library’s future:

**Mission:**
- Clearly delineated, understood and used
- Incorporate traditional and new uses
- Meet informational, educational and social needs of community (empower)

**People:**
- Staff are the best; highly-trained; engaged; energized; cross-trained
- Satisfied and supportive stakeholders
- Satisfied patrons
- Invested library users as Board members

**Services:**
- Increased hours
- Drive-thru
- Updated services
- Self-operating
- Training lab
- More computer access
- Strong youth services
- Coffee shop
- Things that haven’t been invented yet

**Structure:**
- Coffee shop
- Increased meeting/study space
- Additional, comfortable seating
- Plenty of parking
- Plenty of green space
- Larger area for specialized programs and community use
- More staff work space and ergonomically up-to-date

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Vision Sketch of the Future

Resources:
- Limited resources
- Stronger fund development
- Cutting edge resources
- Increased community resources
  - Volunteering

Culture:
- Caring about what they do
- Welcoming
- Educated
- Safe
- Involved in community
- Satisfied
- Creative
- Innovative
- Harmonious support
- Greater engagement with Board and City

External Legitimacy and Support:
- Funding sources support and value library vision/mission
  - Vocally
  - Through monetary donations
- Received gifts and donations
- Thank you
- Seeing the library is appreciated and used
- ROI
Hopes and Concerns Analysis

Assessing the internal and external environments in which the organization operates is the next crucial step in the planning process. This and the other initial steps in the process are really a comprehensive look at the organization as a whole in relationship to the environment in which it operates. Public institutions must understand their internal and external environments in order to respond effectively to changes in those environments and to develop strategies to effectively link those environments in the process of meeting the organization’s purpose and achieving its vision. (Bryson 2004) Internal and external environmental scans are performed as follows.

This step of the analysis looks toward the future and talks about what the planning team saw as their hopes and concerns for the Library. This analysis is important because it may lead to the identification of future opportunities and challenges for the organization and lay the ground work for identification of strategic issues. The planning team developed the following set of hopes and concerns for the Library’s future.

HOPES

- Expansion
- 21st Century
- Digital library with print as an appendage
- Continue to serve traditional audiences while adding outreach to a digital native clientele
- Relevant education
  - Staff
  - Patrons
- Strong fundraising in place
- Strong endowments
- Add services that reflect global world we live in
- Greater appreciation of Library Service
- Have endorsement of key stakeholders on mission/values
- Defined vision
- Proactive leadership
- Building open seven days a week
- Build volunteer program
- Expanded outreach program
- Effectively use technology to free up staff
- Implement key performance indicators/ benchmark of “Where are we in comparison…” - Context to numbers

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Hopes and Concerns Analysis

CONCERNS

How to effectively market programs
How to be more effective at partnerships
Misperceiving role of staff
Patrons’ reluctance to ask for help
Ongoing, relevant staff training is challenging
Budget limitations
Cost of technology and constant change
Personnel, hours and materials cut
Need a strong fundraising campaign
Need to learn to compete in the marketplace
Need a strong Board
Broad-based assumption is that libraries are dinosaurs
People don’t realize we are more than just books
Not being able to meet technological needs
Strategic Issues

Strategic issues are fundamental policy questions or critical challenges that affect an organization. Each participant identified their top issues based on their interpretation of alignment with key stakeholders, adherence to formal/informal mandates, vision of the future, and environmental analysis. The planning team then discussed them in small groups and a large group discussion. The planning team saw one overarching challenge with several subcomponent issues. The overarching challenge is:

*How do we maintain viability as relevant community needs and interests change?*

The planning team felt the Library needed to address the following subcomponent issues of this larger challenge in order to maintain viability and achieve the vision of the future:

- How to raise funding to support the Library’s vision of changes? (5)
- How can we encourage greater utilization of Library resources by more of the community?
- How do we incorporate community resources with Library operations?
- How do we remain viable to the community based on funding concerns and changing service models?
- How do we sell, promote, educate and market the vision to people?
Conclusion

The board will take this plan and further develop strategies, proposals and action steps to address each of the issues using a research-based framework. The scope of the issues identified has necessitated continuing involvement and assistance from UW-Extension’s family living program through the strategy development phase. The board has committed to the implementation of this plan and will be reviewing its progress on a regular basis over the course of the next three years.

Adaptation of Research

The methods and processes used to develop this strategic plan were based on the following research:


*End Note

The planning team used its initial stakeholder analysis to design a series of focus groups comprised of the “players”, “context setters” and “subjects” in order to get feedback from individuals or organizations representing them. A separate report of the focus group findings was prepared for the planning team and shared with the Library board. The findings contained in that report were reviewed by the planning team and used to refine the vision of the Library’s future and inform the identification of strategic issues. The full focus group report is attached and incorporated by reference as an Appendix to this plan.