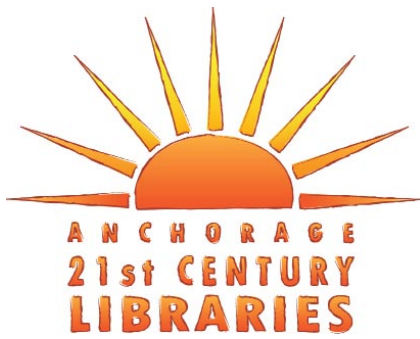


ANCHORAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY PLAN

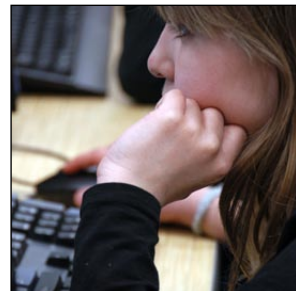
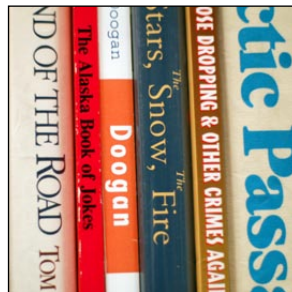


January 2010

table of contents

ANCHORAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY PLAN

Executive Summary.....	1
Prologue.....	4
Chapter 1– Introduction	9
Chapter 2 – The Anchorage Community and the Anchorage Public Library	15
Chapter 3 – Library Vision for the Future.....	30
Chapter 4 – Analysis.....	34
Chapter 5 – Recommendations.....	52
Chapter 4 – Implementation Strategies.....	62
APPENDICES	83



ANCHORAGE
21st CENTURY
LIBRARIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Context for Planning

The Anchorage Public Library (APL) is in a struggle for survival. Over the course of a history that is relatively short in comparison to most public libraries in the United States, APL has experienced a few high points such as the opening of the Z.J. Loussac Library in Midtown in 1986. However, the fact that the Library was forced to close five branch locations less than two years after the grand opening of the Loussac Library is indicative of the Library's uneven history.

In 2008, APL operated with a total staff complement of 86.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and was able to expend only \$ 3.58 per capita on new library materials. APL has a main library (Loussac) and four branch locations. A comparison between APL and other U.S. libraries serving populations of between 250,000 and 350,000 reveals that average staffing for peer libraries in 2008 was 143 FTEs and that average expenditures for new materials was \$ 4.58 per capita. On average, peer libraries operated approximately nine facilities (8.71) and fifty-four percent of the peers also provided one or more bookmobiles.

During the last fiscal year, APL operated with forty percent less staff, spent twenty-two percent less on new materials and provided forty-four percent fewer facilities than its peers. The 2010 Municipal budget portends additional cuts. A few other statistics help frame the current situation. In 1986, when the Municipal population was 246,000, the Anchorage Public Library operated ten libraries or one library for every 24,600 people. In 2009, the ratio between people and facilities is one library for every 56,000 people. A decade ago, the Library had 114 FTE employees. Ten years later, staffing has dropped by 25% while the population has increased by 25,000.

While the Library has struggled to survive, people have continued to use the Loussac Library and APL's branches in record numbers. In 2008, 871,036 people passed through the doors of Anchorage's libraries. This compares to a total attendance of approximately 500,000 at the Sullivan arena. Visitors to the libraries checked out almost 1.6 million (1, 599,025) items. Nearly sixty percent of all Anchorage residents have an active library card. Every day, the library makes a difference in the lives of children who are introduced to books and reading, in the lives of job-seekers who use the Library's computers as their lifeline to employment and in the lives of hundreds of individuals who check out materials related to their education, employment or enjoyment.

The Goal of the Plan

The Library is a tremendous asset to the Anchorage community. A study conducted by the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research in 2007 concluded that residents of the Municipality receive between \$ 1.42 and \$ 2.46 of value

for every tax dollar invested in the Library. The report also cites qualitative benefits to the community such as:

- Strengthening communities
- Fostering economic growth
- Serving as a center for humanities
- Cultivating the workforce of the future
- Improving children's literacy

The goal of this plan is to develop a path that will allow the Anchorage Public Library to do more than just **survive**. It is an effort to chart a path that will nurture this community asset and that will allow it to **thrive** long into the future. Over the past eight months, the planning process has engaged literally thousands of residents in a conversation about what they want the Anchorage Public Library to be. This is not a consultants' plan for library service. It is a plan for library service that reflects the hopes and dreams of the people of Anchorage.

The Plan

The plan recognizes that the Library will not be able to transform itself from a struggling institution into a world-class 21st century library overnight. It also recognizes that the Library will not be able to accomplish this feat on its own. The plan presumes that progress will require strong ties with a wide range of partners. Included is a close partnership with the Municipality to stabilize funding and to address rapidly increasing overhead costs that are out of the Library's control. It envisions partnerships with the Anchorage School District and other governmental entities to enable the library to reach Anchorage's increasingly diverse population. The plan calls for the development of new partnerships with the private sector to help the Library achieve a new level of efficiency and to aid in the development of electronic products and services that will engage a new generation of library users.

The plan calls for partnerships with Anchorage's extensive array of non-profit organizations, with other libraries, with foundations and philanthropists and, most of all, a close partnership with the people of Anchorage to guide the Library as it **strives** for excellence. The plan includes a new vision for the future of the Library that doesn't settle for mediocrity and that sees the Library as an institution that changes lives.

Anchorage Public Library Vision:

The Anchorage Public Library is an essential partner in building and sustaining a literate citizenry, transforming lives through information and knowledge and enhancing Anchorage's quality of life.

The Library's mission statement underscores the Library's role as an organization that strengthens the community and provides opportunities for discovery.

Anchorage Public Library Mission:

Anchorage Public Library provides resources to enrich the lives and empower the future of our diverse community, while preserving the past for generations to come.

The plan includes many very specific recommendations regarding what the Library must do if it hopes to make the journey from **SURVIVING** to **THRIVING**. The detailed recommendations are offered in Chapter 5. However, most of the recommendations can be distilled into five general categories. They are:

- Let people know what the library offers
- Enhance customer service
- Reduce operating costs and secure new sources of funding
- Encourage a new generation of library users while engaging traditional users
- Create a more welcoming, community centered library

The detailed recommendations describe specific ways to accomplish these tasks and point the way to a new service model that is designed to increase the Library's value to individuals as well as to the community as a whole.

A Word About Funding

The plan indicates that the commitment of the people of Anchorage to having a world-class public library is even more important to the future of the Anchorage Public Library than is money. However, the plan also recognizes that funding is "the elephant in the room." The final chapter of the plan confronts the funding issue and presents multiple strategies that, together, will enable APL to complete the journey from **SURVIVE** to **THRIVE**.

The funding strategies encompass a wide range of actions. Some address the reduction of overhead costs and increasing the efficiency of internal operations by deploying advanced technologies. Other seek new approaches to diversifying the Library's funding streams to insulate the Library from the boom and bust cycles that have characterized the Library's history. A final set of strategies is aimed at attracting private and philanthropic support for Library activities on an ongoing basis.

A **THRIVING** Anchorage Public Library offers the community the promise of a brighter and better future. Imagine the possibilities!

PROLOGUE

Focus groups, interviews and surveys revealed that many residents of Anchorage hold a very traditional view the role of public libraries in the community. The following narrative encourages readers to imagine what library service in Anchorage *could be!*

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE ANCHORAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY - 2011

It's 7:55 on a crisp, sunny morning in October, 2011 in Anchorage, Alaska. Every few minutes another car pulls up to the Loussac Library's drive-through book-drop and deposits books, audio-books and movies. Meanwhile, a group of people are gathering in the Library's new ground-level lobby awaiting the 8:00 AM opening time. Several are sitting at tables sipping coffee in the café area that has been open since 7:30 AM.

A woman in a business suit glances at her watch as two older gentlemen share their observations on the weather, Washington, and the world. A man in his early thirties carrying a bundle of overstuffed file folders walks around a kiosk filled with notices of community events. He looks at the notices and glances at a video display on top of the kiosk that announces library programs scheduled for the next week. His fingers fly as he adds the date and time of an upcoming Wildlife Wednesday program to the calendar on his iPhone. He then uses the "Library app" to request notification by email about future events in the series.

A mother and her eight-year old daughter sit on a bench poring over a text book as they wait. A woman in a hotel housekeeper's uniform joins the group at about the time a middle-aged man drives up in a pick-up truck. The man parks near the library's entrance just as a staff member approaches the interior door with keys in hand. Another day is about to begin at the public library.

As the door opens, the gathered group streams into the building, each with a specific purpose in mind. The older gentlemen head for the comfortable chairs in the periodicals section where the staff has just put out the day's morning newspapers. The seniors will soon be joined by three or four other "regulars" who will sip coffee from the café, wade through the newspapers and discuss the issues of the day. Occasionally they glance up at six flat screen TVs mounted on a nearby wall that are set to closed captioning and are tuned to CNN Headline News, the Weather Channel, CNBC, ESPN, MSNBC and Fox News.

The woman in the business suit heads to a study table, opens her briefcase, takes out her laptop computer and spreads some papers next to it. It takes her only a moment to

log on to the library's wireless network so she can check her email as well as updated information from her home office in Seattle. The library serves as her office away from home whenever she's servicing clients in Alaska. The man with the file folders heads to an area under a sign that reads "Foundation Collection." He opens his files and sits down at a computer terminal to continue researching potential sources for the grant application that he's preparing for a local non-profit organization. The Foundation Collection program is a joint effort of the Library with the UAA/APU Consortium Library.

The hotel housekeeper and the man in the pick-up truck both head to the computer reservation terminals and are quickly assigned a computer to use. Before she leaves the library, the woman will update her resume, scour several job sites, and submit her qualifications to three prospective employers. She's pleased that she's able to include the fact that she recently completed an online course in hospitality management using library computers as her classroom.

The pick-up truck man also checks his email. He does so every morning at opening time. He's delighted when he finds a response to a message he sent yesterday. The email was to his daughter, a Second Lieutenant in the Army, who has been stationed in Iraq for the last seven months. Reassured that his daughter is safe and sound for another day, he sends off his daily message and then moves on to several websites. He checks the Seattle Times and Washington Post headlines and proceeds to the Anchorage Daily News site to check the final score in last night's Seawolves' hockey game.

By 10:15 AM, a similar scene has unfolded at the Samson-Diamond Branch. Every one of the 40 public computer workstations is in use. Several additional people are sitting in comfortable chairs using library-owned laptops to access the wireless network. Downtown at Kaladi's, a businessman is checking out the selection of new books and movies in a Library-owned book vending machine. He inserts his library card and selects a movie that he'll watch with his wife that evening.

By now back at the Loussac Library, the mom and her home-schooled child have picked out several books on Alaska native cultures. They had checked the library's catalog online from home and were able to go directly to specific materials including a book based on Tlingit folklore entitled "A Totem Tale." The Youth Services Librarian asks if they're familiar with the "Cultural Outreach" programs sponsored by the Alaska Native Heritage Center and they quickly connect to the Heritage Center's website to explore this exciting possibility. The mother and daughter will soon be joined by two other home-schoolers and their parents for a weekly study session held in one of the library's group study rooms.

Meanwhile, the first of several class visits for the day is arriving. A group of 24 sixth-graders gather in one of the conference rooms for a brief orientation session. A school librarian who accompanied the class and a public library reference librarian are about to present a joint program that covers how to use both online and print reference resources. After the presentation, half of the class will go to the library's Information Commons area to gain some hands-on experience using the quality electronic resources available through the Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) program. The balance of the class gets a similar opportunity to learn more about some of the library's print reference tools. After an hour, the groups will switch places. By the end of the visit, the students will understand that research involves much more than doing a Google™ or Yahoo™ keyword search.

At the same time, a pre-school teacher in Spenard is opening a "Ready to Read" tub from the library's Ready to Read Resource Center. The materials are a key part of efforts designed to prepare children to be "ready to learn" when they enter school. The teacher is excited at the possibility of using some of the new emergent literacy techniques she learned in a training session sponsored by the Library and the Child Care Connection organization that was held at Loussac the previous week.

Back at the library, a group of emergency medical technicians is gathering in the conference room that was recently vacated by the sixth graders. They're about to participate in a video teleconference program on emergency preparedness. The session is part of a series of distance education classes offered by the Emergency Medical Services Unit of the State of Alaska's Injury Prevention & Emergency Medical Services (IPEMS).

At the Chugiak-Eagle River Branch Library, a woman is researching used car ratings and prices. A pre-school story hour has just started in the program area and a "regular" is at the circulation desk discussing her favorite authors as she checks out a biography.

Back in Midtown, new people are occupying the tables in the library café. A woman sitting at a table by herself is lost in a new treasure she found in the new book section as she sips her cappuccino. At another table, a man flips through the pages of a book that he just bought at the Friends of the Library bookshop that adjoins the café area. A lawyer and her client sit at a third table and sip coffee as they review contract language before heading to a real estate closing.

Throughout the day, a constant stream of people combine their visit to the library to select books, audio-books and movies with a viewing of the new exhibit of a local artist's work in the gallery area. Many people have discovered the non-print collections since

they were moved to a more prominent location in the atrium. Meanwhile, reference librarians are busy answering questions that arrive in person, by telephone, by text message.

About a dozen people are in the Alaska Collection area. One is methodically working his way through microfilm reels for a long discontinued newspaper. He's doing research for a local history column he writes for a genealogy newsletter. At another table, a published author is pouring over several volumes that are open on a large table in front of her as she sorts out the chronology of events between 1912 when Alaska officially became a U.S. territory up to Alaska's statehood in 1959. Meanwhile, a book discussion group has settled into the Ann Stevens Room for a lively discussion of a controversial new book on energy independence.

Mid-afternoon, another school class, this time second-graders, arrives at the library. They're headed to the children's program area to listen to a story entitled "The Eye of the Needle," a story based on a Yup'ik folktale. After the story, they'll have a chance to pick out some books to take home using their new library cards they received through a cooperative program between the Library and the Anchorage School District that is designed to ensure that every school child in Anchorage has a library card.

The middle of the afternoon also brings a tour that includes the Mayor, several Assembly members, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation and the advance team of a high-tech firm that is considering relocating to the Anchorage area. The library is one of the premiere sites on the community's "cultural assets" tour that is given to industrial and commercial prospects.

After school, the teens arrive and quickly head to the new Teen Area. They rush for the most comfortable seats, rearrange them into a circle, and begin to spread out an assortment of papers, magazines, laptops, and books. Two tenth-graders head to the download station where they're adding content to their MP3 players. Three eleventh-graders begin to work on a PowerPoint™ presentation at an oversized computer workstation in the group study area. The presentation will be their report for a group project they're doing for a social studies class. Several others are in the "virtual interaction room" exploring and moving through foreign lands and other planets.

At the Muldoon Branch Library, the after school hours also signal the arrival of a host of younger schoolchildren, some of whom arrive with a parent or grandparent. Other children arrive by themselves and quickly choose their spots in the children's area. Several spread out and start working on their homework while others head directly for

the “series” books to see if they can find the next episode in the lives of their favorite characters. A retired teacher who volunteers three afternoons each week during the school year makes the rounds providing homework help. Other children are connecting to online Homework Help through the Tutor.com program.

Early in the evening, a computer user at the Girdwood Library is logged on to a session of an online Construction Management course he’s taking through the University of Alaska’s Distance Education program. Meanwhile, a Library sponsored foreign film showing is just starting in the community room adjacent to the Library. For several of the attendees this is their second visit to the Library today. A group of parents and their preschoolers had occupied the same space for an interactive pre-school storytime earlier in the day. Most of those attending the film program stopped at the library to pick up items they had reserved before heading to the movie.

Meanwhile, a group of people are gathering at the new Mountain View Branch to participate in a “conversation salon.” The group meets on a weekly basis to informally share their perspectives on issues affecting the neighborhood. This night, the conversation has turned to an upcoming event that will showcase Samoan art and culture.

Back at the Loussac Library in Midtown, the meeting rooms are busy throughout the evening. A group of 15 would-be entrepreneurs have convened in a large conference room with representatives of the Small Business Administration and the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). Among other things, they learn that they can attend a class later in the week in the library’s “Information Commons” on how to develop a business plan. Back in the Ann Stevens Room, a new group of 12 mystery fans are gathered to discuss “A Night Too Dark,” the newly published “Kate Shugak” novel by Dana Stabenow.

Several of the tutoring rooms are in use. In one, a literacy volunteer tutors a young man in his twenties who is working toward a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.). In another tutoring room, a second volunteer who is fluent in Korean works with a woman who has recently arrived in Alaska and who is beginning to learn English.

A public hearing about a proposed highway expansion is taking place in the Assembly Chambers and a chamber music concert has just started in the Wilda Marston Theatre. A family “bedtime” story hour is taking place in the children’s program room. The interactive session helps parents learn how to engage their children in important pre-literacy activities that help develop speech and motor skills.

Adults and young adults continue to pass through the library doors all evening long. Some are looking for a good bestseller; others search for a book to help them deal with a health issue or to give them decorating ideas. College students occupy several study carrels scattered throughout the building. The Tech Center in the Information Commons section of the Library is offering a training session in how to use Microsoft Excel™. Every one of the 120 computer workstation in the Loussac Library's new Information Commons area is filled.

At 10 PM, the library finally closes its doors for the day, but library service doesn't end. Well into the night, people are stopping in the Library's outer lobby to pick up reserved items from the automated book lockers. Other individuals are accessing the library's web site to download audio books and yet others are using their smart phones to reserve and renew books and to access the "SLED" databases.

Reference service also continues after hours because the "Ask-A-Librarian" service has been expanded through cooperation with other libraries throughout the United States and Canada to offer virtual reference service on a "24X7" basis. The virtual reference service also answers reference questions online in "real time." Through the night, new RSS feeds selected by the Library based on profiles submitted by library users are popping up on computers and smart phones all over the Municipality.

Far-fetched? Not really. The scenario portrayed above isn't a dream. Some of the services and activities are already provided by the Anchorage Public Library. Others are realities in many U.S. and Canadian libraries. World-class cities have world-class libraries. Why not Anchorage?

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

About the Plan

Over the past eight months, the Anchorage Library Foundation (ALF) challenged the community to imagine what would happen if the people of Anchorage had a world-class, 21st century library. Literally thousands of residents of the Municipality shared their thoughts, opinions and ideas in focus groups sessions, community meetings, personal interviews, and through an online survey. People offered their assessment of existing services, provided their reactions to innovative ideas and service models in use or under consideration by exemplary U.S. and Canadian libraries, and presented original ideas drawn from business, retail, and personal experience.

Among the questions raised were, “What roles do exemplary 21st century libraries play in their communities? How do strong libraries contribute to the strength and well-being of the communities they serve? What kinds of information and library services do the people of Anchorage want and need? How can partnerships with other organizations enhance community life? What must the Library do to deliver those services to current and future generations of library users?”

The people of Anchorage responded with their own challenge to the Anchorage Public Library (APL) and to the community at large. They imagined an Anchorage where the Library worked to ensure that:

- every child who enters school is ready to learn
- every worker has the technological skills they need to succeed
- every citizen is well informed
- every student has the tools and skills they need to thrive in a global economy
- every resident has the information they need to make important life decisions
- every teen has an environment outside of school where they can learn and grow
- every resident has 24x7 access to the information they need wherever they are
- every resident has resources that enrich their leisure time
- every resident has an inviting neutral place where they can share their ideas
- every organization in the community works together to solve community problems

Imagine the possibilities!

The Anchorage Library Foundation worked with a team of consultants on the visioning and planning process. The charge to the consultants was to develop a “community-based” plan for library services. The call for a **community** plan underscored the importance of public involvement in the process. Consequently, great emphasis was placed on engaging the people of Anchorage in a discussion about the library and information services they want and need. Following is a description of the process that was used to involve the residents of Anchorage. The result is **not** a consultants’ plan for library service or even the Library’s plan for itself. Instead the process resulted in a plan that is highly responsive to what the people of Anchorage say they want and need.

Description of the Planning Process

In January 2009, the Anchorage Library Foundation issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for assistance in the development of a “Community Plan for the Anchorage Public Library (APL).” The RFP specified that the desired outcome of the project was to “create a long-term community plan that is guided by a clear vision encompassing:

- outreach,
- modernization, and
- enhanced library experience.”

The RFP went on to call for the development of “An inspiring long-term vision that defines the Library’s purpose in Anchorage, including its role in the gathering and dispersion of knowledge and in creating and fostering community relationships.”

In February 2009, Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants in cooperation with Agnew::Beck Planners and RIM Architecture, submitted a proposal for carrying out the project. The team was subsequently selected to assist with the planning process.

The community plan is intended to chart a course that will enable the Anchorage Public Library to provide high-quality library services that are relevant to the residents of the Municipality of Anchorage well into the future. In the final analysis, the success of the planning effort can only be measured in terms of the impact that the implementation of the plan has on the people of Anchorage. If the plan is fully implemented, not just the Anchorage Public Library will be different. The Municipality of Anchorage will be changed in positive ways!

Since the planning process began in March 2009, over 6,000 Anchorage residents have contributed their opinions and ideas about the future of library and information services. Scores of Anchorage residents were engaged through focus groups held in libraries, in cafes and in community centers throughout the Municipality. Thousands of residents responded to web surveys and dozens more participated in individual interviews. Hundreds more participated in a variety of public meetings that were held throughout the course of the project.

Following is a listing of the 18 targeted public focus group sessions that were held as a part of the planning effort. A summary of the results of these sessions is provided in Appendix A.

- Library Volunteers
- Parents of Young Children
- Loussac Library Computer Users
- Alaska Collection Users

- Teens (Loussac Library)
- Genealogists
- Technology Professionals
- Multi-Ethnic Young Professionals
- Residents of South Anchorage (held at Elim Café)
- Residents of Mountain View (held at Mountain View Boy's and Girl's Club)
- Samson-Diamond Branch Computer Users
- Users of the Muldoon Branch Library
- Users of the Chugiak-Eagle River Branch Library
- Users of the Gerrish (Girdwood) Branch Library
- Middle Schoolers (at the Muldoon Branch Library - located adjacent to the Boy's and Girl's Club)
- Downtown Workers (Business focus – held at Downtown Kaladi's)
- Downtown Area Residents (Neighborhood focus – held at Downtown Kaladi's)
- Refugee Outreach Group Interview (held at Catholic Social Services)

The consultants also conducted eight focus groups with Anchorage Public Library staff members. These sessions were divided along functional/departmental lines. Sessions held included:

- Librarians and Administrative Support Staff
- Adult Services Staff
- Collection Development and Technical Services Staff
- Circulation Department Staff
- Dispatch Staff (shelvers)
- Youth Services Staff
- Supervisory Staff
- Branch Library Staff

A summary of the results of these sessions is provided as Appendix B.

Information was also gathered through a variety of formal and informal public meetings. On May 19, approximately 75 individuals participated in a 21st Century Library Summit that presented information about new approaches and service models that have been adopted by some U.S. and Canadian libraries. Summit participants were given the opportunity to discuss these and to share their own ideas for improving library services in breakout sessions. The group then reconvened, presented the high points of the discussion groups and had the opportunity to interact with a panel that included presenters, members of the consulting team, and two community reactors. A summary of the 21st Century Library Summit is provided as Appendix C.

A project “Sounding Board” composed of individuals representing a broad spectrum of interests and organizations in the community was organized to review findings and draft documents and to provide a community-based reality check for the consulting team. The Sounding Board met a total of four times over the course of the planning effort. The fourth meeting of the Sounding Board was a joint session with representatives of the Library’s Advisory Board, Foundation Board and Friends’ Board. A list of the members of the Sounding Board and notes from their sessions are provided as Appendix D.

Surveys seeking information about library use and information seeking behavior were distributed at several public events including the 21st Century Library Summit, several Parks and Public Spaces Events, a meeting of the Urban League Young Professionals, at JUICE (a local hip-hop event), and at an Anchorage Chamber of Commerce meeting.

A web survey was also developed to gather opinions and ideas from a broad range of community residents. The Library contacted more than 20 community organizations and asked them to distribute an email containing a hot-link to the web survey to their members or employees. Different web addresses were used for different types of groups to allow the consultants to analyze survey responses by type of respondent. Separate categories were established for:

- Arts and Culture Organizations
- Business Organizations
- Early Learning/Childcare Organizations
- Library Advocates (e.g., Library Advisory Board, Library Foundation Board, Friends of the Library, Sounding Board)
- Municipality of Anchorage Employees
- Non-Profit Agencies
- Quality of Life Organizations (e.g., Parks and Environmental Organizations)
- Anchorage School District Teachers and Librarians
- General Public (promoted through media, link on library website and through an email sent to APL cardholders)

A total of 5,897 valid responses to this survey were received. The survey instructions encouraged individuals who are not active library users as well as those who do visit APL often to participate. A total of 631 respondents who indicated that they had not visited an APL facility responded to the survey. Cross-tabulations were performed to provide a picture of how library users and non-users differ in regard to their opinions about the Library and the future of library service in Anchorage.

In addition to a variety of questions regarding library use, the survey explored consumer behavior related to books and DVDs, personal interests, information needs and

willingness to support increased taxation to improve libraries. Several “open-ended” questions offered opportunities to suggest changes or improvements that might lead to increased library usage. A summary of the web survey results is provided as Appendix E.

Personal one-on-one and small group interviews were conducted with approximately twenty individuals that possessed special insights regarding the community and library services. Included were individuals such as Carol Comeau, the Superintendent of the Anchorage School District (ASD), Neal Fried, an Economist with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Steve Rollins, Dean of the UAA/APU Consortium Library and Linda Thibodeau, Director of Libraries, Archives and Museums for the Alaska State Library.

The content of each interview was dependent on the specific expertise of the interviewee. A list of individuals interviewed as well as an overview of information gleaned from the personal interviews is provided as Appendix F of the project report.

The public was afforded a final opportunity to contribute to the plan through a Business and Non-Profit Organization Strategy Session and a Town Hall meeting held on November 10, 2009. The Business and Non-Profit Strategy session attracted 12 participants and attendance at the Town Hall meeting was approximately 80 people.

Participants in the sessions had an opportunity to review the project findings and recommendations and to offer their comments and ideas for strengthening the plan. A summary of the discussion at the Town Hall session is provided in Appendix G.

A variety of background research activities were also undertaken as part of the project. A sample of addresses representing recent library usage was drawn from the Library’s circulation system. These records were processed using a geo-coding system that approximated the location of active households (households with library circulation activity) during a one-month period. Because the Chugiak-Eagle River Branch Library was closed during a portion of the first sample period, a second sample was drawn for that library. The information gleaned from this process is presented in a series of maps included as Appendix H.

Background research also included an analysis of the performance of the Anchorage Public Library in comparison to other U.S. public libraries serving populations of between 250,000 – 350,000. Excerpts from this analysis, which yielded some startling facts and figures, are presented in several places in the plan document. The data used for the analysis is included as Appendix I.

Two final pieces of background information are presented as appendices to the project report. The first provides a summary of service trends in U.S. and Canadian public libraries. The second offers design concepts for the Loussac Library that reflect

technological change and new and emerging service delivery mechanisms recommended in the plan. The service trends are included as Appendix J and the design concepts are included in Appendix K.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY AND THE ANCHORAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Demographic Overview

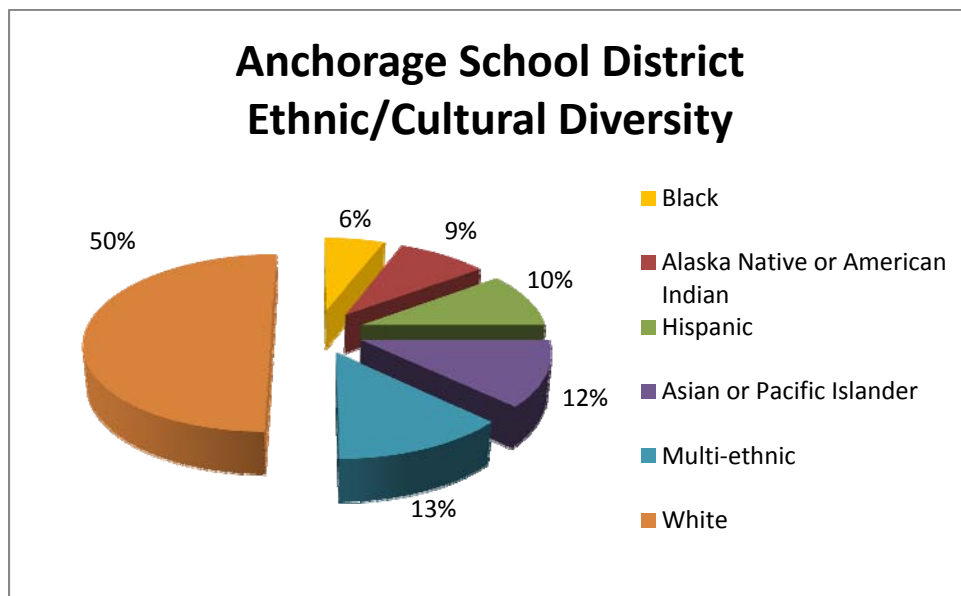
Anchorage is a young City both historically and demographically. In the course of less than sixty years, it has grown from a small town into a major metropolitan area. The population of the City of Anchorage was slightly more than 11,000 in 1950. Even when the population of Anchorage Borough (which merged with the City of Anchorage to become the Municipality of Anchorage in 1976) is included, the area population did not reach 100,000 until the late 1960s.

The Alaska Department of Labor projects that the Municipality of Anchorage's population will exceed 293,000 by the time of the 2010 census and that nearly 307,000 people will reside within the Municipality's boundaries in the year 2015. The number of people in Anchorage will have very nearly tripled in a period of 40 years.

The majority of the population growth has been the result of in-migration. People have moved to Anchorage from other places. Less than one-third (32%) of Anchorage's population was born in Alaska. Nationally, nearly two-thirds (64%) of the population lives in the state in which they were born. The so-called "Cheechaako Factor" (the large percentage of relatively new arrivals to Alaska) may, in part, account for a weaker sense of "ownership" of the community and its institutions.

The median age of Anchorage residents (32.4 years) is a bit lower than the national average (35.3). The percentage of the population between the ages of 0 and 19 is particularly high. Almost one-third (32%) of Anchorage residents fall in this age group compared to a national percentage of 27%. The percentage of the Municipality's population that is over the age of 60 (10%) is considerably lower than the national percentage (17%). However, the senior cohort is expected to grow faster than any other age group in the next 10 years. The number of individuals 65 years of age or older is expected to increase from about 16,000 in 2004 to approximately 36,000 in the year 2018. It is important to note that an individual reaching the age of 65 in 2018 would have been born in 1953. Much of the growing senior population will be comprised of so-called "baby-boomers."

The population of Anchorage is very diverse. The Anchorage School District's website reports that 94 different languages are spoken by District school children. After English, the five most common languages spoken are Spanish, Hmong, Tagalog, Samoan and Korean. The School District also reports that approximately half (50%) of the students in the district are non-white. The graph that follows shows the makeup of the ASD's student population.



The diversity of the general population of the Municipality is also significant and is growing. In the 1990 U.S. Census, 21% of the population identified themselves as being something other than "White." This percentage had grown to 28% in the 2000 U.S. Census. Estimates developed by the State of Alaska indicate that the percentage has already exceeded 30%.

Several demographic characteristics that are frequently cited as being correlated with higher than average library usage are present in the Anchorage population. Both the educational attainment (percentage of the adult population with at least a Bachelor's degree) and the median household income in Anchorage are higher than the national norm.

Library History

Compared to the public libraries in other major municipalities in the United States (U.S.) and Canada, the Anchorage Public Library's history is a rather short one. Many public libraries can trace their roots back to the late 1800s and some lay claim to beginnings in the 1700s as subscription libraries, mercantile libraries, or other non-tax supported entities.

In contrast, the first library service in Anchorage dates back to 1916 when a volunteer library effort, independent of local government, was formed in what was then a frontier town of less than 2,000 people. The first paid librarian was hired in 1925; however, although the library occupied space in a corner of the City Hall, no tax dollars were directly budgeted for library purposes until 1946. It is important to recognize that in 1946, the population of Anchorage area was only about 15,000 and the city population was less than 10,000.

The history of the Anchorage Public Library as a "system of libraries" is even briefer. At various times, public library services in the area that is now the Municipality of Anchorage operated under the City, the Greater Anchorage Borough, the Spenard Public Utilities District and under a City-Borough contract. Fully unified library services in the area did not become a reality until City-Borough unification in 1976-77.

Library service in the City of Anchorage grew with the community in the 1950s. The original Loussac Library opened at Fifth Avenue and F Street in the Downtown area in 1952. This building was the first facility designed as a public library in Anchorage and was the only public library in the area until a volunteer/social library opened in Spenard (not then part of the City) in 1960. The Spenard Public Utilities District provided modest tax funding for the Spenard Library until it joined with the Anchorage Library in 1965.

Fledgling libraries without direct tax support also existed in other areas outside the City boundaries in Chugiak and Eagle River in the 1960s. Federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) funding resulted in the establishment of formal, tax-supported "station" libraries in 1965 in Chugiak-Eagle River and Girdwood under a City-Borough contract. LSCA also contributed to the development of branch locations in the Grandview Gardens area in 1967 and in Mountain View in 1968. Some of these "libraries" were little more than deposit collections when they began. A full service library was opened in Mountain View in 1973. Between 1970 and 1980, the population of the City/Municipality exploded from 48,081 to 174,431 and libraries were opened to meet a growing demand. In 1973, a Sand Lake Library was added followed by the Samson-Diamond Branch in 1977.

Several studies were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s that looked at library needs in the Anchorage area. A “Library Plan” that was published in 1977 by the brand new Municipality of Anchorage reflected the unification of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough. The Plan called for ten libraries, including a “headquarters location” in the Central Business District (CBD).

Population growth continued in the early 1980s. The original Loussac Library was demolished in 1981 to make way for the William A. Egan Civic and Convention Center. A Downtown Branch was opened in 1981 and planning began for the new, much larger, Loussac Library in Midtown. A full service library was opened in the Muldoon area in 1984.

The present Loussac Library opened with great fanfare in 1986 in Midtown Anchorage as the great oil-bust of the 1980s was unfolding. Budgetary pressures related to the recession continued to grow and, in 1988, the Downtown, Grandview Gardens, Mountain View, Sand Lake, and Spenard Branches were all closed.

The library facilities serving Anchorage residents changed very little during the decade of the 1990s. However, electronic access to library resources grew. Of particular note was the work that went into forming the alliance that led to the shared online catalog system used by the Anchorage Public Library, the Consortium Library (The University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University), Alaska Resources Library & Information Services (ARLIS), the Anchorage Museum Atwood Resource Center, and several other academic institutions.

The Municipality of Anchorage continued to grow rapidly and by the year 2000, the municipal population had reached more than 260,000 people. The Anchorage Library Renewal Initiative was launched in 2006. The goal of the initiative was “...to improve Anchorage Public Library operations, increase outreach to the community and create state-of-the-art facilities.” The Initiative included upgrades to the technology and all five branch facilities as well as improvements to the Z.J. Loussac Library. The creation of a fifth branch in the Mountain View area and a sixth branch library in the Downtown area were also part of the Initiative.

As a result of the Initiative, the Muldoon Library moved into new quarters in 2007 and all APL libraries became wireless hotspots. The Samson-Diamond Library recently upgraded its furniture and installed a new computer lab. The new Scott and Wesley Gerrish Girdwood Branch Library, which benefitted from significant local efforts as well as from inclusion in the Initiative, opened in 2008. The Chugiak- Eagle River Library

moved to a new facility in a revitalized Eagle River Town Center. In Mountain View, construction is underway on the renovation and expansion of the original library building that was closed in 1988 due to budget cuts.

Some upgrades to the Z. J. Loussac building have already been completed and others are underway; however, additional improvements, including the redesign of the Library entrance, are on hold because of the failure of an April ballot proposition that would have partially funded that project. Planning for a new Downtown Library is also currently on hold because a site that was considered for the facility is no longer available. Furthermore, the economy continues to have a negative impact on the Library's efforts to make progress. The opening of the Mountain View Branch Library has been delayed. Library staff faced furloughs during the summer of 2009 and staff cuts are expected in the 2010 budget year.

As was illustrated in the prologue to this report, public library service is far more than buildings. However, the chronology of public library facilities in Anchorage provides a fairly accurate picture of the constantly changing fortunes faced by the Anchorage Public Library. The combination of a relatively short history, rapid population growth, and an economy characterized by boom and bust cycles has made it very difficult for APL to realize its full potential in spite of considerable effort that has gone into planning.

That said, the Anchorage Public Library has much of which to be proud. Circulation of materials reached an all time high of 1,599,025 items in 2008. That translates into 5.61 items checked out by every man, woman, and child in the Municipality. Over 170,000 (60%) of Anchorage residents have active library cards. A total of 871,036 people walked through the doors of APL's facilities (more than the approximately 500,000 people who passed through the turnstiles for all events at the Sullivan Arena during the year).

Furthermore, a 2007 study conducted by the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research concluded that residents of the Municipality receive an outstanding return on every tax dollar invested in library services. The report concluded that residents of the community receive between \$ 1.42 and \$ 2.46 of value for every tax dollar expended by the Library. The report cites multiple qualitative benefits to the community in addition to those that can be quantified. Benefits specifically mentioned included:

- Strengthening communities
- Fostering economic growth
- Serving as a center for humanities
- Cultivating the workforce of the future
- Improving children's literacy

The Anchorage Public Library has faced a number of significant challenges in its relatively short history and undoubtedly will need to confront adverse conditions in the future. Nevertheless, Anchorage Public Library has proven itself to be a priceless community asset.

Community Context

Anchorage is a unique community in many ways. Its location, history, demographics and economy set it apart from most cities of comparable size. Anchorage grew from little more than a frontier outpost in the early 1940 to a city of approximately 80,000 people by the time Alaska achieved statehood in 1959. Since 1960, the population of Anchorage has more than tripled and is now approaching 300,000.

Alaska's natural resources have contributed significantly to the State's economy and oil and gas interests continue to be important factors in Alaska and Anchorage's fiscal health. On the downside, the volatility of energy markets has also contributed significantly to the boom and bust cycles that have characterized the Alaskan economy.

Of growing importance in recent decades has been Anchorage's location on trade routes between the U.S. and Asian markets. The city's position has transformed it into a major transportation hub. In 2008, the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was the world's fifth busiest airport when measured by cargo traffic. Only Memphis (corporate headquarters for FedEx), Hong Kong, Shanghai and Seoul exceeded Anchorage's volume of shipments. It is estimated that one of every eight jobs in Anchorage is tied directly or indirectly to the airport.

This factor has also contributed significantly to the diversity of Anchorage's population. The mixture of Alaska native cultures, large numbers of transplants from the lower forty-eight and growing Asian populations lends to the Municipality's position as a truly cosmopolitan community.

Anchorage's position as the State's largest city also contributes to its character. While not the capital, it nevertheless serves as a very important center of State government. Most State agencies have offices in Anchorage and nearly twice as many state employees are stationed in Anchorage than are assigned to offices in Juneau. When Federal, State, Municipal and School District Employees are added together, government is the single largest source of employment in the Municipality.

Another unique characteristic of Anchorage is the unusually large number of non-profit organizations in the community. The ratio between the number of non-profit organizations and population in the State of Alaska is among the highest in the nation.

The National Center for Charitable Statistics reports that there were over 5,000 non-profit organizations operating in Alaska in 2008. This represents 74.2 non-profit organizations per 10,000 population. The national average in 2008 was 49.8 non-profits per 10,000 population. A large percentage of Alaska's non-profit organizations are headquartered or have a presence in Anchorage.

Anchorage is a bit of an enigma in regard to philanthropy. A Boston College study of philanthropy ranked Alaska 51st among the states and Washington D.C. for charitable contributions from households with incomes above \$200,000. A survey based on statistics gleaned from the IRS, the Foundation Center and the Urban Institute resulted in a ranking of 55th among the 100 largest U.S. cities in terms of overall giving per capita.

However, in spite of this rather lackluster performance, Anchorage has a distinguished track record of individuals and families who made their fortunes in Alaska giving back to their adopted State and City. Rasmuson, Marston and Loussac are only a few of the names attached to facilities and foundations in Anchorage that pay homage to the generosity of some Anchorageites.

Current State of the Anchorage Public Library

In 2008, more people visited the five Anchorage Public Library (APL) facilities than during any other year in its history. Visits to the Municipality's public libraries (871,036) exceeded total attendance at the Sullivan Arena by more than 74%. More materials were checked out of the APL than ever before. In fact, if every item checked out at the library in 2008 was stacked on top of each other, the pile of books and other materials would be six and a half times higher than Mt. McKinley! But, the picture of library service in Anchorage is not entirely positive.

As has already been mentioned, the history of the Anchorage Public Library is a relatively short one. Unlike many public libraries in the United States and Canada that date back to the late 1800s, no tax dollars were directly allocated for public library services in Anchorage until 1946. Of greater significance than the Anchorage Library's late start is the fact that the APL's progress has been uneven. The Library's fate has been affected by the boom and bust nature of Alaska's economy. The Library has experienced periods of growth in the good times and has faced severe cuts during the bad times.

When the current Z. J. Loussac Library opened in 1986, the Municipality of Anchorage had a population of 246,139 and the APL offered services from 10 facilities (one library

for every 24,614 people). Within two years of the opening of the Midtown Loussac Library, five branches were closed. In 2009, with the Anchorage population hovering around the 280,000 mark, APL operates only five facilities (one library for every for every 56,000 people). Furthermore, over the last decade, APL's staffing levels have fallen by 25% during a period of time when the population has increased by nearly 25,000. Additional staff cuts appear to be on the horizon.

Historically, library usage grows during economic downturns. When jobs and dollars are short, people turn to public libraries for help. Job seekers turn to the library for access to online employment resources; cost-conscious people look to their libraries as a source of repair manuals and unbiased consumer information; as disposable incomes shrink, people flock to libraries for free recreational reading, listening, and viewing materials. Unfortunately, increases in support for public library service in Anchorage have seldom matched the height of the economic booms and deep cuts in library support have accompanied every economic bust. The result is that the Anchorage Public Library is struggling to survive at the very time when the people of Anchorage need it the most.

A comparison of the Anchorage Public Library with other U.S. libraries serving similar-sized populations reveals some important and troubling information. The next section of this report presents these findings.

Summary of Statistical and Peer Comparisons

A review of historic data for the Anchorage Public Library reveals that statistical record keeping has not always been a priority. Data through the 1990s are characterized by inconsistencies between and among different sources as well as by inexplicable extremes on some measures from one year to the next. Fortunately, more recent data appears to be somewhat more reliable. The consultants have, therefore, restricted most of their statistical analysis to recent years.

In order to create a baseline for understanding the performance of the Anchorage Public Library, the consultants identified a set of peer libraries in the United States to use as a point of comparison. A total of 44 public libraries in the United States serving populations of between 250,000 and 350,000 people were identified using the Public Library Data Service (PLDS) as the source of information. Nine of the 44 libraries did not report a number of important data elements and were withdrawn from the set. Statistics from the remaining 35 libraries for Fiscal Year 2008 (FY '08) were used to assess the performance of the Anchorage Public Library relative to libraries serving similar-sized populations. Following is a table that presents Anchorage Public Library's performance in comparison to the mean for the 35 "peer" libraries:

Anchorage Public Library Performance
 Measured Against the Performance of 35 'Peer' Libraries
 Serving Populations of 250,000 – 350,000

Category	Anchorage Public Library (FY 2008)	Mean for 35 Libraries Serving Populations of 250,000 – 350,000 (FY 2008)
Population	284,994	293,033
Circulation	1,599,025	2,563,341
Library Visits	871,036	1,387,530
Number of Registered Borrowers	170,686	161,831
Reference Questions Answered	219,043	327,145
Circulation per Capita	5.61	8.84
Holdings (# of Volumes)	605,000	762,842
Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 11,895,415	\$ 10,269,556
Circulation per Registered Borrower	9.37	15.46
Total Staff (Full-Time Equivalents)	86.0	142.97
Library Visits per Capita	3.06	4.75
Library Visits per Registered Borrower	5.10	8.86
Registered Borrowers as a Percentage of Total Population	59.89%	55.83%
Reference Questions Answered per Capita	0.77	1.13
Volumes per Capita	2.12	2.61
Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$ 41.74	\$ 35.53
Materials Expenditures per Capita	\$ 3.58	\$ 4.58
Circulation per Staff Member	18,593	17,636

The picture that is created through this analysis is mixed. There are bright spots such as the high productivity of staff (18,593 items circulated per Full-Time Equivalent staff [FTE] vs. an average of 17,636 items per FTE) and the relatively high percentage of the population with a current library card (59.89% vs. 55.83%). However, on many measures, and particularly measures related to the number of transactions that represent direct service to the public, APL appears to perform at a lower level than the other U.S. libraries serving a similar population base. Circulation per capita is lower (5.61 vs. 8.84) as are reference questions answered per capita (0.77 vs. 1.13) and visits per capita (3.06 vs. 4.75).

Some of the negatives undoubtedly reflect APL's lower staffing level. In 2008, Anchorage operated its library with 86.0 full-time equivalent staff members. The average for the group of 35 libraries was 142.97 FTEs. It is interesting to note that APL staffing reached 114 FTEs ten years ago and that the number of staff has been constantly reduced since that time. The majority of the staff reductions have been in the professional ranks (individuals holding a master's degree in library science).

Another factor that undoubtedly accounts for some of APL's lower performance is its small number of service outlets. The Anchorage Public Library currently operates four branches and the Main (Loussac) Library. The average number of branch locations provided by peer libraries was nine (8.71) in spite of the fact that the size of the service areas of most of the libraries was considerably smaller than the area served by APL. In addition, more than half of the libraries (54%) operated one or more bookmobiles. Anchorage residents have fewer opportunities to access library service near their homes.

Although the Z. J. Loussac facility is among the largest "central" or "main" libraries among its peers serving 250,000 – 350,000 people, both the geographic size of the Municipality of Anchorage and its relatively small number of branches mean that people typically travel a longer distance than in other communities to access library services. This likely accounts for the fact that Anchorage residents who are registered cardholders visit the library fewer times each year than residents of peer communities (5.10 visits per year vs. 8.86 visits per year). The gap between circulations per capita in Anchorage and in other peer communities is similar (5.61 circulations per capita vs. 8.84 circulations per capita).

A third factor that probably contributes to APL's lower performance is the Library's collection of materials. Although libraries in 2009, including APL, are offering more online and virtual services, books and non-print media such as CDs and DVDs are still the primary "stocks-in trade." The Anchorage system owns 20% fewer items than the average among peer libraries (605,000 items vs. 762,842 items). Anchorage's expenditures on new materials are considerably lower than its peers (\$ 3.58 per capita vs. \$ 4.58 per capita).

Given this data, it was therefore troubling to note that APL's total expenditures (\$11,895,415 vs. \$ 10,269,556) and expenditure per capita (\$ 41.74 per capita vs. \$35.53 per capita) were both higher than the peer average in 2008. If APL has a considerably smaller staff and purchases significantly fewer materials, why is it more costly to operate? Because of the disparity between funding and performance, the consultants decided to examine library funding in greater detail. A very interesting picture emerged from this examination.

The data from the peer libraries shows that staffing levels are higher in 28 of the 35 peer libraries. Furthermore, in 2008, Anchorage Public Library expended only 54.9% of its total budget for salaries and benefits compared to an average among peer libraries of 66.3%. It is clear that APL's higher than average expenditure is not due to staffing.

APL's expenditures on materials are also among the lowest. Thirty of the 35 peer libraries spent a larger percentage of their budget for book and other library resources in 2008 (8.6% of APL's budget was spent on materials while the peer libraries averaged 12.8%). It is also obvious that spending on library resources is not the cause of the higher overall cost of library service in the Municipality.

The statistics available through the Public Library Data Service lump all remaining expenditures together in a category referred to simply as "other." In 2008, 36.5% of APL's budget was allocated to purposes other than staff and materials. This compares to a peer average of 20.9%. Only two libraries among the 35 peers expended a higher percentage in FY 2008. Clearly, the "other" category warrants additional examination.

Fortunately, considerable detailed information is available to analyze APL's other expenditures. The picture that emerges shows that the costs that appear to be higher than normal appear to be entirely out of the Library's control. Intergovernmental Charges, or "IGCs," levied by the Municipality of Anchorage for services provided ranging from facility maintenance to e-government services and from purchasing to horticulture account for the lion's share of expenditures in the "other" category.

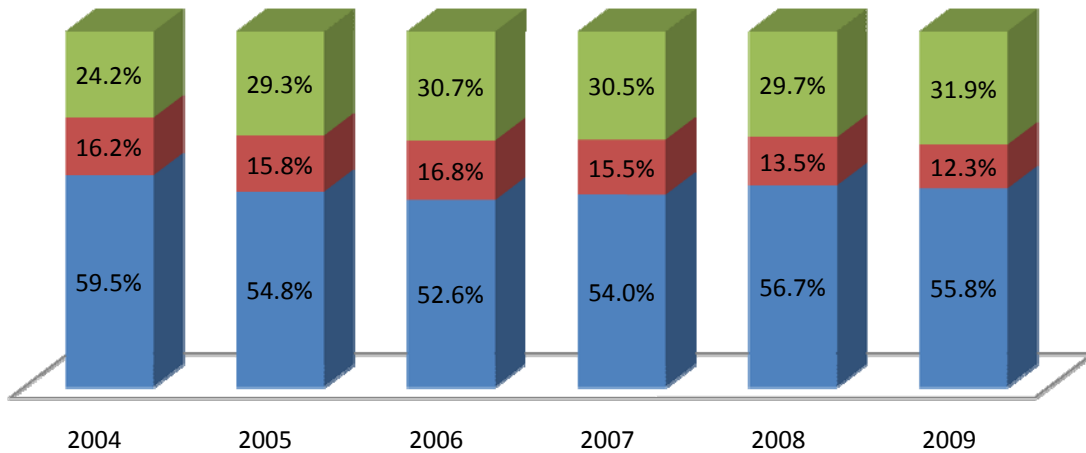
In 2004, Intergovernmental Charges assigned to the Library's budget amounted to \$2,050,960 or roughly 24% of the Library's overall budget. By 2009, IGCs had increased to \$3,633,205 or more than 32% of the overall budget. This increase in IGC charge-backs amounted to \$1,582,245 while the balance of the Library's budget (including staffing and library materials) increased by \$1,357,451. The increase in IGCs that accounted for 24% of the Library budget in 2004 accounted for almost fifty-four percent (53.82%) of the Library's total budget increase in the 2004 – 2008 period.

Far and away the largest portion of the IGC charge-backs is for facility maintenance. This segment of the IGC more than doubled in the five-year period between 2004 and 2008 from \$864,790 in 2004 to \$1,899,471 in 2008.

The following graph shows the relative increase in IGCs compared to Library expenses for personnel, materials, and other costs that are directly under the Library's control. Note that amounts differ somewhat from amounts presented earlier because the graph is based on budgeted amounts rather than on actual expenditures.

The Library's Dwindling Stock-in-Trade

■ Budgeted Staffing ■ All Other Categories Including Books/Materials ■ Intergovernmental Charges



Over the past five years, the percentage of the Anchorage Public Library's budget that it has been able to expend on resources directly related to public services (staff and library materials) has dwindled while IGCs have accounted for an ever increasing percentage of the total. The erosion of the Library's buying power for service related resources severely limits its ability to maintain high-quality service to the people of Anchorage. A careful examination of ways to limit the growth or reverse the rapid upward trend of IGCs that impact the Library's budget is clearly in order. APL and the Municipality both have a stake in reducing the cost of support services in order to direct tax dollars to direct services that benefit Anchorage residents.

Summary of Consultants' Observations

The Anchorage Public Library has labored under difficult circumstances for a considerable period of time. Over a decade, staffing has been reduced to skeletal levels. The Library's purchasing power for new materials has eroded as Intergovernmental Charges assessed by the Municipality have increased. Important maintenance on facilities has too often been deferred.

The Anchorage Library Renewal Initiative launched in 2006 has been the brightest light in an otherwise dark sky. The Initiative has enabled the Library to address some longstanding facilities issues and to reinvigorate several of its branch facilities. Some of

the deferred maintenance at the Loussac Library has also been completed. However, major deficiencies still remain at the main library.

At the same time the Initiative offered glimmers of hope, it also perpetuated difficulties the Library has long encountered in regard to sustainability. As was recounted earlier, the Anchorage Public Library was forced to close five branch facilities within two years of the opening of the Midtown Loussac Library. In a similar way, operating a new, much larger Girdwood facility, a larger Chugiak-Eagle River facility and newly proposed branches in Mountain View and Downtown would appear to be unsustainable without an infusion of operational funds for staffing and materials.

The current status of the Anchorage Public Library is a mixture of the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The Good:

- 60% of Anchorage residents have current library cards (170,686)
- Library visits are at an all-time high (871,036)
- Highly productive staff handle nearly 1,000 more items per full-time equivalent staff (FTE) than staff in peer libraries
- People in every part of the Municipality use the Library
- Traditional library users are generally satisfied
- The Library Administration is highly aware of service trends and best practices in public libraries
- The people of Anchorage when challenged to imagine a world-class library for Anchorage have a vision for an institution that would greatly enhance the quality of life in the community

The Bad:

- APL has lower than average number of visits per capita, circulations per capita, and volumes per capita
- APL has less than half the number of branch locations in comparison to peer libraries (4 vs. 9)
- APL is well below standard in the number of Internet accessible computers available to the public (19% below the basic standard; 39% below the enhanced standard)
- APL has insufficient bandwidth to support a full range of public computer services
- Many Anchorage residents are unaware of services the Library already offers that are relevant to them

The Ugly:

- APL has far fewer staff (40% fewer) than libraries serving comparable populations (86.0 FTE vs. 142.97 FTE)
- APL has much lower expenditure (22% less) for new materials than in peer libraries (\$3.58 per capita vs. \$4.58 per capita)
- APL has much higher expenditures for support services that are out of the Library's control (Intergovernmental Charges or "IGCs" assessed by the Municipality). IGCs account for 54% of the Library's budget increase since 2004.
- The next generations of library users (teens and young adults) view the Library as antiquated and irrelevant

Although the Anchorage Public library is being used more than at any time in its history, it lags far behind most libraries serving similar populations in almost every category. Funding available for "stock-in-trade" items (new resources and staffing) has declined significantly while IGCs for support services have surged. APL's capacity to provide services to the people of Anchorage has declined substantially in recent years.

The Library is in a struggle for survival. Unless it is able to enhance its services to traditional users and moves to develop highly convenient and user-driven technology-based services, it will fade into obscurity.

On the other hand, if the people of Anchorage can turn their vision for service into a reality, they can have a Library that will thrive and that will make an immeasurable difference in the lives of the people of the Municipality. As you may recall, the public said that they wanted a library that worked to ensure that:

- every child who enters school is ready to learn
- every worker has the technological skills they need to succeed
- every citizen is well informed
- every student has the tools and skills they need to thrive in a global economy
- every resident has the information they need to make important life decisions
- every teen has an environment outside of school where they can learn and grow
- every resident has 24x7 access to the information they need wherever they are
- every resident has resources that enrich their leisure time
- every resident has an inviting neutral place where they can share their ideas

- every organization in the community works together to solve community problems

Anchorage faces a profound loss if it continues to allow its Library to decline. The Library must first **survive**. It must then initiate actions that **strive** for excellence and sustainability. If it succeeds, it can thrive and can become a community asset of immense value.

CHAPTER 3 – LIBRARY VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Vision and Mission Statements

Anchorage Public Library Vision:

The Anchorage Public Library is an essential partner in building and sustaining a literate citizenry, transforming lives through information and knowledge and enhancing Anchorage's quality of life.

Anchorage Public Library Mission:

Anchorage Public Library provides resources to enrich the lives and empower the future of our diverse community, while preserving the past for generations to come.

Guiding Principles:

The Anchorage Public Library is guided by the following principles. The Library strives to be:

Accessible

The Library removes all barriers that hinder the public's access to information.

Dependable

The Library is a dependable source of reliable information.

Efficient

The Library is a good steward of the funding entrusted to it and strives to achieve excellence in everything it does.

Involved in the Community

The Library is fully engaged in community life and collaborates with government, businesses and the non-profit sector to strengthen the Anchorage community.

Inclusive/Comfortable

The Library celebrates the diversity of our community and welcomes all who wish to learn and grow and it provides conveniently located facilities that offer comfortable, stimulating learning environments.

User-Driven

The Library is constantly seeking new ways to respond to the library and information needs of the entire community.

Sustainable

The Library works to ensure that the people of Anchorage will always have the information resources they need to live successful and productive lives.

Innovative/Dynamic

The Library is a recognized leader in utilizing technology and innovative approaches to deliver information and library resources where and when they are wanted.

Implications of Pursuing the Vision

The Anchorage Public Library that is envisioned is not a passive organization. It is not a building, a collection of materials or a network of computers. Rather the APL that is envisioned is an active, integral part of the community. It is a living, growing, changing organization guided by its customers and their information needs.

The Library seeks to be a “boundary-spanning” organization: one that works with other organizations and with individuals to serve as a catalyst for individual and community improvement. The Library is driven by a desire to enable people to succeed in school, at work, and in their personal lives by promoting literacy, providing accurate information, and supporting lifelong learning.

In order to become an organization that plays a major role in transforming lives, the Library must first transform itself. It must see itself not as a place where people come to get books, movies and information but rather as an organization that concentrates on bringing people and ideas together using whatever means efficiently and effectively accomplish this goal. Every Library employee needs to see their role as an advocate for books, literacy and learning.

Given the realities of the current economy, it is clear that the Library will be unable to fully realize its vision or fulfill its mission immediately. However, as the Library struggles first to survive, and then begins to strive for its goal of becoming a world-class 21st century library, it must from the start be guided by its vision, mission and guiding principles.

It must also recognize that it will never achieve its vision on its own. Forging strategic partnerships with a variety of different organizations and toward different ends will be essential.

Collaborative relationships will be required in at least seven areas. Fortunately, partnerships in all these areas already exist to some degree. However, each will need to be developed in greater depth and nurtured over time if the Library is going to thrive. The required partnerships are:

- **Partnership with the people of Anchorage**
This partnership will be necessary to preserve traditional library services and to develop new user-driven services that are highly relevant to the people of the Municipality. The Friends of the Library organization provides a starting point for building a network of community contacts.
- **Partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage**
This partnership will be required to address the rapid increase of Intergovernmental Charges and to secure stable funding levels that reflect population growth and service needs.
- **Partnership with other governmental entities**
Partnerships with the State Legislature, the Alaska State Library, the School District of Anchorage, and other governmental entities will be critical in pursuing strategies to secure one-time and/or ongoing funding and to develop and implement innovative service models.
- **Partnership with the private sector**
Partnerships with corporate neighbors promise to help the Library move quickly to develop information products and services that will engage a new generation of technology-savvy library users.
- **Partnership with community organizations**
Partnerships with non-profit and other community organizations will enable the Library to connect with segments of the population that have not traditionally used library services. These partnerships will also enable the Library to realize its promise as a boundary-spanning organization in addressing community problems.

- **Partnership with other libraries**

Partnerships with other libraries including a continuation of the close relationship with the Consortium Library and new alliances with exemplary libraries will enable APL to move toward the implementation of technology-based products and services that offer better access to traditional library resources as well as access to new electronic information sources.

- **Partnership with the philanthropic sector**

The Anchorage Library Foundation serves as a primary link between the Library and the broader philanthropic sector. These partnerships will be needed to provide financial support for demonstrations of new and innovative service models, capital projects, and, through endowments, for ongoing operational support.

CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS

Identification of Issues/Barriers Standing Between Where the Library Is and Where it Wants to Be

The challenges confronting the Anchorage Public Library are enormous. Envisioning a world-class public library for Anchorage is easy. Creating such a library in a difficult economic environment is not. The purpose of this plan is to chart a course that will enable the Anchorage Public Library to become the kind of library that Anchorage residents need, want, and deserve over time.

In its simplest form, strategic planning is about four things. They are:

- assessing where an organization is
- determining where it wants to be
- identifying the barriers that stand between where the organization is and where it wants to be
- developing strategies that will enable the organization to overcome those barriers.

Where the Library Is

We have already discussed where the Library is. In spite of valiant efforts by Library staff, the Anchorage Public Library's performance in comparison to its peers is, at best, mediocre. It ranks in the lower half in comparison to other libraries on most measures and falls into the bottom quartile in several others. Most notably, the Library lacks sufficient staffing and funding for the acquisition of new materials. Furthermore, the erosion of the Library's buying power for "stock-in-trade" purposes (staff and materials) to uncontrollable Intergovernmental Charges assessed by the Municipality is a serious concern.

However, several other issues are extremely important to address. One is the fact that many residents of Anchorage, even those who use the Library, are unaware of many of the services that are available. For example, many survey respondents who identified themselves as Library users were unaware that the Library offers movies on DVD.

A second issue has serious long-term implications for the Library. Interaction with teens, young adults, and young professionals in focus groups and in community meetings revealed that many young people view the Anchorage Public Library as irrelevant. All indications are that the Library has also failed to connect effectively with

the Native Alaskans and growing populations of foreign-born residents of the Municipality. While the Library has a solid base of what might be considered “traditional” library users, it is in jeopardy of losing future generations of library users and segments of the population that represent an increasing percentage of Municipal residents.

Where the Library Needs/Wants to Be

The public has expressed a clear and dynamic vision for library service in the community. People want a library that is fully engaged in community life and that is working with other community organizations to promote reading, literacy, and lifelong learning. The Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles that appear in Chapter 4 offer an overview of the Library’s preferred future.

Issues/Barriers Standing Between Where the Library Is and Where it Wants/Needs to Be

The Anchorage Public Library and supporters of the Library’s efforts to transform it understand the magnitude of the gap between where the Library is and where it needs to be. Members of the Library Advisory Board, the Anchorage Library Foundation Board and the Friends of the Library Board are committed to pursuing the dream of a world-class library for Anchorage.

The enthusiasm of the citizen “Sounding Board” that has helped to guide the planning process and the large and positive response to the web survey that was conducted indicate that there are a large number of residents of Anchorage who share the view that the Library needs to move forward rather than backward.

In the survey, over twenty-eight percent (28.2%) of respondents who said they had used the Library in the last six months said they would be willing to pay \$10.00 or more per person in taxes to improve the Anchorage Public Library. Another nineteen percent (19.4%) said that they would be willing to pay between \$5.01 and \$10.00 more to enhance Library services. Only eleven percent (11.3%) of the library user group said they were not willing to pay more.

Perhaps even more telling is the fact that eighteen percent (18.0%) of those who had not used the Library in six months or more also said they would be willing to pay \$10.00 per year more per person to improve the Library. Well over fifteen percent (15.6%) said they would pay between \$5.01 and \$10.00 to enhance services. Just under twenty-four

percent of those who had not used the Library for six months or more said they would not support a tax increase.

The web survey involved a self-selected sample of individuals. Therefore, the consultants are unable to generalize the findings reported above to the entire population. Nevertheless, it is impressive to know that among a significant number of people (almost 6,000), support for moving the Library forward appears to be strong.

The 2010 Municipal budget looks bleak. Proposals for reductions in the Library budget would result in 13.5% cuts to an already skeletal staff and a 12% cut in the Library's already anemic materials budget. It is painfully apparent that the first issue that the Library must address in its effort to become a world-class library is survival.

The plan for the Library that follows is structured around three key words that can be seen as big-picture goals. The words are:

- SURVIVE
- STRIVE
- THRIVE

The three words provide both a conceptual framework for improvement as well as a general timeline for transformation. The Library's immediate goal must be to **survive** the current fiscal crisis by offering the best, most responsive service possible given the dreadful circumstances. Library supporters must fight to ensure that funding for 2010 is adequate to offer core services, albeit at a reduced level. The new vision, mission and guiding principles should be applied as decisions are made regarding budget cuts.

The mid-term goal represents a long and steep climb. The Library must **strive** to move ahead. While public funding for Library services is obviously the "elephant in the room," simply restoring Municipal budget cuts and reversing the downward trend in Municipality of Anchorage funding cannot be seen as the ultimate solution. The Library must work with the Municipality to reduce overhead costs (IGCs) and must develop new strategies to diversify funding streams.

Furthermore, striving must include a focus on issues beyond financial concerns. Developing greater public awareness of existing services, implementing new, more efficient service delivery models and expanding outreach to the next generation of library users must also be high priority items. It is highly unlikely that the Anchorage Public Library will be able to become the Library described in the Prologue in the year

2011. The Library's period of striving is likely to extend well into the second decade of the 21st century.

During this extended period of striving, the Library must avoid the tendency to direct its efforts toward "catching up." The Library's vision of thriving as a world-class Library will only be realized if it continually seeks to leapfrog the present and to find "solution-next" that provides state-of-the-art services.

While it may be tempting to see *thriving* as "mission accomplished, it is not. Sustaining the gains made as the Library strives to transform itself require positive action rather than a passive caretaker approach. User involvement in designing products and services should be a core element in the Library's efforts to strive. It will remain the cornerstone of the Library's ongoing struggle to thrive.

Survive:

The Anchorage Public Library is in a struggle for survival. If left unchecked, current funding trends will lead to a library that is at best mediocre and at worst totally irrelevant. Although the Library is among the most heavily used public services and has numerous supporters in the community, it will suffer irreparable damage if it fails in the short-term to meet the needs of traditional users and if it is unable to offer the technology-based information services that will engage a new generation of users very quickly.

Big Picture Goal – Survive:

- Minimize 2010 budget cuts
- Partner with Municipality of Anchorage to reduce cost of support services (IGCs)
- Maximize the use of existing resources through capital investment in technology
- Maximize the use of existing resources by increasing the public's awareness of existing relevant resources
- Shift staff focus from the Library's inventory to creating opportunities for discovery
- Engage a new generation of users while maintaining traditional users

Strive:

Simply maintaining the status quo will not provide the people of Anchorage with the library services they want and need. The Library must strive to do more than simply working to catch up with its peers. If efforts over the next few years are directed toward merely catching up, the Library will likely find itself in an endless cycle of being a few years behind exemplary libraries. APL must strive to leapfrog from where it is today to being a world-class library of tomorrow. This transformation will not be easy nor will it happen overnight. In short, APL will need to vigorously pursue “solution next” rather than current practices and processes. The Library will need to embrace a new sense of purpose and will need to diversify its funding streams if it hopes to become the kind of library the people of Anchorage want and deserve.

Big Picture Goal – Strive:

- Identify and develop strategic partnerships to increase the Library’s capacity to serve
- Develop mechanisms to engage the public in designing user-driven service models
- Encourage use by creating a more welcoming environment
- Engage non-traditional audiences through programming and targeted outreach efforts
- Identify and develop strategies to secure new sources of funding

Thrive:

If the Anchorage Public Library is going to thrive in the future, it must find ways to sustain the gains that it makes over time. The Library’s future will depend on its ability to develop multiple streams of dependable funding to support operations as well as its skill in attracting grants and gifts to support experimentation, innovation, and capital projects. An ongoing willingness to embrace change and to get users and potential users more involved in designing the library and information services that are relevant to them will also be of critical importance.

Big Picture Goal – Thrive:

- Work with the Municipality to achieve stability of funding that reflects population growth and service needs
- Explore the feasibility of alternate public funding mechanisms and implement if possible

- Identify services that are candidates for funding on an ongoing basis through endowments
- Pursue both fund-raising and fund-development strategies
- Sustain gains by continuing to involve end-users in the design of products and services

A Discussion of Trends and Preferred Futures

The purpose of this section of the report is to describe trends observed in exemplary public libraries in the U.S. and Canada, to explore how these changes relate to what the consultants heard from the people of Anchorage, and to identify the issues that confront the Anchorage Public Library as it attempts to provide relevant, high-quality library services to the residents of the Municipality.

The discussion below addresses some of the questions that are raised about the viability of libraries in a technological age as well as emerging roles that public libraries fulfill in the 21st century. We begin with a discussion of the future of the physical books and non-print media that have been the traditional stock-in-trade of public libraries and proceed to explore some of the other ways in which public libraries enrich the lives of the people that they serve and build stronger communities.

Traditional Services

Print, Analog and Digital “Books”

After centuries of being focused on collecting, organizing, preserving, and distributing print-on-paper documents (books, journals, newspapers, etc.), libraries have been transitioning into a world in which information content is presented in a wide variety of formats. It is fair to question the viability of libraries in the future as collections of discrete physical items such as books and other formats such as compact discs (CDs) and Digital Video Discs (DVDs).

Pundits in the 1970s and 1980s predicted the demise of the public library more than once. The first wave of dire predictions came with the arrival of the desktop computer. The second wave came a bit later as the Internet began to emerge. However, the consistent message was that libraries would become quaint relics of the past by the year 2000.

Instead, public libraries have enjoyed a resurgence and are, in fact, busier in the first decade of the 21st century than they have been at any time in history. The explanation

for this phenomenon is complex. No single factor explains why this has happened; however, it is clear that the predicted abandonment of print-on paper books has not occurred. Print-on-paper books have proven to be far more resilient than anticipated and have remained an extremely popular way to package and deliver *some* types of content.

An apt analogy appears to be the prediction that radio would disappear as television emerged in the 1950s. “Why would anyone use a radio when a radio with pictures is available?” was the reasoning. As we all know, television didn’t kill radio. Instead, the content delivered on radio changed to fill a gap as a delivery medium that was compatible with multi-tasking (e.g., driving while listening, doing household chores while listening, etc.). Some types of content disappeared. Radio dramas became a thing of the past. However, other content took its place and radio has continued to thrive.

In much the same way, print materials haven’t died, but they have undergone a shift in focus. Fewer and fewer “reference books” are being published. The number of scholarly journals and newspapers has declined and continues to drop. At the same time, sales and the use of books for leisure reading and for children’s content remains remarkably strong. The convenience, portability, and lack of a need for any kind of an electronic device to read print on paper has extended the life of books far longer than many expected. The dire predictions that print-on-paper books would be totally replaced by “e-books” and the Internet have proven to be largely false.

Meanwhile, the traditional book in libraries was first joined by a variety of analog formats (microfilm/fiche, phonograph records, audio and video tapes) and more recently by a wide range of discrete physical items in digital formats such as audio CDs and DVDs. As counterintuitive as it might seem, the space needs of libraries for the storage of physical items grew rather than declined during the final decades of the 20th century.

Books in print form are likely to be with us as an option (especially for recreational reading and for children) for a considerable period. However, the “shelf-life” of individually packaged analog and digital formats appears to be much shorter. The graveyard of formats once offered by libraries already includes phonograph records, reel-to-reel tapes, 8-track tapes, cassette tapes and videotapes in multiple forms. VHS tapes and books on cassette tape, while still in use in some libraries, are on their last legs. The CDs and DVDs that replaced them aren’t far behind in the race to obsolescence.

Online and “downloadable” content has already made significant inroads into the audio world. Music CDs are quickly becoming obsolete as digital downloads and affordable playback devices such as iPods, MP3 players and smart phones make it possible to store and play enormous quantities of musical content. Audio books on CD are

beginning to suffer the same fate. Although bandwidth and intellectual property issues have made the transition from physical DVDs and Blu-Ray discs to downloading video content a bit slower, these formats would appear to be waning as well.

Over the last decade, libraries have been sorting out their role in a world of downloadable content. Their experience with proprietary online resources such as full-text electronic journals and indexes has served as a model for their foray into the world of downloadable audio books and e-books. Twenty-first century libraries, like their predecessors, have served the purpose of aggregating demand for intellectual content and purchasing that content on behalf of many. In the case of electronic journals, downloadable audio books and e-books, this has usually taken the form of purchasing licenses from vendors that allow groups of individuals (such as cardholders of a particular library) to access content that would otherwise be subject to an individual fee, free for a limited duration of time.

Some libraries that license downloadable content have added “download” stations that the public can use to load content on their own personal devices such as MP-3 players, laptop computers, and smart phones. This trend will probably continue for a number of years; however, wireless downloading will, in time, replace the need for wired devices for the transfer of this type of content.

Many libraries have also ventured into the world of pre-loaded devices. One such type of device, known as a “Playaway” is an MP3 player preloaded with a specific audio book. The entire device is loaned to the end user for use in much the same way that more traditional materials have been loaned.

E-books intended for use on other types of readers such as Amazon’s Kindle or Sony’s Reader Digital Book have been somewhat more problematic. Proprietary systems and a hesitancy or unwillingness to license content for group use has slowed the entry of libraries into the distribution of text format e-books significantly. However, it appears likely that licensing by libraries may be part of the solution that will ensure that authors and creators of other intellectual content will receive fair compensation for their work.

In short, it would appear that public libraries will continue to play an important role in the distribution of content including some print-on-paper resources for decades to come. The role of libraries in distributing physical digital formats such as CDs and DVDs is likely to diminish over the next decade as their role in licensing and distributing downloadable content grows significantly.

The information collected from Anchorage residents through focus groups and surveys indicates that there is some difference in how the Anchorage Public Library is perceived by those who use the library versus those who do not. The perception of public libraries held by most Anchorage residents who don’t use the library often is very traditional.

Many non-users see the library as a “nice thing to have” but question the library’s relevance to their own lives. For many of these individuals, the Anchorage Public Library is a book repository that also does some programs for children. Questions about information seeking behavior in several non-library venues showed that very few non-users think of the library as a source of information (reference services). This “disconnection” from the library is particularly prominent among the young professionals with whom the consultants interacted.

While users of APL have a somewhat more multi-dimensional view of the library, even some individuals who use APL on a regular basis hold fairly traditional views regarding the role of the public library. Some were unaware that the APL offers movies. Furthermore, a considerable number of library users when asked what new services would encourage them to use the library more, cited services that the library already offers but of which they were obviously unaware.

It is perhaps not surprising that some library users are unaware that the library has movies. The non-print resources at the Loussac Library are tucked away in a corner of the top floor in sharp contrast to many libraries that give these popular materials prominent floor space. Efforts to raise public awareness of the resources that the library already owns is obviously an issue that must be addressed as the library moves forward.

The web survey and focus groups with library users also underscored the opinion that we are not yet in a post-print world. Numerous comments called for “more books” and several people bemoaned the fact that the APL book collection is not as “deep” as it once was. This is certainly not surprising given the decline in expenditures for new materials as Intergovernmental Charges (IGCs) have increased. Nevertheless, it would appear that the acquisition, organization, and distribution of physical materials will remain a part of the Anchorage Public Library’s program of service for many years to come.

Other Library Service Trends

The Library as a Center of Community Life – The Third Place

One of the unmistakable trends in exemplary public libraries over the past 10 -15 years has been a conscious effort to establish public libraries as centers of community life. In 1989, a book entitled ***The Great Good Place***, written by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg, championed the concept of the “third place.” A third place is defined as a place that is not home and is not work (or school) that offers a neutral public space for a community to connect and establish bonds.

In fact, Oldenburg gave a name to a concept that describes what some public libraries had been doing for more than a century. Most Carnegie libraries featured fireplaces and comfortable reading areas that encouraged patrons to sit and read. Meeting spaces were typically included in the library's design and libraries were expected to be a place where public discourse and learning would occur. The fact that quite a number of public libraries in New England have "athenaeum" as part of their name underscores the point that early libraries in the U.S. were envisioned as places where people could gather to learn.

More recently, the emergence of mega bookstores featuring comfortable seating and cafés in environments that included books and other materials typically offered by libraries created new expectations that the public brought with them to libraries. The result was a rethinking of public library spaces with the goal of returning to the idea of creating community places where people can gather and interact. Oldenburg does a good job of summarizing why these spaces are essential in healthy communities.

In Oldenburg's words,

"Life without community has produced, for many, a life style consisting mainly of a home-to-work-and-back-again shuttle. Social well-being and psychological health depend upon community... Most needed are those 'third places' which lend a public balance to the increased privatization of home life."

Public libraries offer a unique opportunity to create quality third places in a learning environment. The Cleveland (OH) Public Library has long billed itself as "The People's University." Libraries can be places where all can learn without paying tuition.

Libraries that have taken the third place model to heart have created a variety of different types of spaces to support different kinds of interactions. Many libraries now incorporate multiple conference rooms, conference center quality multi-purpose rooms, theaters, group study spaces, tutoring rooms, gallery areas, cafés, copy centers and bookstores.

Participants in the 21st Century Library Summit and public focus groups as well as many respondents to the web surveys expressed enthusiastic support for the creation of library facilities of this type. The desire for and acceptance of this approach can be seen in the exceptional level of support for the Gerrish (Girdwood) Branch Library. That Library and the adjoining public meeting space have become a center of the Girdwood area's community life.

The Z.J. Loussac Library is a bundle of contradictions in regard to being suitable to become a center of community life. The building has several outstanding strengths

including the Wilda Marston Theatre, the Ann Stevens Room and space devoted to a café and Friend's Bookstore operation. The building also has a considerable amount of free public parking for an urban central library. Furthermore, the proximity of the newly developed Cuddy Family Midtown Park offers excellent opportunities to extend library services into the park and park services into the library.

On the other hand, visitors to the Loussac Library are greeted by a formidable and unattractive stairway to the front entrance and a crumbling terrace. Upon entering, they are confronted by a massive, dark, and foreboding circulation desk. Those approaching the building through the lower entrance must cross an active traffic lane and observe the results of deferred maintenance overhead.

The Wilda Marston Theatre, while an exceptional community asset, is poorly equipped from an audio/visual standpoint. The theatre lacks a functional wired Internet connection that can be accessed by presenters. The aging data projection equipment provides a murky image at best and convenient connections and controls for using presenter-owned equipment are lacking. Other assets such as the café are tucked away from public view; the Friends bookstore is small and ill-suited as a retail space, and the Ann Stevens room is underutilized.

Much to their credit, the Anchorage Public Library administration and staff, the Library Advisory Board, Library Foundation Board and the Friends of the Library are well aware of both the strengths and the shortcomings of the Loussac Library as a candidate to fulfill an important role as Anchorage's premiere third place. Events such as the series of outdoor concerts and the Reading Rendezvous event demonstrate an understanding of the library's potential as a center of community life.

A concept for redesigning the entrance area exists but has not been implemented due to a lack of funding. A library staff committee produced an excellent report that contained ideas for the revitalization of several of the Loussac Library's interior spaces. Many components for moving the Loussac Library in the direction of becoming Anchorage's community living room are available but have not yet been acted upon.

As was noted in the reference to the Gerrish (Girdwood) Library, branch facilities can also play a vital role as centers of community/neighborhood life. An analysis of library usership patterns conducted using geographic information systems offers an indication of the degree to which APL's branches are fulfilling this role. The Chugiak-Eagle River and Gerrish (Girdwood) branches evidence relatively strong usage in their areas with moderate use of the Loussac Library. In contrast, the Muldoon Library and the Samson-Diamond Library lack well-defined service areas. With the exception of a single census tract in the Muldoon area, residents use the Loussac Library more than their

“neighborhood” branch. While usage of both locations clearly justifies their existence, it appears that public “ownership” of these branches is relatively low.

It is logical that distance from the main library contributes to the stronger levels of neighborhood/community ownership in Girdwood and Chugiak-Eagle River. The Loussac Library is many miles away from both sites. However, the consultants believe that other factors are also at play. The Samson-Diamond Branch’s location in a mall tends to depersonalize and institutionalize that facility. The branch lacks the warmth and ambiance associated with quality third places. There is also some evidence to suggest that some adults avoid both the Samson-Diamond and Muldoon facilities because they tend to have teens loitering around their entrances. While the locations of the two branches in the mall and adjacent to the Boy’s and Girl’s Club can be seen as a strength in attracting young adults to the libraries, extra efforts are necessary to ensure that adult users are comfortable using the libraries and that parents are comfortable bringing their children to the sites.

The Library as a Partner/Collaborator in Addressing Community Needs

Another important trend in public libraries is as a partner and collaborator in addressing community needs. Martin Gómez, former President of the Urban Libraries Council and recently appointed City Librarian of Los Angeles, spoke to this issue at a conference on the future of libraries and museums that was convened by the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2008. He said,

One of the things that public libraries have done fairly well is to realize that their mission, their job, is about community building... it’s really about making a contribution to the community, looking at your institution as an asset to problem solving, and trying to develop that as part of the overall context of service.

Public libraries are part of the support network for public education and a key player in the development of early literacy skills. In fact, it is easy to argue that providing resources and programming that introduce preschool children to books and reading in a positive supportive environment is the most important thing that public libraries do. Children who enter school ready and eager to learn perform better throughout their school careers and become more productive citizens. It is not an accident that our nation’s prisons are full of people who cannot read.

Libraries are frequently involved in efforts related to employment and workforce training. Public libraries have traditionally provided print materials related to job skills development; however, as job listings and the employment application process has

moved to an online environment, public access computers have become critical tools for individuals who lack Internet access in their homes. Many employers now assume that they will use email to contact potential job applicants to arrange for an interview. Libraries often assist individuals in setting up web-based email accounts and offer training in using email.

Many libraries are also active in teaching the information literacy skills that are increasingly necessary in the workplace. Computer labs in public libraries offer a wide range of technology training sessions. Assistance offered ranges from rudimentary mouse and keyboard skills or basic training in accessing the Internet to more specific help such as assistance in producing a resume or skills related to using specific productivity software (e.g. Excel, Access).

Participants in the 21st Century Library Summit were highly supportive of the community partnership concepts presented by Carlton Sears, the Executive Director of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County. Mr. Sears offered multiple examples of how the Youngstown Library has acted as a catalyst and a key collaborator in addressing issues of great importance. The examples ranged from “Baby Brilliant,” an emergent literacy program to a financial literacy effort (Smart Money) that has involved partners as wide ranging as the United Way, Junior Achievement, the Treasurer of the State of Ohio, the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, three local television stations and a federal banking regulation agency (FINRA). Another example from Youngstown involved the library as a partner in community development and housing.

Public libraries, especially those with limited financial resources, cannot be all things to all people. However, robust partners and true collaboration around recognized areas of community need attract funding and stretch public and private dollars while at the same time solving problems and improving quality of life in the community. Mr. Sears pointed out that effective partnerships have a tendency to produce new programs. Several of the Youngstown Library’s partners in the Baby Brilliant program became partners in the financial literacy program. The seed for the effort was thinking about how a generation of “baby brilliants” would be able to afford to go to college.

The Anchorage community appears to have great potential for partnerships and collaboration. The interviews conducted by the consultants with a variety of community leaders revealed that Anchorage has an unusually large number of non-profit agencies. It was suggested by several interviewees that the library might have a significant role to play as a resource provider and a convener of organizations to explore collaborative approaches to meeting some community needs.

The Library is not a stranger to collaboration. It already has active partnerships with several organizations ranging from the Anchorage School District to the Alaska State Library. APL cooperates with the University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University through its involvement in a shared online catalog. However, the possibilities for collaboration have not been fully explored in large part because APL lacks the staffing it needs to identify, develop, and nurture major partnership initiatives.

Convenience and Customer Service

Public libraries in the 21st century operate in a consumer society. Expectations for library services are driven as much by Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com as they are by what happens in other libraries. Consumer behaviors are largely driven by value, convenience and positive customer experiences.

Exemplary libraries have recognized this fact and have worked to add value, increase convenience and to upgrade both the ambiance of their facilities and the quality of customer service that they offer. Public libraries have come to recognize that one of the great advantages they have in the public “marketplace” is value. Most public library services are offered without a direct charge at the “point of sale.” While we all know that there are costs (in the form of taxes) associated with library services, numerous studies, including one conducted for the Anchorage Public Library by the University of Alaska Anchorage’s Institute of Social and Economic Research, have demonstrated that public libraries offer an excellent return on the taxpayer’s investment. The UAA study concluded that Anchorage residents receive between \$ 1.42 and \$ 2.46 in benefits for every \$ 1.00 spent on public library service.

APL offers the public a bargain. However, unless consumers are aware of the availability of a bargain, “sales” will be limited. There is a great deal of evidence from focus groups and meetings with individuals who do not use the library and from both users and non-users who responded to the web survey that many residents of Anchorage are unaware of many of the services the library provides.

The best U.S. and Canadian libraries are those who constantly seek to know and understand what their “customers” value. Ongoing focus groups, test-marketing of new delivery concepts, quick response web surveys, and, in a few instances, the use of “secret shoppers” help these libraries to understand customers and potential customers and to modify or invent new service delivery mechanisms that respond to consumer preferences.

Exemplary libraries also seek to add value to the services they provide. Delivering information or a physical item when and/or where an individual wants it are simple examples of added value. For many, convenience and value are closely intertwined. Some libraries have added drive-through windows or are experimenting with book vending machines in convenient public locations in the community. Some libraries have installed book lockers that provide 24 X 7 access to library materials that have been reserved.

There are an enormous number of locations where an Anchorage resident can go through a drive through to pick up a cup of coffee. Opportunities for picking up reading materials at a drive through are non-existent in Anchorage and drive through facilities for returning materials are extremely limited.

Other responses to customer preferences include “hyper-browsability” and more user friendly approaches to arranging popular materials. A few libraries have gone as far as eliminating traditional Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress arrangement of materials in favor of book store type categorization of some or all of their collections. The hyper-browsability idea creates an area of the library where materials on high interest topics are pulled out of the regular collection and given prominent display. In October 2009, an area such as this might have one section of shelving devoted to the H1N1 flu and other infectious diseases, a second section featuring materials presenting multiple points of view on the healthcare debate and a third highlighting materials on banking, recession and the economy. There are obvious implications of this kind of approach on library budgets. To create and maintain high-quality topical display areas such as these require a considerable expenditure on quantities of materials.

The delivery of a wide variety of information to handheld devices offers libraries new opportunities to deliver value to people wherever they are located. Text reference services, providing utilities that help individuals organize and subscribe to RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds that are relevant to them and offering downloadable content are all well within the realm of possibility for libraries. The following section entitled Library 2.0 provides additional information regarding important trends that are related to how new technologies may transform the delivery of information content.

Library 2.0

Library 2.0 is a term used to describe a new model of library service in an electronic age. The model, which is a direct spin-off of concepts such as Web 2.0 and Business 2.0,, envisions a world in which the library is a collaborator and enabler for the creation and transfer of intellectual content.

Key principles of the Library 2.0 concept include:

- Providing web access to advanced electronic tools that allow users to access and interact with information content
- Proactively involving the library user in both the design and implementation of services
- Providing opportunities for library users to design and modify library provided services
- Actively harvesting and integrating ideas, products, and best practices from the business, non-profit, and governmental sectors into library service models
- Examining and reevaluating library services in an ongoing basis and being willing to replace or modify them as newer/better services emerge

While some argue that several of these principles are not new, Library 2.0 emphasizes public participation in the development of services and of content as well.

An example of how the Library 2.0 concept changes the role of the public library can be seen by comparing the basic online public access catalog (OPAC), which was an outgrowth of the traditional card catalog, with a full-featured Library 2.0 catalog. Traditional card catalogs and OPACs are finding tools. They gather and organize descriptions of discrete packages of information (the physical books and non-print media items discussed earlier). The electronic catalog indexes key words (subject headings, key words from the title and author names) and provides location information such as department and “call number” that aids the library user in finding the item.

A full-featured Library 2.0 “catalog” is more like an interactive search engine. Like the traditional OPAC, it provides location information to physical items; however, it also provides connections to quality online resources, journal articles, reviews, blogs, photos, videos, and a host of other information content. Furthermore, it allows users to add their own reviews (Amazon.com style), to contribute new content to blogs and discussions about what they find, to start new ongoing discussions, and to capture content that can be used in the creation of new content.

In some ways, the Library 2.0 concept is the virtual version of the physical library as a center of community life in a learning environment that was described earlier. Library 2.0 taken to its logical conclusion becomes a virtual learning community in which people are connected to each other electronically rather than physically. While pieces of the Library 2.0 idea exist, at this point, most implementations draw heavily on using existing technological tools. Components of Library 2.0 exist, but they’re not yet fully integrated.

For example, libraries have become involved in social networking sites such as Facebook and in virtual communities such as Second Life. Online catalogs from

vendors that have provided integrated library systems to libraries for many years have added features to allow searching that integrates content from databases licensed by the libraries and reviews of books and other materials. Some actually allow for some interaction between users and the catalog/library. Progress toward Library 2.0 has been made, but public libraries are still only scratching the surface.

A hopeful glimpse of tomorrow can be seen in the development of “open source” catalogs and other library application software. This movement toward open, evolving public/library interfaces has the potential to deliver some of the promises of the Library 2.0 idea. Open source software is itself an example of how Library 2.0 is intended to work. Individuals (or organizations) take a basic concept, idea, or, in the case of software, a functional application, and they are expected to improve and expand the concept, or in the case of software, the functionality of the software.

While an individual library may decide to embrace and provide entrance into the world of Library 2.0, the concept really transcends any individual library. Libraries and librarians working together with a new breed of library users across the nation and around the world will create new information delivery systems that will never stop evolving and changing. Local libraries will participate in something much larger and will contribute information of local interest, assistance in navigating in the new electronic environment and connections to physical resources (such as books) and to both live and virtual programs, classes, and discussions.

In a Library 2.0 world, much of the information that is shared will be delivered to handheld devices such as netbooks and smart phones. Collaboration between and among libraries to develop full-featured applications (apps) will be necessary. This is already starting to happen. In January, the District of Columbia released an iPhone app that provides easy access to a few basic library services. OCLC, a non-profit library bibliographic utility, also has an experimental iPhone app to access their “Worldcat.” Other apps for a variety of devices are sure to follow.

The fact that many young professionals in the Anchorage area feel disconnected from the Anchorage Public Library was noted earlier in this section. Providing iPhone, Blackberry and other smart phone applications that provide easy access to relevant information is likely to be the quickest way for APL to reconnect with this demographic group.

The Anchorage Public Library has done some exploration of connecting to segments of the population through technology. APL and its branches have Facebook pages and connecting to the online catalog the library shares with the Consortium Library is relatively easy from APL’s newly redesigned website home page. The webpage also offers several opportunities for people to interact with the library online. However, if

APL is going to alter the perceptions held by many young professionals that the library is old fashioned and irrelevant, it needs to move quickly toward a Library 2.0 model that gets this important segment of the Anchorage population engaged in creating technology-based mechanisms for delivering desirable content to handheld devices.

CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Program of Service

Context for the Recommendations

The “recommended” program of service reflects the spirit of the Request for Proposals that set the planning process in motion. The RFP specified that the desired outcome of the project was to “create a long-term community plan that is guided by a clear vision encompassing:

- outreach,
- modernization, and
- enhanced library experience.”

The realities of the Municipality’s funding outlook underscore the urgency of developing strategies aimed at the mere survival of the Library. However, the Library’s long-term vision and its mission should not be lost in the midst of economic strife. The Library’s new Vision statement, the Library’s Mission statement, and Guiding Principles should act both as a source of hope for the future and as an invaluable tool for making hard decisions in the short-term. The Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles are as follows:

Anchorage Public Library Vision:

The Anchorage Public Library is an essential partner in building and sustaining a literate citizenry, transforming lives through information and knowledge and enhancing Anchorage’s quality of life.

Anchorage Public Library Mission:

Anchorage Public Library provides resources to enrich the lives and empower the future of our diverse community, while preserving the past for generations to come.

Guiding Principles:

The Anchorage Public Library is guided by the following principles. The Library strives to be:

Accessible

The Library removes all barriers that hinder the public’s access to information.

Dependable

The Library is a dependable source of reliable information.

Efficient

The Library is a good steward of the funding entrusted to it and strives to achieve excellence in everything it does.

Involved in the Community

The Library is fully engaged in community life and collaborates with government, businesses and the non-profit sector to strengthen the Anchorage community.

Inclusive/Comfortable

The Library celebrates the diversity of our community and welcomes all who wish to learn and grow and it provides conveniently located facilities that offer comfortable, stimulating learning environments.

User-Driven

The Library is constantly seeking new ways to respond to the library and information needs of the entire community.

Sustainable

The Library works to ensure that the people of Anchorage will always have the information resources they need to live successful and productive lives.

Innovative/Dynamic

The Library is a recognized leader in utilizing technology and innovative approaches to deliver information and library resources where and when they are wanted.

As the Library makes the difficult decisions it must confront due to current economic conditions, it should use the Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles as a blueprint for progress. At every step along the way, decision-makers should seek ways to move closer to realizing the vision, fulfilling the mission and acting on the guiding principles. In some circumstances, it is likely that the Library will be faced with choices that involve selecting “the lesser of two evils.” In these cases, the Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles should be applied by asking “which choice does the least harm to our efforts to achieving our ultimate goals?”

Recommendations

Taken as a whole, the recommendations that follow chart a course that will lead to the world-class 21st century library that the people Anchorage say they want and need. Chapter 6 of this report will deal with the realities of implementing the recommendations including how recommendations with significant cost implications might be funded.

While this report offers a long series of very specific recommendations, it is possible to summarize them into five “action themes.” The action themes are:

1. Let the people know what the library offers
2. Enhance customer service
3. Reduce operating costs and secure new sources of funding
4. Encourage a new generation of library users while engaging traditional users
5. Create a more welcoming community-centered library

All of these actions presume an enhanced level of partnerships and collaboration as described in Chapter 3 (The Library Vision for the Future). It is also important to place these action steps in a context of services provided to the people of Anchorage. For this reason, the recommendations that follow are presented under the preferred future categories discussed in Chapter 4. These service categories are:

- Print, Analog and Digital “Books”
- The Library as a Center of Community Life
- The Library as a Partner/Collaborator in Addressing Community Needs
- Convenience and Customer Service
- Library 2.0

A bracketed number corresponding to the numbering of the five action themes follows each recommendation to indicate the action theme or themes that are involved.

Recommendations by Preferred Future Category

Print, Analog and Digital “Books”

Background

Although electronic resources and services are increasing in importance, it is likely that the Anchorage Public Library will need to continue to devote a significant portion of its resources to the traditional roles of acquiring, organizing and distributing physical items

(print books and non-print materials) for many years to come. The fact that the library circulated nearly 1.6 million items in 2009 underscores this fact.

Recommendations Regarding Print, Analog, and Digital Books

Specific recommendations include:

- Increase awareness of the Anchorage libraries through branding efforts and better exterior signage (1)
- Use social networking tools, blogs and other electronic mechanisms to provide information about library resources to a wide variety of specific target audiences (1, 4)
- Work closely with the Consortium Library and other partners in the shared online catalog to develop a highly functional and interactive catalog that integrates access to physical print and non-print resources with online resources and that affords a high degree of user customization (see Library 2.0 discussion in Lessons Learned) (2, 4)
- Move the most popular materials to prominent locations in all library facilities and use retail techniques to market their availability (1)
- Provide tools that make it easy for library users and staff to offer “reviews” of library materials (2)
- Provide a drive-through for returns and the pickup of reserved materials in at least two facilities (including the main library) (2)
- Experiment with 24 X 7 distribution mechanisms such as book lockers and book vending machines (2, 4)
- Monitor and collaborate with other libraries and vendors to explore print-on-demand technologies. (2, 4)
- Seek funding and begin the process of transitioning to using radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology for circulation, sorting, and other collection maintenance tasks (3)
- Implement RFID including self-check in all library facilities (2, 3)
- Explore alternative funding structures such as library districts and direct state-aid to libraries (3)
- Explore the potential for “endowing” exceptional ongoing services such as the Alaska Collection and storytelling (3)
- Expand collections of materials in languages other than English (4)

The Library as a Center of Community Life

Background

The Anchorage Public Library has tremendous potential as an important “third place.” The Z.J. Loussac Library has many attributes that are assets upon which the library can build. Many of the concepts developed for Loussac as part of the Library Renewal Initiative are sound and should be pursued.

The Gerrish (Girdwood) Library is an outstanding success and can serve as a model for branch renewal. The homey look and feel of the facility, the outdoor views and the spacious community room all contribute to making the Gerrish Library a center of life in Girdwood.

Recommendations Regarding the Library as a Center of Community Life

Specific recommendations include:

- Create a new, less intimidating entrance lobby at the Loussac Library that eliminates the existing exterior stairs. (5)
- Create new exterior performance space or spaces at the Loussac Library to replace the terrace (5)
- Redesign circulation department and remove the dark intimidating desk and create an entrance that draws people into the interior of the facility (5)
- Renovate the Children’s area using a whimsical theme that starts with an exciting themed entry (5)
- Create a more welcoming entry area at the Muldoon Library that discourages loitering in the lobby (5)
- Explore ways to increase the amount of natural light available at the Muldoon, and Samson-Diamond facilities (5)
- Redesign/reallocate computer workstation spaces at all libraries to create learning environments suitable for small group use as well as individual use (2, 4, 5)
- Expand the amount of space devoted to public meeting space in the Loussac Library (4, 5)
- Redesign/reallocate space in Loussac Library and in branch libraries to encourage community meetings, tutoring and group study (5)
- Encourage public use of the Ann Stevens room for book discussion groups
- Relocate non-print media to a prominent/lobby location (1, 2, 4, 5)
- Convert current AV/non-print area into Young Adult section (2, 5)
- Add signage welcoming the public in several languages (4, 5)

- Provide translation guides that include basic questions and phrases for use by staff in interacting with non-English speakers (4, 5)
- Relocate the Café to be more visible and to include a larger public seating area (1, 2, 4, 5)
- Develop a larger, more attractive Friends store and expand/improve stock and enlarge the selection of books (2)
- Add a library “branded” automated sign at the corner of Denali Street and E. 36th Avenue that provides a visual indication that the library is open or closed and can display information about programs and events (1, 2, 5)
- Add visible, library branded exterior signs at all APL locations that provide a visual indication that the library is open or closed (1, 2, 5)
- Expand public programming at the Loussac Library as well as in the branches by drawing on community resources such as partnerships with other organizations and the use of volunteer presenters (2)
- Work with the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, Midtown civic organizations and philanthropic organizations to develop ways to extend library services into the Cuddy Family Park and park services into the Loussac Library (1, 2, 5)

The Library as a Partner/Collaborator in Addressing Community Needs

Background

The phrase “Libraries Change Lives” has been used as a rallying cry for libraries in a number of campaigns on behalf of libraries. People who have worked in and near libraries have witnessed the difference that libraries can make in the lives of children who succeed in school, adults who learn to read or find a job, or seniors who are able to continue their “education” throughout their life. The question is not whether libraries change lives as much as it is figuring out the areas in which a library should concentrate in order to affect the change that is most important in a given community.

Anchorage already has a “Ready to Read Resource Center” program that works to promote early literacy. However, funding for this important program is from limited term grant sources. The Anchorage Public Library needs to work to create strong partnerships that enable it to sustain programs that strengthen the Anchorage community.

Recommendations the Library as a Partner in Addressing Community Needs

Specific recommendations include:

- Build the expectation for involvement in community organizations into the job descriptions of all library managers/supervisors (in the branch libraries as well as at Loussac) (4, 5)
- Support community involvement of library staff through the allowance of work time for participation with other organizations and the payment of memberships (4, 5)
- Designate specific library staff members as official liaisons to key community organizations such as the Anchorage School District, Anchorage Literacy Council, area museums, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. (4, 5)
- Provide staff liaisons with training in community building techniques and charge them with providing regular reports on the activities of potential partner organizations/agencies (4, 5)
- Organize and implement meetings with representatives of ethnic organizations to discuss services (4, 5)
- Seek to establish a core group of community organizations interested in working together to seek collaborative approaches to addressing community needs (4, 5)
- Act as the convener of community organizations around at least two topics of community need per year (e.g., emergent literacy, workforce training) (4, 5)
- Develop effective tools for the evaluation of potential partnerships (4)
- Seek bridge funding for effective grant-funded initiatives that are currently underway (such as the Ready to Read Resource Center) and apply outcome-based evaluation tools to build the case for ongoing public and/or private support for programs that generate results (3)
- Work to identify ways in which the library can act as a central resource and information provider in support of helping agencies/organizations in Anchorage (4)

Convenience and Customer Service

Background

Many people indicate that lack of time is the primary reason that they don't use the library or use it less than they would like. Libraries that have instituted services that save people time and money have discovered that offering "convenience services" expands their user base and results in increased library use.

Anchorage residents are highly mobile. People drive to work, school, and to widely scattered retail areas. The Anchorage Public Library needs to develop services that reflect the Anchorage lifestyle and that enable people to access library services as they go about their busy lives.

Recommendations Regarding Convenience and Customer Service

Specific recommendations include:

- Add visible, library branded exterior signs at all APL locations that provide a visual indication that the library is open or closed (1, 5)
- Provide a drive-through for returns and the pickup of reserved materials in at least two facilities (including the main library) (2, 4)
- Explore the deployment of book and media return boxes in convenient community locations (2, 4)
- Experiment with 24 X 7 distribution mechanisms such as book lockers and book vending machines (2, 4)
- Consider the idea of creating a “Downtown Branch” as a “convenience branch” with a limited physical collection but quick and easy access to information and traditional services through 24 hour book lockers, virtual reference services and other non-traditional delivery mechanisms (2, 4)
- Increase the number of public access computers at all facilities to meet at least the “Basic” standard of one computer for every 2,000 people in the service area and work toward the “Enhanced standard of one computer for every 1,500 people (2)
- Increase the bandwidth available at all libraries to support additional computers and media-intensive applications (2)
- Implement new models of service that get staff out from behind service desks and onto the floor to interact with library users (2, 4)
- Consider using the Downtown Branch as an experimental/innovation branch where new service models and ideas can be test marketed and refined (2, 4)
- Develop and deploy a whole range of Library 2.0 services that are delivered directly to the end user by way of handheld devices such as smart phones (2, 4)
- Shift staff focus from the Library’s inventory to creating opportunities for discovery (2, 4, 5)

Library 2.0

Background

The Library 2.0 concept offers a framework for new models of service that can be applied to both technology-based services and more traditional services. Key factors include ongoing interaction between the library and users/potential users to create new services and modifying existing services to meet individual and group needs.

While the Anchorage Public Library has made a valiant effort to take advantage of new technologies, it has lacked the resources and support from the Municipality to stay ahead of the curve technologically. The Anchorage Public Library needs to engage the Municipality and the community in efforts to position APL as a leader in using technology to deliver library and information services. APL needs to go beyond efforts to “catch-up” and needs to work with other libraries, corporate partners, the philanthropic community and the Municipality to become an exemplar in connecting people and ideas.

Recommendations Regarding Library 2.0

Specific recommendations include:

- Work with the Municipality IT Department and the Municipality to develop a new model of IT support that affords greater flexibility and opportunities for innovation (2, 4)
- Explore the Information Technology (IT) support structure that has been developed by the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL Labs) and seek Municipal, corporate and philanthropic support to build a similar IT support structure for the Anchorage Public Library (2, 3)
- Build the technological capacity of library staff by providing opportunities to attend technology conferences and conventions (both library specific and more general) to expose them to innovative technologies (2)
- Work with the Consortium Library and other partners in the shared online catalog to develop a highly functional and interactive catalog that integrates access to physical print and non-print resources with online resources and that affords a high degree of user customization (2, 4)
- Work with the Urban Libraries Council, the Public Library Association, and other national library organizations to build a coalition of libraries interested in developing high-end Library 2.0 applications (3, 4)
- Build a citizen advisory committee composed of IT professionals in the community to act as advisors, beta testers and reactors to new applications that are developed (1, 4)

- Use online social networking and virtual community sites to communicate with segments of the population (1, 4)

A Word About Library Facilities

Library facilities are among the Anchorage Public Library's most valuable resources. This report has outlined both the virtues and deficiencies of APL's physical facilities. The peer analysis revealed that the Loussac Library is among the largest of main libraries serving populations of between 250,000 and 350,000. On the other hand, the comparison with libraries serving similar-sized populations also showed that APL has less than half the number of branch locations.

Many facility-related recommendations have already been offered. Additional guidance regarding facilities will be offered in Chapter 6 in the discussion of implementation strategies. However, a few basic concepts deserve mention in this section of the report as well. If the Anchorage Public Library wishes to become a world-class 21st century library it will need to:

- renovate and reconfigure the Z. J. Loussac Library to make it more accessible, more welcoming, and more efficient to staff and,
- increase the number of branch libraries and enhance some of the existing branches to strengthen their ability to serve as centers of community life.

CHAPTER 6 – IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation Recommendations

The transformation of the Anchorage Public Library from a largely neglected traditional library into a world-class 21st century public library will require more financial resources than are currently available. Consequently, a discussion of funding strategies occupies a prominent place in the text that follows. However, money is not the ultimate answer to overcoming the challenges facing the Anchorage Public Library. The ultimate answer is commitment. Over the long-haul, Anchorage will get the kind of library service that the people of Anchorage are willing to fight for.

Public support for the Anchorage Public Library is lukewarm. As in almost every city that has a public library, Anchorage has a core of people who are passionate about the public library. The passion of these people is played out through their participation on one of the three boards (Library Advisory Board, Library Foundation Board, Friends of the Library Board), through the gift of their time as volunteers, or through monetary gifts that enable the Library to provide services and resources. However, in Anchorage, this group of core supporters is small. The general public does not seem to share their passion for the Library.

In part, this report is an appeal to the people of Anchorage to recognize that they have the kernel of an invaluable resource that can play a major role in making the Anchorage community a better place in which to live. The Library that has been described in the previous chapters is not a passive institution. The Library that is envisioned is actively engaged with the community, identifying and addressing community needs. It is an institution that builds a foundation of literacy one child at a time and that offers every resident an opportunity to learn throughout their lifetime.

Funding for the transformation of the Library will not come from a single source. Anyone who believes that everything will be “OK” if only the Municipality were to restore funds or if it were to allocate a little more is not facing reality. The Municipality certainly has an important role to play in moving the Library forward. Improved funding from this source in the future will be critical to the Library’s success. However, support from the private sector, from the State of Alaska, and from philanthropic sources, from businesses and from individuals will also be needed. The impact of existing funding will also need to be magnified by working with the Municipality to rein in overhead costs, by partnering with a host of governmental, non-profit, and business organizations to maximize community resources to accomplish great things.

Funding is, indeed, the elephant in the room. However it is the commitment of the people of Anchorage to better library service that will result in expanding the financial resources of the Library. The Municipality will eventually respond positively if the people of Anchorage make it clear that quality library service is a priority. The philanthropic community will respond if committed staff and advocates for the Library are effective in communicating the positive outcomes that will result from specific efforts. More individuals will respond by giving their time and/or money to an organization that delivers services that they value.

What follows is a discussion of the resources the Library has and those that it will need if it hopes to transform itself. Resources are addressed first to place the later discussion of sustainability and potential sources of funding in context.

Resource Issues

The discussion of resources is broken into four areas that together account for the vast majority of the Library's budget. They are:

- Staffing
- Collections/Information Resources
- Facilities
- Technology

Some of these categories are inextricably bound together. For example, libraries must provide their staff with appropriate technologies that enable them to do their work efficiently. In a similar way, it is impossible to completely separate technology from a discussion of a library's collections and information resources since an increasing volume of information content is disseminated using digital media or online.

Staffing

The Anchorage Public Library's staffing deficit has already been mentioned several times. In 2008, APL's staffing consisted of 86.0 full-time equivalent positions. You may recall that the average staffing contingent among peer libraries was 142.97 full-time equivalent positions. Additional staffing cuts appear likely in 2010.

The Anchorage Public Library's staffing is grossly inadequate. If Anchorage wants a world-class library, staffing levels will need to be increased. To put the Anchorage staffing situation in perspective, some of the other U.S. libraries with staffing levels between 80 and 90 include those in Charleston, West Virginia (Kanawha County Library – service population 181,000), Pascagoula, Mississippi (Jackson-George Regional Library – service population 152,000), McAllen, Texas (McAllen Memorial Library – service

population 195,000), and Peoria, Illinois (Peoria Public Library – service population 113,000). In other words, Anchorage’s peers in regard to staffing are libraries serving much smaller populations. Furthermore, many of its staffing peers are located in areas that can be characterized as being economically challenged.

Many members of the Anchorage Public Library staff are tired and morale is generally low. This comes as no surprise given recent history. Staffing levels have been reduced by 28 full-time equivalents over the last decade. During this time, the population of Anchorage has increased significantly as has library usage. Comparisons with other libraries serving populations of 250,000 – 350,000 show that staff members are highly productive. In 2008, 18,593 items were circulated per staff member at the Anchorage Public Library. The average number of items circulated per staff member in peer libraries was 17,636.

APL staff lack the time to do much more than the “production work” involved in checking materials in and out, re-shelving materials, and answering reference questions from behind a desk. The Anchorage Public Library will never **THRIVE** with staffing at its current level. In fact, a staff of 86 (let alone less than that as has been proposed in the 2010 budget) will not be able to sustain existing levels of service.

This illustrates why this plan has chosen the word **SURVIVE** to represent immediate actions that must be taken. The Anchorage Public Library is currently engaged in a struggle simply to survive. Every effort must be made to maintain staffing levels in the short term and to increase them in the long term. A target of 5.0 full-time equivalent staff members per 10,000 service population should be the Library’s target for the **THRIVE** phase. This ratio is currently less than 3.0 FTE per 10,000 people (2.96) and is in jeopardy of dropping even lower.

A final note regarding staff is in order. Simply adding staff may enable APL to survive; however, merely increasing staffing levels will not ensure that the Library will thrive in the future. In order to thrive, APL must have the right staff with the right training and the right attitude using the best technology and practices to carry out their work. The Library will need to identify the technology skills it lacks if it hopes to implement the kinds of services described as “Library 2.0” that are essential to developing a next generation of library users.

Furthermore, a beleaguered staff will need to believe in the future of the Library and will need to replace an existing defensive attitude with a new sense of reading evangelism. The design of the Loussac Library accentuates the defensive stance. Many library users view the massive circulation desk that they confront when entering as a fortress. The front-line staff is often seen as guards protecting the Library’s materials.

The Library’s mission statement emphasizes the Library’s role in building community and in providing opportunities for personal growth regardless of background or economic condition.

Anchorage Public Library provides resources to enrich the lives and empower the future of our diverse community, while preserving the past for generations to come.

The staff focus will also need to shift from the Library playing a passive role (a place where people come to get books and other materials) to an active role (an organization that reaches out into the community to provide service[s] wherever people are). These are not inconsequential changes. Engaging staff and getting them to “buy into” a new model of service will be essential. This change was described in the recommendations offered in the last chapter as “...shifting the staff focus from the Library’s inventory to creating opportunities for discovery.”

It will also be necessary to equip staff with the best technology that is available and with the training they will need to use that technology. The consultants have strongly recommended that the Library pursue the implementation of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology and automated materials handling systems (AMHS) as soon as possible. While there are capital costs associated with these steps, the cost should be seen as an investment in greater efficiency, and therefore, as an important cost containment measure.

Collections/Information Resources

Books and other physical resources such as DVDs are still any public library’s stock-in-trade. While APL needs to expand its efforts to provide access to information online and through offering downloadable media, the demand for print materials will remain strong for the foreseeable future. The Anchorage Public Library needs to ensure that it offers a good selection of traditional library materials if it hopes to retain its existing customer base.

The Anchorage Public Library currently lags behind other libraries serving similar-sized populations by approximately \$ 1.00 per capita. Where peer libraries expended an average of \$ 4.58 per capita for new materials in 2008, Anchorage Public Library expended only \$ 3.58 per capita. This is not an insignificant difference. Furthermore, Anchorage Public Library maintains what might be considered to be a “premium” collection (the Alaska Collection) that goes beyond the local history resources that are provided by many of its peers. The result is that APL acquires fewer new titles than many peers and fewer copies of best-sellers and other popular titles.

An analysis of the decline in spending for materials reveals that the uncontrolled increase in Intergovernmental charges (IGCs) is very closely correlated with the

decrease in expenditures on new materials. It is clear that the Library has repeatedly turned to its materials budget to offset increased IGC costs.

This would suggest that as the Library works with the Municipality to control, and hopefully to reverse, the upward trend in IGCs, that any savings should be directed back into collection development. A long-term “**THRIVE**” target would be to achieve an expenditure level for materials that reflects approximately 15% of the total (non-capital) portion of the budget. Furthermore, the Library should work to index expenditures for materials to population growth. A target in regard to expenditures per capita for books and other library resources should be no lower than \$ 6.00 per capita.

Online resources and downloadable media were mentioned at the beginning of this section. The traditional model for libraries is one that involves the “acquisition” of physical resources such as books. While this aspect of what libraries do will continue into the foreseeable future, an increasing amount must be devoted to “licensing” information content. This model applies to content that APL is already providing, e.g., downloadable audio books and online database subscriptions, and to new formats that are beginning to appear in libraries such as e-books read on handheld devices such as the Kindle™ or the Sony Reader™.

A pathway from the **SURVIVAL** mode toward the **THRIVING** mode may well involve using soft money sources (grants, gifts, etc.) to pay for the licensing of e-book content as the overall percentage of the Library’s budget for resources (both traditional and digital/electronic) increases toward the 15% target.

Facilities

Library facilities are a critical part of any library’s resource base. Facilities should not be seen as ends in themselves but as important tools that enable libraries to deliver services. The quality of the design of library buildings can significantly affect the public’s perceptions of the library as a whole, the average length of time that users spend in the library, the efficiency of staff, and operational costs such as heat and light.

It should be remembered that staffing library facilities costs far more in the long-run than building them. This suggests that efficiency of design should be seen as a high priority for APL. A library with a design flaw that requires one additional staff member to operate can cost the tax-payer well over a million dollars over the 20 year period that is typically used for planning library buildings. A simple illustration of this fact would multiply a \$ 35,000 annual salary times 20 years (\$ 700,000) and then add estimated costs associated with cost of living adjustments and benefits to that figure. The million

dollar total is achieved even when very conservative benefit and cost of living adjustments are made.

The inefficiency of the Loussac Library can be illustrated easily by considering the location of the non-print/media collections. The Library's movies and audio books are among the most popular resources that APL owns. These materials circulate frequently and some are loaned for shorter periods than books. This means that these items are constantly flowing out of and into the Library. At the present time, some of the most popular materials that circulate most frequently are located at the far end of the fourth floor. Every time these materials are returned they face a long trip before they reach the shelving units on which they are displayed. A reprogramming of the Loussac Library that rethinks workflows will enhance the ability of the Library to keep up with the volume of production work with its skeletal staffing levels.

As has already been noted, Anchorage has a relatively large main library and a small number of branch locations when compared to peer institutions. What is the optimal number of libraries that are needed to serve the Anchorage community well? What kinds of facilities are needed? What characteristics should these facilities have? These are complex questions that are most appropriately handled through a master facilities planning effort; however, these questions are addressed in general terms below.

Z.J. Loussac Library

The Z. J. Loussac Library is well located to serve the Anchorage community. The building occupies a prominent piece of real estate at a major intersection in the Midtown section of the community. Parking availability is reasonably good for a "main" library.

An analysis of usage patterns reveals that people from throughout the Municipality of Anchorage use the Loussac Library and that it is the most heavily used public library in all but a limited number of census tract areas in Anchorage. (People living in census tract areas near the Chugiak-Eagle River Branch Library and the Gerrish Branch Library (Girdwood) use those libraries more than Loussac.) This is also true in a small area near the Muldoon Branch. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the Loussac Library serves as the primary library for the majority of the Anchorage population. Having said that, it also appears that the distance from a library has some impact on the number of visits that Anchorage residents make to the library and the number of items they check out. While the number of visits to and total circulation from the Anchorage Library reached all time highs in 2008, APL still lags peer communities in both regards.

The Anchorage Library Renewal Initiative envisioned many positive changes to bring the Z. J. Loussac facility up-to-date. A reworking of the intimidating (and potentially

dangerous) front stairway is long overdue. Major maintenance and renovation that included roof work and work on mechanical systems has already been completed. However, much also remains to be done. Significant changes to the entry area (most of which are completely consistent with facility recommendations that appear in the previous chapter) were put on hold due to the failure of the April ballot proposition. Library staff worked long and hard to identify other improvements that would transform some rather sterile areas of the Library, e.g., the entrance to the Children's Services area, into inviting and enticing areas that would underscore the Library's potential as an important "third place" in the community. The improvements envisioned in the Library Renewal Initiative and a reprogramming of space to achieve greater efficiency need to proceed as part of APL's efforts to **STRIVE** for excellence.

Branch Libraries

While many people would love to have a branch facility located in their neighborhood, it is entirely possible for a library to have too many branch locations. Maintaining branches requires staffing, collections, and other valuable resources that are often in short supply. Branches that operate minimal hours, are minimally staffed and poorly stocked dilute the overall quality of services available in a municipality. At the same time, operating too few branches can result in low per capita usage since excessive distances from a library facility discourage use.

Healthy libraries must maintain a good balance between convenience and quality. Every circumstance is different and there is no magic ratio between the number of people served and the number of branch locations that can be applied in every instance. Factors such as significant distance from other library facilities often appropriately result in branches being placed in areas that may not have a large potential service population. Anchorage has such an instance in Girdwood. Although the potential service area for the Gerrish Branch Library is less than 3,000 people, the considerable distance from another library facility justifies the operation of the Girdwood branch.

However, if Anchorage tried to maintain this ratio (one library for every 3,000 residents), it would need nearly 100 branches. This is obviously impractical. What overall ratio might achieve the appropriate balance between convenience and quality? Most library planners would agree that one library for every 20,000 people is impractical (although there are some libraries that do operate at this ratio). Most would also agree that one library for every 60,000 – 70,000 people, except in very densely populated areas, represents too few facilities. The balance point is generally seen as lying somewhere between these extremes. With five facilities (Loussac and four branches) and a

population of approximately 293,000, the Anchorage Public Library has been operating at the high end of the range (one library for every 58,600 people).

The fact that the Gerrish (Girdwood) Library serves a population of less than 3,000 means that the four remaining libraries serve on average approximately 72,500 people. An analysis of library usage patterns revealed that the largest population being served by any of the branches currently is approximately 40,000 (Samson-Diamond). The Chugiak-Eagle River Branch serves approximately 28,000 people and the Muldoon Branch reaches another 35,000.

The 35,000 to 40,000 service population reached by the Muldoon and Samson-Diamond branches is applied rather frequently as a planning standard. In fact, one library for every 35,000 people yields a total of 8.43 service outlets for Anchorage, which nearly matches the 8.71 figure identified among peer libraries. One library for every 40,000 residents would result in 7.325 branches to serve the Anchorage population.

The size of facilities and their location also contribute to the need for a greater or lesser number of branches. Large regional branches (35,000 – 45,000 SF) can be adequate for serving 50,000 people. An excellent case could be made for the replacement of the existing Samson-Diamond Branch with a freestanding regional branch.

A 1977 study commissioned by the Municipality shortly after unification of the City and Borough called for ten branches. This number reflects the thinking of the time and probably is too high for Anchorage to sustain even if new sources of funding are found.

Based on the information and data reviewed to date, the consultants believe that a total of eight full-service branches would meet the needs of the Anchorage community well for the next 20 years. This would include continued operation of the Loussac Library and the Chugiak-Eagle River, Gerrish (Girdwood), and Muldoon facilities, the opening of the planned library in Mountain View, the replacement of the Samson-Diamond Library with a larger freestanding branch and the addition of two additional full-service branches.

However, the recommendation for operation of eight branch facilities should be seen as a scenario that fits in the “THRIVE” category. Planning for additional branches should continue; however, no additional facilities should be opened until funding is available to sustain them without diluting already strained staff and material resources. Every effort should be made to find a way to help the people of the Mountain View area realize the long-awaited return of library services in their community. Nevertheless, even this opening should be suspended unless bridge funding (funds to operate for at least 2 – 3

years) and a commitment from the Municipality to work toward the allocation of operational funds for future years can be secured.

The consultants strongly recommend that the Anchorage Public Library carry out a master facilities planning process as soon as is practical to determine the number of facilities, the size of facilities and the nature of any new service outlets.

A number of innovative ideas should be explored as part of the master facilities planning process. Included should be the possibility of one or more express service outlets (less than full-service branches) and collaboration with the Anchorage School District (ASD) in a joint library project. It should be noted that joint school/public libraries are notorious for their failure rate. In fact, an unsuccessful APL/ASD effort to provide services in Mountain View demonstrated some of the problems with the concept.

Those who approach the idea with a simplistic view that school and public libraries are the same and that great savings will result through such a collaboration will be disappointed. There are significant differences in terms of mission, staff skills and collections. There are also major policy issues regarding security, access to adult materials in a school environment and the unwillingness of some segments of the community to enter a school facility that must be addressed. However, APL must be willing to entertain unconventional solutions to difficult problems and the work that has been done envisioning a different approach to a “community” school by the West – Romig Study Committee is worthy of further conversation.

Technology

Technology crosses many boundaries defined in previous sections of this chapter. Technology affects staff efficiency, offers new mechanisms to deliver content and can be used to improve the efficiency of facilities. We will begin the discussion of technology by looking at resource allocation issues related to using technology to deliver content.

Virtual Branch and Services

Technology presents tremendous opportunities for libraries to provide valued information content to new generations of library users. However, relatively few libraries have approached the use of technology for this purpose as more than an “add-on” to existing services. The most effective (best-practice) approach to developing high level technology-based services appears to be treating this aspect of technology as a “virtual branch” that has a dedicated staff, an ongoing budget allocation and latitude to innovate.

The Anchorage Public Library has demonstrated that it is aware of the potential for technology. Unfortunately, staffing and a restrictive arrangement with the Municipality for information technology management have resulted in mixed results.

The consultants discovered that the APL website has a surprisingly large audience given the relatively modest information content that it provides. The web survey found that almost eighty-five percent (84.5%) of those identified as library users had visited the Library website in the past year. This statistic was underscored by recent analytics performed by the Municipality that showed that, with the exception of the main Municipal home page that primarily provides links to other departments (<http://www.muni.org>), the Library's home page received the most visits. Furthermore, those visiting the Library's site spent approximately three times more time at the Library's site than at most others. The Library clearly has success on which to build.

A best-practice model on which to build is available at the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL). Over the years, DCPL has suffered many of the same problems that APL has faced including frequent budget cuts and poorly maintained facilities. One of the last words that the general public would have associated with the D.C. Public Library was innovative. New leadership and a renewed sense of commitment to the importance of the Library to the quality of life in the nation's capital have resulted in many positive changes. One of the positive steps taken by the D. C. Library was the creation of DCPL Labs (<http://dclibrarylabs.org/>), a dedicated staff charged with the development of new and innovative technology-based services.

The result of this group's first major initiative (the release of an iPhone application for interaction with the online catalog) has been fantastic. It has managed to whet the appetite of a new generation of users and has the public linking DCPL and innovation. This provides a model for APL to follow as it moves into the **STRIVE** phase.

However, APL can't wait to start engaging new, technology-driven users. Even within the confines of its **SURVIVAL** phase, the Library must connect with Anchorage's wired, or, more precisely, un-wired community. Since the Library lacks the resources to do too much on its own at this point, it will need to leverage community resources and skills. Contacts with major businesses to enlist the help of information technology professionals and alliances with Consortium Library, libraries such as the District of Columbia Library that have already developed applications that might be used or licensed and partnerships with organizations representing multiple libraries (such as the Urban Libraries Council) can help the APL move forward even in the short-term.

Technology as a Tool to Increase Efficiency

The importance of moving toward the implementation of RFID and AMHS has already been discussed in the staffing section. APL should be seeking technological solutions to increase efficiency throughout the organization. Providing the public with greater opportunities for self-service checkout (thereby freeing staff for other tasks) is one of the important side benefits of the RFID implementation. RFID-based self-check stations work considerably better than first and second generation self-check systems. Libraries larger than the Anchorage Public Library are experiencing shelf-check usage in the range of 80% - 90% of circulation.

Other areas worth exploring include applying relatively low-tech materials handling techniques to reduce the time and effort moving materials. The presence in Anchorage of organizations such as FedEx and UPS that are experts in materials handling suggests the possibility of outstanding partnership opportunities.

Technology as a Public Service

Survey results suggest that a majority of people in Anchorage have computers and Internet access in their homes. However, many people do not have such access. Others prefer to use library computers over their home computers because they only have a slow dial-up connection at home, do not have a printer, or have a computer that is malfunctioning or broken.

Increasingly, public access computers are a primary link between un-employed/under-employed job seekers and potential employers. Individuals create and print resumes, search job sites and receive emails regarding interviews using library computers. Others take online course, apply for veteran's benefits or research consumer purchases using the Library's computers.

The Anchorage Public Library currently offers an insufficient number of public access computers to meet public needs. Funding for additional computers and for the enhancement of the Library's bandwidth to support these computers is a high priority.

Sustainability and Potential Sources of Funding

The ***SURVIVE, STRIVE, THRIVE*** progression that is presented in this report suggests that the Anchorage Public Library's path to becoming an exemplary library will take some time. However, the three part strategy does not mean that supporters of quality library service in Anchorage should sit on their hands waiting for the economy to improve or for the Municipal budget outlook to brighten.

The three part strategy that is offered calls for immediate action to minimize further damage to the Library's ability to serve the public, medium-range action to reverse the tide and to begin the path to excellence and long term action to sustain the improvements that are made. It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that funding is the "elephant in the room." The financial issue looms large and it would be easy to give up, believing nothing can be done. Nothing could be further from the truth. Following is a description of a large number of efforts the Library must undertake if it is going to begin its journey to becoming a world-class 21st century library.

If the Library is going to succeed, it must:

- Maximize the impact of funding that is currently available
- Stabilize existing tax support
- Develop new revenue streams

Maximizing the impact of the funding that is currently available will first involve seeking ways to reduce costs. The analysis of the APL budget clearly demonstrated the detrimental effect that intergovernmental charges have had on what was characterized as the Library's stock-in-trade (materials and staffing). The Library must work in partnership with the Municipality to identify ways to reduce these costs that have, until now, been totally out of the Library's control.

There is good reason for the Municipality to work with the Library in this effort. All Municipal departments face similar pressures. Finding ways to reduce overhead and administrative charges will allow the Municipality to deliver more in the way of direct services with the tax dollars that are already available.

Maximizing the impact of funding that is currently available may also involve spending some money in the short-term in order to save money in the long-term. A one-time capital investment in labor saving technologies such as radio-frequency identification and an automated materials handling system will pay long-term dividends by allowing library staff to work more efficiently. The Library will still need considerably more staff than it has at the moment, but it will not need as much more staff if an investment is made in labor-saving technology.

Partnerships with other organizations may also offer some promise for maximizing the impact of funding that is currently available. Reducing costs through group purchasing arrangements and collaborating on the development of more streamlined service delivery mechanisms can generate some savings.

Stabilizing existing tax support is also imperative and presents a considerable challenge. The urgency that attends this step is conveyed in the choice of the word ***SURVIVE*** to describe the initial step on the path to success. In order to ***THRIVE***, the patient must first ***SURVIVE***. The very first priority is to stop the bleeding.

The third component is the development of new revenue streams. The strategies that are presented below reject the notion that the Library's fate is tied to the Municipality's budget. The strategies assume that the Library will be proactive in pursuing new sources of public and private funds to accomplish its goals.

The funding strategies are divided into three categories. They are:

- Public Funding Strategies
- Partnership Strategies
- Private/Philanthropic Strategies

Public Funding Strategies

The public funding strategies relate to the Library's tax-based support.

Getting Control Over IGCs

Intergovernmental charges have accounted for more than half of the increase in the Library's budget over the last five years. This increase has had a direct negative impact on the ability of the Library to purchase new materials and to maintain staffing levels. At the current rate of growth, IGCs will approach 40% of the Library's budget by the year 2015. This is simply unacceptable.

The Library must begin working with the Municipality immediately to address this issue. Since IGCs impact all Municipal departments, finding ways to decrease overhead charges will benefit all departments and, in turn, all tax payers by allowing every department to provide more direct service at the same cost.

The Library should be an eager partner with the Municipality to apply site-based management techniques, to explore "contracting out" some services and seeking to identify the causes of sharp increases in specific IGC categories. Any savings realized as a result of these efforts should be redirected toward the purchase of new materials and/or the licensing of online information content.

Capital Investment in Labor-Saving Technologies

Considerable long-term savings are possible through the implementation of labor saving technologies. Several of the technologies are closely related. They are the implementation of radio-frequency identification (RFID), the implementation of an automated materials handling system (AMHS), the use of RFID-based check-out and check-in for both staff assisted circulation and self-check, and the use of an RFID materials security system.

The combined impact of applying these technologies would be significant. Loss of materials to theft would be reduced, security would appear to be less intrusive, self-check could be increased from its current low level to somewhere between 60% to 90% and less staff time would be required to sort returned materials in preparation for re-shelving.

Unfortunately, the implementation of these technologies would require a significant initial investment. Every item in the collection would need to be tagged with an RFID target. Each item would also need to be linked to the Library's database. New check-in and check-out equipment and a new materials handling system would need to be installed.

The Anchorage Public Library should first appeal to the Municipality to support the implementation of RFID through its capital budget. By amortizing the capital cost over time, the Municipality would offer the public the benefits of the service in the short-term while minimizing the immediate impact on the Municipality's budget.

The Library might also explore the possibility of the Municipality's paying for a portion of the implementation cost with the balance of the costs coming from a foundation or from other private sources. The question in regard to these technologies should not be "if" but rather "how."

Exploration of Direct State-Aid for Local Library Services

Equitable access to quality library service is recognized in some states as an issue worthy of direct state tax support. While the Anchorage Public Library receives a small amount of funding through the State of Alaska for acting as a

statewide resource, the consultants believe that seeking additional direct state aid is a sensible goal.

Efforts to secure additional state aid should not be seen as an Anchorage issue. Rather, the Library and Municipality should join forces with communities, large and small, throughout Alaska to implement a program that would provide ongoing support for public library services. In fact, an increase in State Library Aid overall would benefit all libraries but would especially be beneficial to Anchorage. Article 03 of the Alaska Statutes (Library Assistance Grants) provides a formula that currently offers Anchorage only a marginal benefit in that aid is provided on a per library basis (the Loussac Library receives the same amount that would go to the smallest library in the State). However, Sec. 14.56.330 provides that after the minimum per library is met that the balance would be distributed on a per capita basis. Since current payments approach the per library threshold, a modest increase in State Aid (distributed on a per capita basis) could benefit Anchorage significantly.

Exploration of Alternative Governance and Funding Structures Such as Library Districts

Public libraries that have the independent authority to appeal directly to taxpayers for support have generally fared better than those that are operated as municipal or county departments. Several states have a significant number of “district libraries.” Washington State may be a good model for Alaska to consider; however several other states including Illinois, Michigan, and Texas offer variations of the library district concept.

In many ways, the library district idea is closely aligned with the spirit of this plan. Simply stated, under the library district form of governance, the people, rather than the Assembly, would get to decide the level at which they wished to support library service. Typically, enabling legislation at the state level calls for an initial levy election to set a specific tax rate for library purposes. In most places, this tax rate is subject to review/renewal by the public at a regular interval (usually every 3 to 5 years).

While this approach may be seen as a radical departure from the current structure, it is consistent with the popularity of government by initiative. If the Library is perceived as a value, it will be supported at a level that will allow it to thrive.

Population-Growth Based Targets for Municipal Funding

The Anchorage Public Library's budget has been disconnected from the reality of population growth for many years. The most striking manifestation of this is the fact that library staffing decreased by 28 full-time equivalents (nearly 25%) during a time when the Municipality's population grew by approximately fourteen percent. It would seem apparent that maintaining quality services in this environment is next to impossible.

The Library needs to work closely with the Mayor and the Assembly to identify reasonable baselines for staffing levels and for materials expenditures. An effort should then be made to establish target ratios for staffing and materials expenditures that factor in population growth and usage of services. Percentage target levels should also be established for staffing, library materials and electronic resources, and overhead costs that are reasonable and sustainable.

While this approach does not guarantee that library support will grow (targets do not assure that supporting allocations will be approved), targets do offer a solid approach to monitoring the Library's condition. If targets are not met one year, deficits in future years grow and decision-makers have a better understanding of the true situation.

It appears that the Library has seldom benefitted during boom periods and that it has been cut to a greater extent than many other departments during recurring "busts." Targets would afford the Mayor and the Assembly the information they need to seize opportunities to address shortfalls when the Municipality is in a stronger fiscal condition.

State Endowment of Services/Functions (Wyoming model)

In 2007-2008, the State of Wyoming, which was enjoying the benefits of increased revenues related to taxation tied to oil and natural gas extraction, established what is known as the "Public Library Endowment Challenge Program." The State legislature created an endowment fund to directly benefit public libraries and to encourage charitable giving in support of libraries.

The program identifies amounts available to each public library in the State that can be used as a “challenge” fund. State dollars match private giving. This approach takes advantage of times when state revenues are relatively healthy and provides an enduring incentive for libraries to actively seek private support.

The Anchorage Public Library and the Municipality of Anchorage, in concert with other libraries and organizations such as the Alaska Library Association, should work toward the eventual implementation of a similar program to benefit Alaska libraries.

Partnership Strategies

You may recall that a series of seven areas of partnership were presented earlier in this report. They are:

- **Partnership with the people of Anchorage**
This partnership will be necessary to preserve traditional library services and to develop new user-driven services that are highly relevant to the people of the Municipality. The Friends of the Library organization provides a starting point for building a network of community contacts.
- **Partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage**
This partnership will be required to address the rapid increase of Intergovernmental Charges and to secure stable funding levels that reflect population growth and service needs.
- **Partnership with other governmental entities**
Partnerships with the State Legislature, the Alaska State Library, the School District of Anchorage, and other governmental entities will be critical in pursuing strategies to secure one-time and/or ongoing funding and to develop and implement innovative service models.
- **Partnership with the private sector**
Partnerships with corporate neighbors promise to help the Library move quickly to develop information products and services that will engage a new generation of technology-savvy library users.

- **Partnership with community organizations**

Partnerships with non-profit and other community organizations will enable the Library to connect with segments of the population that have not traditionally used library services. These partnerships will also enable the Library to realize its promise as a boundary-spanning organization in addressing community problems.

- **Partnership with other libraries**

Partnerships with other libraries including a continuation of the close relationship with the Consortium Library and new alliances with exemplary libraries will enable APL to move toward the implementation of technology-based products and services that offer better access to traditional library resources as well as access to new electronic information sources.

- **Partnership with the philanthropic sector**

The Anchorage Library Foundation serves as a primary link between the Library and the broader philanthropic sector. These partnerships will be needed to provide financial support for demonstrations of new and innovative service models, capital projects, and, through endowments, for ongoing operational support.

Some of the partnerships presented hold promise for maximizing the impact of funding that is currently available. Other partnership efforts will help stabilize existing tax support. Many are aimed at developing new revenue streams or enabling the library to introduce new, innovative services at a reasonable cost.

Partnerships with the private sector appear to have tremendous potential. We will mention just three, but many others may be possible.

- Partner with FedEx, UPS, or both to help design new materials handling systems and procedures
- Partner with large corporate entities to create a loaned executive/loaned technologist program to assist the Library in the development of Library 2.0 applications that deliver information content to handheld devices
- Partner with corporate entities to secure assistance in developing a comprehensive marketing program designed to inform the community of the services the library offers

Private/Philanthropic Strategies

Implementing the private funding and philanthropic funding strategies that are outlined below can spell the difference between creating a library that is adequate and a library that is exceptional. The Library should work toward a funding model that uses public (tax-based) funding to support basic operations and that uses gifts from individuals, corporate donors and foundations to provide innovative services or traditional services at an exceptionally high level.

The strategies range from those that will generate immediate assistance that will help the Anchorage Public Library survive the current fiscal crisis to those that will have a lasting effect on the ability of the Library to sustain a high level of service over the long-haul.

Providing Greater Opportunities for Small Individual Gifts

A question on the web survey asked respondents to indicate their willingness to pay for the improvement of Library services in Anchorage. While the responses received were largely from library users, significant numbers of Anchorage residents indicated that they were willing to “put their money where their mouth is.” Nearly thirty percent of library users (28.2%) and eighteen percent (18.0%) of non-users indicated that they would be willing to pay \$10 or more per person to improve the Anchorage Public Library. In all, more than 1,500 survey respondents indicated this level of support.

The consultants believe that there are a sizeable number of Anchorage residents that would be willing to contribute small amounts to the Library if offered a convenient method for doing so. The Anchorage Library Foundation should explore this potential and should seek innovative ways (use of social media tools, acceptance of credit card donations online, etc.) to tap this resource.

Greater Emphasis by the Library Foundation on Long-Term Fund-Development vs. Fund-Raising

Library Friends organizations and Foundations often emphasize fund-raising for specific capital projects or initiatives and neglect fund-development activities that benefit the Library over a much longer term. The Anchorage Library Foundation should review its current activities and should identify short-term, mid-term and long-term goals and objectives and should develop short, mid, and long-term

fund-raising and fund development strategies that match these goals and objectives.

Over time, the Foundation should place a greater emphasis on mechanisms such as deferred giving and should establish designated funds within the Library Foundation that appeal to specific segments of the population. One model that may prove useful would be efforts to endow specific activities in the fashion employed by symphony orchestras. Instead of an endowed clarinet chair, donors might be offered the opportunity to contribute to an endowed storytelling chair. The consultants believe that the Alaska Collection also has potential as a permanently endowed service within the Library.

The Library Foundation must work closely with the Municipality in their efforts. The Mayor and Assembly should recognize that the enthusiasm of donors will wane quickly if private gifts merely replace tax support. For example, if the Foundation was able to create an endowment to support the Alaska collection, the Municipality should allow the Library to redirect funds that currently support the Alaska Collection to improve other library services or collections rather than simply reducing the Library's budget.

Prospectus Approach to Seeking Foundation Support for Introducing Innovative Services

Foundations and philanthropists are interested in affecting their communities in a significant way. They direct their dollars toward projects and initiatives that achieve results and avoid programs that merely maintain the status-quo.

The Anchorage Public Library and the Anchorage Library Foundation need to package their requests for support using a prospectus approach. In other words, the Library and Foundation need to make the case for philanthropic support based on the outcomes that the proposed initiatives will achieve.

This plan presents many ideas that have the potential for changing the Anchorage community in positive ways. The Library and Library Foundation need to make other foundations and potential donors aware of the Library's vision for service to the community and particularly to the potential results that would accompany a transformation of the Library into a world-class 21st century institution.

Working with Foundations and the Municipality to Seek “Bridge Funding” to assist with Survival While Developing Targets and Enhanced Public Funding

While funding from foundations and other donors should be seen primarily as a source for introducing new programs rather than for sustaining existing programs, the current fiscal situation may require turning to non-tax sources for a few specific continuing efforts.

A good example is the Ready to Read Resource Center, which is currently supported through a federal Library Services and Technology (LSTA) grant awarded through the Alaska State Library. This program is very consistent with the desired outcomes of this plan. Seeking “bridge” funding that would enable programs such as these to continue until Municipal or other tax-based support is available is defensible. Discontinuing a program that works and that contributes to early literacy would be tragic and counter-productive.

APPENDICES

- A. Public Focus Group Report**
- B. Staff Focus Group Report**
- C. 21st Century Library Summit Report**
- D. Sounding Board Members & Activities**
- E. Web-Based Survey Report**
- F. List of Interviewees**
- G. Town Hall Meeting**
- H. Library Usage Distribution**
- I. Library Peer Analysis Report**
- J. Trends in 21st Century Libraries**
- K. Library Design Concepts**



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ANCHORAGE 21ST CENTURY LIBRARIES