BPL 2021: Accessibility, Connection, Diversity

The Library is an arena of possibility, opening both a window into the soul and a door onto the world.

- Rita Dove
A LETTER FROM THE
LIBRARY BOARD PRESIDENT

We are pleased to present the 2021 Strategic Plan. The development of this Strategic plan has been a long time coming and we are excited to present a short-term plan that will allow us to springboard and address directional goals through 2025. Although Covid-19 delayed planning and shifted focus for the staff and board, it also further revealed the power the Berwyn Public Library has on the community. Throughout the pandemic, the Library worked hard to be accessible to patrons virtually, over the phone, through drop-offs and by offering curbside pickup. The forward thinking by the staff allowed the community to hold on to a sense of normal, while ensuring safety was still top of mind.

This 2021 strategic plan reveals that the priority of the Library is to be accessible, remain connected and celebrate the diverse contributions of our community we serve. To guide this plan, three strategic goals were developed to help move the Library forward. Those goals include Organizational Development, Community Presence, and Welcoming Environment. Each of these goals have carefully crafted priorities and metrics to measure their success over time.

The thoughtful process developed by the staff of the Berwyn Public Library reveals their passion for their work and their desire to get resources in the hands of as many individuals as possible. While this strategic plan helps set a structure short term, there is still work occurring by the Library board, Library Director and Staff to prepare for the ultimate strategic plan that will guide the Library through 2025. We look forward to continue working together with the community at large to further the vision, mission and strategy of the Berwyn Public Library.

Erika Corona Owens
Acknowledgements

BERWYN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Erika Corona Owens – President
Rosemary Caruk – Vice President
Maria Salinas – Secretary
Marta Rodriguez – Treasurer
Emily Diebold – Trustee
Cindy Hayes – Trustee
Barbara Korbel – Trustee
Nora Laureto – Trustee
Paul Nudd – Trustee

BERWYN PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR & MANAGEMENT TEAM

Tammy Sheedy – Executive Library Director
Kathleen Behrendt – Youth Services Manager
Deborah Bolda – Audio Visual/Collection Management Manager
Nona Chapman – Office Manager
Christine Lojewski – Outreach Manager
Maria Lupercio – Circulation Manager
Hannah Rapp – Readers Advisory Manager

ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mayor Robert Lovero
Graphic Design: Elizabeth Dickter – Outreach Librarian
Planning Assistant: Debra Burke – Office Associate
Before there was a City of Berwyn, there was a Berwyn Library.

In 1894, the leading women of Berwyn met in the home of Dr. Arthur MacNeal, the founder of MacNeal Hospital, to organize a small lending library. They agreed to circulate books out of the home of Charles E. Piper, co-founder of Berwyn. By 1901, when Berwyn residents voted to separate from Cicero and form a township of their own, the library already had outgrown its home base.

Relocated to Francis Lackey’s dry goods store on the southwest corner of what are now Windsor and Grove Avenues, the library’s increasing popularity soon spelled its demise. Circulation outgrew Mr. Lackey’s available time and space; the books were turned over to Emerson School, and the library went into hiatus.

In 1922, the Berwyn Woman’s Club organized a library for children that soon re-ignited adult interest in reading. The Woman’s Club spearheaded a petition drive for a tax-supported public library, and on November 18, 1924 the Berwyn City Council established a “Public Library and Reading Room” to be governed by a nine-member board appointed by the mayor.

By November 1925, the library board had mustered a $500 loan to rent space and operate a library in the Berwyn Club Building at 33rd Street and Oak Park Avenue. Twelve more rental locations and one public space in Berwyn City Hall would follow. In 1960, voters approved construction of branch libraries at 3400 Oak Park Avenue and 6420 W. 16th Street. Later referendums to build a single, central facility failed to gain voter approval. In 1996, the library settled into its present quarters at 2701 S. Harlem Avenue, the former CSA Fraternal Life building purchased and retooled for library use by the City of Berwyn.

As the Berwyn Public Library approaches its 25th anniversary at its current location, the Library continues to be responsive to the ever changing needs of the community. The development of this strategic plan has given us the foundation necessary to be responsive to the growing needs and expectations of our patrons. The Berwyn Public Library remains committed to providing equitable, quality services the public needs and deserves. Public libraries need to be adaptive to change to remain relevant in their community, and the Berwyn Public Library is committed to meeting and exceeding this challenge.

**MISSION OF THE BERWYN PUBLIC LIBRARY:**

The mission of the Berwyn Public Library is to provide an accessible environment for learning, enlightenment, connection and enjoyment where diversity is celebrated and connections are created.

**VISION OF THE BERWYN PUBLIC LIBRARY**
The Berwyn Public Library is the heart of an inclusive, diverse and dynamic community where people and ideas connect.

**BPL 2021: Goals, Actions & Indicators of Success**

**Focus Areas:**
As we begin the strategic planning process with this BPL 2021 plan, our first step was to survey the staff as to what direction they wanted to see the library move toward in the future. Six top goals were identified. For the purpose of this 2021 plan, the top three goals will be addressed.

**Top three focus areas:**
1. Organizational Development
2. Community Presence
3. Welcoming Environment

Within these focus areas, goals were created to guide the direction and make improvements. Following the goals are action items for implementation, along with indicators of success. The purpose of this plan is to begin a strategic planning process that will address directional goals through the year 2025.

As we move forward in the strategic planning process, we will be working to gather additional data from community partners, organizations and residents to assist with formulating focus areas that address additional needs within the community of Berwyn.

**BPL 2021: Organizational Development**

**GOAL 1:** Create an environment where staff members are recognized for their positive contributions to the organization and feel recognized and appreciated as individual contributors and as divisional teams.

**WHY:** The Berwyn Public Library understands that engagement and commitment are best maintained through positive reinforcement and support that demonstrates the high value that is placed on its staff members. The Library expects the staff to be responsible for carrying out its mission, and through positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of staff efforts, the Library helps to build a stronger and more effective workforce. Building trust between management and staff is essential to achieving this goal.

**ACTIONS:**
1. Management and the Staff Activities Committee will explore how to formalize staff appreciation within the Library.
2. The Staff Activities Committee and Administration will explore options for and implement communication tools to acknowledge patron and coworker compliments.
3. The Library will celebrate institutional achievements and recognize the role staff members achieved in obtaining them.
4. Management will actively seek feedback from staff on decision making issues via surveys, committees or other means and maintain an ongoing dialog with and between library administration and staff.

5. Management will make a commitment to keep an open line of communication with staff, actively work to improve staff morale, and foster a culture of shared respect and trust.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:
1. Staff participation at Library and other citywide events increases.
2. Coworkers praise and acknowledge each other within their own divisions and library wide.
3. Management receives positive feedback from staff as to their feelings of worth within the organization.

GOAL 2: Staff members are active participants in creating a welcoming, positive environment both internally with each other and externally with the patrons.

WHY: Excellent customer service is the cornerstone of any successful organization. It connects our patrons to our Library and keeps them coming back. People are the core value of our institution, and upholding the highest standards of service is the most basic foundation on which we operate.

ACTIONS:
1. The staff of the Berwyn Public Library provide excellent and exceptional customer service and are proactive in assisting customers and in finding ways to remove barriers to access.
   a. Customer service training programs will help staff develop the best customer service skills.
   b. Manager training workshops through HR Source will give the managers the skills needed to train, assist and evaluate the skills of their staff.
2. The staff are committed to professional growth and to continually develop and refresh skills needed to deliver excellent service.
   a. Staff in-service days will offer skill building programs
   b. Outside continuing education opportunities are offered to staff in all job classifications
3. Staff members will work with the community to assist with defining the Library’s role and determine what services the library needs to offer.
4. Internally, staff will begin to work as a team rather than individual divisions.
5. Gaps in internal communication will be identified in order to increase effective communication.

INDICTORS OF SUCCESS:
1. Circulation statistics increase
2. Program attendance increases
3. Door count increases
4. Management receives positive reports from managers and patrons about employee interactions with each other and the public
5. Staff treat each other with respect; work is accomplished in a positive fashion with a team approach
6. Surveys of patrons are utilized to gather feedback on satisfaction levels related to interactions with staff.
7. Staff members see themselves as an organization rather than individual divisions.
8. Internal communication will allow all staff members to be knowledgeable of information relating to the Library and its operation.

**GOAL 3:** Staff members understand the needs of the community and patrons, and are proficient in utilizing all of the Library’s resources, and actively use and promote the usage of these resources with our patrons.

**WHY:** In order to remain a strong and viable institution in changing times, the Library needs to be flexible – to consistently reinvent our services to remain connected to our patrons and to bring in new patrons. Staff must be able to understand the Library’s resources and services, to communicate them effectively to the public, and to adapt new and innovative strategies to fulfill its mission.

**ACTIONS:**
1. Using Niche Academy, staff will be connected to training opportunities on library resources and services.
2. Training opportunities will be available that allow staff to keep pace with advances in library technology.
3. Establish effective channels for staff and the public to communicate about ways to improve service.
4. Ensure that Library employees are adequately trained to assist patrons with their technology needs.
5. Identify and implement marketing strategies to reach community members and promote the Library services.
6. Empower the staff to be innovative, and actively experiment to better serve the needs of the patrons.

**INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:**
1. Technology proficiency of the staff rises.
2. Library collaboration with outside organizations and partnerships increase.
3. Library card registrations increase.
4. Usage of online resources increases.

---

**BPL 2021: Community Presence (Connection)**

**GOAL 1:** Create a visible, mobile presence in the community that takes services and programs to places beyond our physical buildings.

**WHY:** The library recognizes the need to provide access to library services to areas of the community that are underserved. In reaching new communities and demographics, the Library recognizes that it must meet patrons where they are, and adapt services beyond the Library walls.

**ACTIONS:**
1. Provide innovative services to targeted areas within the community where the population is traditionally under-represented as library patrons.
   a. Develop a pop-up Library service, targeting locations and audiences to connect with new patrons with the goal of making them new library patrons.
   b. Further develop usage of the book bike in order to bring mobile services to underserved areas of the community
   c. Continue to research methods of providing access to digital resources in underserved areas of the community.
2. Investigate the possibility of providing 24-hour library vending machines to provide services in areas that are not served by the traditional building such as train stations.
3. Encourage staff participation in neighborhood community groups, block parties and school events for the purpose of staff being aware of issues in the areas they serve. Each division within the library will participate in at least one community event per year.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:
1. The community becomes more aware of the many services offered by the library and the number of requests for library services increases due to the awareness.
2. Staff members become more actively and civically engaged in the community they serve, and feel empowered to pro-actively seek out opportunities to serve the community in new, innovative and/or meaningful ways.
3. Educators are aware of the Library’s ability to provide students with access to a diverse collection of books, materials and online resources to aid in learning for all groups.
4. New patrons are attracted to visit the library and usage statistics continue to increase.
5. The number of active library card holders increases.

GOAL 2: Create and sustain meaningful partnerships that support the community and find methods to evaluate the impact of the partnerships.

WHY: The Library, as the cornerstone of education within the community, needs to partner with organizations within the community that share its mission, vision and core values and ensure that partnerships are working towards mutually beneficial goals that support the community’s objectives.

ACTIONS:
1. The Library Director and the Community Engagement staff will work towards library staff being available to participate in community organization events.
2. To ensure that resources are maximized and that partnerships are effective for both the institution and the community an evaluation method for both entering into partnerships and accessing outcomes will be created and consistently used.

INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS:
1. The Berwyn Public Library improves its reputation in the community as a community anchor institution, a valuable and knowledgeable resource. Opportunities and requests increase to have Library staff members attend a variety of community, civic, business and educational events to share knowledge, resources and/or programming.
2. A method of partnership evaluation will be created, understood and utilized by staff members at all levels when entering into partnerships and upon completion, or at regular intervals throughout partnerships.
GOAL 3: Communicate the presence, the value, and the impact of our services through traditional and new, non-traditional methods, and through a re-branding of the Library using the theme Connection, Accessibility and Diversity.

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

Using the Library’s new mission as a communication vehicle will strengthen the visual recognition and brand of the Library in the minds of the community members.

ACTIONS:
1. Library staff will assess new means of communication, especially new forms of social media, for suitability to the Library’s goals, mission and demographics and implement these media tools as appropriate.
   a. The Library will develop a social media policy and guidelines for staff.
   b. The Library will find ways to increase use and awareness of the Library’s website, social media presence and other mobile applications.
   c. The Library will explore software products to provide an online experience where patrons can further their interactions with both staff and others. For instance, an area where book club members can continue their discussions virtually after a Library book club program.
   d. Explore using podcasts to share information with the community.
2. The Library Limelite monthly newsletter will be reformatted to reflect the new mission of the library.
3. The Library will continue to use traditional means of communication such as newsletters, flyers, advertisements in community magazines and newspapers to reach community members.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:
1. The Library will obtain higher levels of customer feedback and as such be able to identify and be responsive to patron needs.
2. The new Library branding will be easily recognized by the community and associated with the Library.
3. Library staff will become more proficient in technology and other means that allow collaboration across the library.

**BPL 2021: Welcoming Environment (Diversity & Accessibility)**

GOAL 1: Create an inclusive environment where all members of the community feel welcome by removing unnecessary barriers to services and facilitate positive interactions between staff and patrons.
WHY: Equitable access to libraries have the ability to promote literacy, spark lifelong learning and connect communities. The Berwyn Public Library believes that overdue fees create barriers to use for those who have limited resources. Elimination of overdue fees will allow equitable use of the library for all community members. Library fees disproportionately impact lower income families and individuals.

ACTIONS:
1. Beginning January 1, 2021, the Berwyn Public Library will implement a policy for fine free use.
2. The Circulation Division will, with the cooperation of SWAN (System Wide Automated Network), develop a process to purge existing library fines on patron’s library cards.
3. Eliminate unnecessary barriers to obtaining a library card; explore renewal of library card options online.
4. Investigate ways to provide services to patrons that have transportation challenges. Expand option of home delivery.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:
1. Decrease in the number of patrons blocked due to overdue fees
2. Increase in number of items circulating both physically and digitally
3. Increase in the number of registered library card holders.
4. Fewer negative staff/patron interactions
5. Staff time will be better spent assisting patrons with other services rather than fine collection.

GOAL 2: Provide free and open access to information to patrons of all abilities, ages, races, genders and gender identities, socio-economic classes and religions that reflects and engages Berwyn’s diverse community and residents equitably and inclusively.

WHY: The Berwyn Public Library affirms the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, which states “equity, diversity and inclusion are central to the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom.” Equity means increasing diversity by improving conditions of disadvantaged groups; diversity means recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of each individual; inclusion means creating an environment where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully. Embracing these values create an inclusive environment where all voices have the opportunity to be heard, and everyone feels welcomed.

ACTIONS:
1. The Berwyn Public Library and Berwyn Public Library Board of Trustees will develop a Diversity and Inclusion Library Statement.
2. The Berwyn Public Library Collection Development committee will create guidelines to conduct a diversity audit of:
   a. Collections. Designated staff in each division will evaluate their respective collections using the guidelines of the diversity audit. Materials will be removed/added as needed.
   b. Programs. Programming in each division will be evaluated and new programs will be developed that promote appreciation and understanding of the diversity in the community.
   c. Technology. The Library will evaluate their website, social media and other technology and remove barriers to access patrons with physical, developmental or language restrictions.
3. The Berwyn Public Library Collection Development committee will review and revise the Collection Management Policy.
4. The Berwyn Public Library Board of Trustees will review and revise the current Meeting Room Policy to balance reasonable access and usage with the need for the Library to meet its core purpose.

**INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:**
1. The materials collection of the Berwyn Public Library will be more inclusive and diverse.
2. Program attendance will increase.
3. Website usage statistics will increase.
4. Increased awareness of the Library and Library services throughout the city.

**GOAL 3:** Create a library environment that makes everyone, both staff and patrons, feel safe, welcomed and respected.

**WHY:** Libraries have traditionally been seen as safe havens where people are empowered to explore, ask questions and express themselves without judgement, no matter who they are or where they come from. The Berwyn Public Library seeks to create a respectful, safe and welcoming environment that invites personal growth, provides a physical “hub” for community and provides patron centered services reflecting our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. The concept of inclusive services should be evident in all library services.

**ACTIONS:**
1. The Berwyn Public Library and the Library Board of Trustees will conduct an Inclusive Services Assessment to identify gaps for inclusive services.
2. All current staff, and all future hires, will undergo an Inclusive Services training workshop.
3. Staff will be trained to provide inclusive services for all interactions including but not limited to:
   a. Arrival at the building (greeting patrons, making building and materials accessible)
   b. Interactions with library staff (body language, tone, proactive/reactive responses)
   c. Library environment (ensuring aisle are navigable, access to technology, individual privacy)
   d. Passive interactions (website, signage, displays and marketing)
4. Staff formed committee will create inclusive services initiatives to determine how accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion can be embedded in all aspects of the library.
5. Actively hire and support staff who are invested in and represent the diversity of the community they serve.

**INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:**
1. Results of the Inclusive Services assessment will create guidelines for future strategic planning, organizational development and patron services.