BCLS

BLAIR COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-2020

Blair County Library System
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Summary, Process & Goals

On behalf of the Blair County Library System (BCLS), and its 8 member libraries, this 2017-2020 Strategic Plan states a shared understanding of agreed-upon goals and priorities for the next four years. It is also meant to convey that understanding to our partners and funding agencies, as well as the public.

This plan represents the culmination of months of work. Input from the system's head librarians, the BCLS board and selected community leaders and organizational partners was essential to completing this plan. We are grateful to consultant Tracy Carey for facilitating several of our sessions.

This plan reflects a focus on the following five goals:

- EXEMPLARY GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

- STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

- EIGHT LIBRARIES ARE ENSURED

This plan is meant to be a living document. The librarians of the eight county libraries will review the plan in July and August of 2017 and have input on a detailed work plan will be developed for each goal. This plan and the work plan will be presented to the BCLS board at their September 2017 meeting for final approval. This plan will be updated each year and presented to the board with evaluation of previous year at April board meetings.

We look forward to the next steps in our journey!

Jennifer Knisely
System Administrator

Timothy Salony
County Coordinator

Catherine Martin
ILS Specialist

June 20, 2017

Mission & Vision

Vision Statement: The Blair County Library System will become the most innovative federated system in the Commonwealth.

Mission Statement The Blair County Library System provides guidance to ensure stability and a foundation for growth in library services across eight libraries in Blair County.

Values:

Innovation: BCLS values the process and products of introducing new ideas, devices and methods for the provision of library services in Blair County.

Continuity: BCLS values providing consistent library services to all the residents of Blair County through its 8 service outlets.

Access: BCLS provides its constituents (libraries and library users) with information that is distributed in an equitable and accessible manner by removing as many barriers to service as possible.

Leadership: BCLS values role-modeling all the behaviors and values it espouses by providing excellent service to its member libraries.
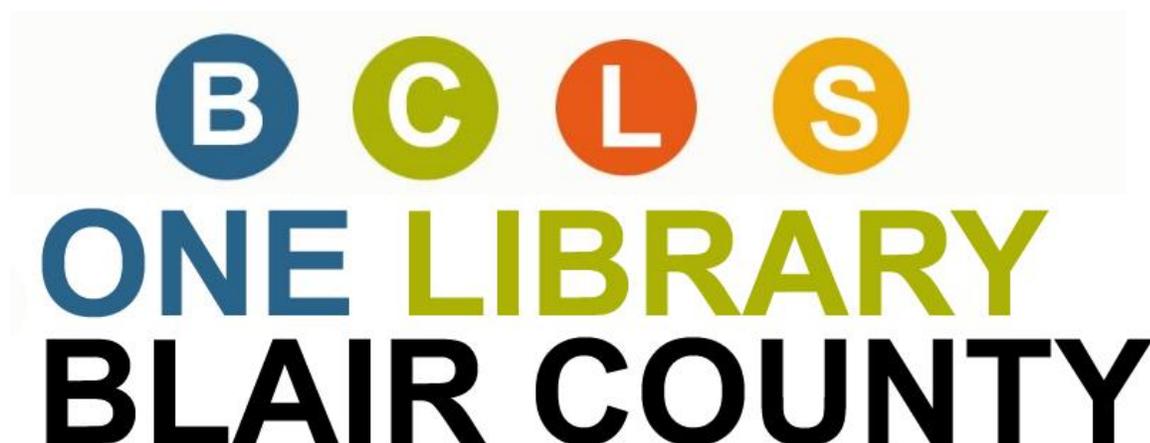
History

On January 13, 1965, the Blair County Commissioners E.G. Hamill, Correll Gressley and Edward Flanagan formally indicated their intention to cooperate with the Blair County Library Association to foster cooperative public library service by meeting the requirements of the Pennsylvania Library Code for state grants.   Under the Library Code, the County Commissioners are the central enabling body to launch county-wide library service by nominating the county library board and adopting a responsible program of financing.

The Commissioners' decision to support county-wide library service fulfilled the decades-long dream of library advocates to provide excellent countywide library service to the residents of Blair County. Library service in Blair County began in 1860 with the establishment of the Altoona Mechanics Library by the Pennsylvania Railroad. This collection formed the basis of the Altoona Area Public Library which was established in 1926. By the end of the 1950s, libraries had been established in Hollidaysburg (1942), Martinsburg (1948), Williamsburg (1950) and Roaring Spring (1959).

The Commissioners' decision also paved the way for a federal grant to upgrade the established libraries and to help establish libraries in Bellwood, Claysburg, and Tyrone in 1965. These eight libraries constitute the Blair County Library System

Since 1965, the Commissioners have contributed over $5.3 million in funding to the Blair County Library System. This funding, combined with State Aid and local funds, has allowed the libraries to provide and maintain innovative programs, services and current collections. Over the past 50 years, library patrons have borrowed over 24 million items from the eight county libraries.

 The eight county libraries that comprise the BCLS have made tremendous strides during the past 50 years in their goal to offer materials, services and technology to meet the educational, recreational, and informational needs of Blair County residents. Over the fifty years the goal has remained constant but the ways to achieve the goal have evolved.

The libraries operated on separate catalogs until coming together to join the SPARK consortium in 2016. In early 2017, they began allowing patrons to put holds on materials from other BCLS libraries for delivery, a process known as 'resource sharing.' This model of focusing on change as a reality and focusing on patron experience to move forward has worked for reaching agreements on major changes on how the System functions and we look forward to using the model as we try to adapt to an ever increasing pace of change.

The libraries' goal of meeting county residents' needs through collections, programs and services has come at increasing costs. In 1967, the total operating budget was about $2.00 per county resident. By 2014, it had risen to almost $15 per county resident. Almost 68% of the total operating budget comes from Blair County sources with the remainder coming from State and Federal funds.

By the end of 1967, the first year that all eight libraries were members of the BCLS, their collection totaled over 110,000 items—today the total is over 335, 000. In 2015-16, almost 300,000 patrons passed though the library doors, tens of thousands of residents tapped into electronic resources and attended library events.

Colson Jones, former Blair County Commissioner and former Board President of the BCLS makes a most idealistic case for support of libraries, when he stated that "Libraries are the most democratic service available to citizens of Blair County. No matter your race, creed, nationality, financial status, level of education, young or old, you can become a member of a library with six words – 'May I have a library card?'

Eight Libraries

Altoona Area Public Library
1600 5th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602
814-946-0417
http://www.altoonalibrary.org/

Bellwood-Antis Public Library
526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA 16617
814-742-8234
http://bapl.lib.pa.us/default.aspx

Claysburg Area Public Library
957 Bedford Street, Claysburg, Pa. 16625
814-239-2782
http://www.claysburglibrary.org/

Hollidaysburg Area Public Library
1 Furnace Road, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
(814) 695-5961
http://hollidaysburglibrary.org/

Martinsburg Community Library
201 South Walnut Street, Martinsburg, PA 16662-1129
814-793-3335
http://www.martinsburgcommunitylibrary.org/

Roaring Spring Community Library
320 East Main Street, Roaring Spring, PA 16673
814-224-2994
http://www.roaringspringlibrary.org/

Tyrone-Snyder Public Library
1000 Pennsylvania Ave, Tyrone, PA 16686
814-684-1133
http://tyronelibrary.org/

Williamsburg Public Library
511 West Second Street, Williamsburg, PA 16693
814-832-3367
http://www.williamsburgpl.net/

Goals

- EXEMPLARY GOVERANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

- STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

- EIGHT LIBRARIES ARE ENSURED

Goal One: Governance and Leadership

Governance and Leadership is the key to building stronger bonds between the System, member libraries and staff in a culture of trust and mutual respect.

Desired Result: All libraries participate in the system according to the terms of the Member Agreement and System Standards.

Objective One: Evaluate and refocus the System and member libraries' responsibilities in a new membership agreement.

Objective Two: Develop system-wide standards to ensure quality service and compliance with state standards

Objective Three: Assure open communication, collaboration and transparency between the libraries and system office.

Objective Four: Focus system resources on identified strengths while monitoring changing community needs.

Objective Five: Improve communication and visibility with elected officials at the local, state and national levels.

Goal Two: Technological Development and Innovation

The system will help equip member libraries to better meet the demands of evolving technology challenges by tracking new trends; seeking out funding for and supporting the implementation of new and innovative programs; and providing technology structures through the ILS and WordPress support.

Desired Result: System office has a strong web presence and County Coordinator participates widely in the SPARK and Evergreen communities. Member libraries are proficient in use of SPARK and have support for their WordPress websites. System office creates innovative programming with external funding to be offered at the libraries.

Objective One: Update the BCLS website to a WordPress site with external hosting.

Objective Two: Provide WordPress support and connect libraries to resources to migrate to WordPress or improve their existing WordPress sites.

Objective Three: Engage in ongoing research and review of electronic resource developments and opportunities, with a focus on being in the forefront of changing technology options.

Objective Four: Monitor external funding opportunities and collaborations in order to provide enhanced programming across the county.

Objective Five: Provide digital media and technology programming support to libraries.

Objective Six: Provide ILS support & training services to BCLS libraries. Research new developments in the ILS and advocate for BCLS library interests in the SPARK and Evergreen communities.

Goal Three: Strong Community Partnerships

Strong Community Partnerships are the key to providing innovative library services. The System office should focus on building a strong community presence for the libraries and offering programming, training and information to and from partners in a centralized fashion.

Desired Result: System office has a strong community presence and County Coordinator/System Administrator are active participants in community groups that partner with libraries. The System has picked a Literacy in which to become a community leader and developed a plan for reaching that goal.

Objective One: Increased community presence for the System Office.

Objective Two: Provide training, resources and information to member libraries on the services offered by partner organizations.

Objective Three: Provide training, resources and information to partner organizations on the services offered by member libraries.

Objective Four: Design programs in concert with partner organizations to be offered at member libraries.

Objective Five: Choose a PA Forward literacy (basic, information, health, civic/social or financial) on which to explore becoming a leading community organization & develop a plan for what it would take for the System to be a county-wide leader and resource around one of the Literacies.

Goal Four: Customer Service Excellence

Customer Service Excellence is the most valuable asset of the System, made possible through quality service to member libraries and providing ongoing training opportunities to library personnel.

Desired result: All member libraries are supported in their efforts to offer excellent customer service to their patrons.

Objective One: Ensure consistent experience across diverse libraries by providing trainings on customer service and ILS use; and working to streamline policies and procedures.

Objective Two: Ensure that the System models excellent customer service by providing excellent service to member libraries.

Objective Three: Encourage participation of library staff in meetings, webinars and conferences.

Goal Five: Eight libraries are ensured

Organization and Structure needs to be reviewed in light of continuously evolving social, economic and technological environment.

Desired Result: Maintain eight libraries to ensure quality service throughout Blair County.

Objective One: Use analytics and outcome evaluation to guide member libraries in their efforts to make innovative changes to library services. Encourage libraries to form their programming and outcomes around PA Forward Literacies.

Objective Two: Highlight the value proposition of library services by collecting return on investment data and showing outcomes-based improvement.

Objective Three: Utilize system resources to help libraries focus on both maintaining and increasing the number of patrons.

Objective Four: Research alternative service and organizational models so as to assist libraries in taking advantage of opportunities in an ever-changing environment.