

Connecting People... Building Community

Ocean County Library Strategic Plan 2008-2011

September 2008

INTRODUCTION

To the Ocean County Library Community,

It is with great pleasure that we present “Connecting People, Building Community - Ocean County Library Strategic Plan 2008-2011”. The Library has a long tradition of planning and our success has been built, in part, upon this foundation.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this document. Our goals were developed utilizing input from all of the library’s stakeholders – customers, staff, governing bodies and community partners. We also wish to acknowledge the on-going contributions made by the Ocean County Library Commission and the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Both of these bodies have been consistent in their support of the library and have fostered the Library’s growth and development.

Finally, thank you to our consultants, Library Development Solutions, for their help and guidance throughout the planning process.

Sincerely,

Elaine H. McConnell, Director

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Suzanne Scro	Supervising Librarian, Branch Manager, Manchester Branch
Sharon Thompson	Principal Library Assistant, Brick Branch
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Connecting People . . . Building Community

The Ocean County Library (OCL) is a success story. The Library has responded to the needs of Ocean County's 500,000 residents with a vibrant system of 20 branches and a Headquarters offering high quality services, friendly and knowledgeable staff, collections and resources to meet the community's diverse needs. The Library has earned many awards and accolades for its diversity, technology, teen, youth and other innovative programs.

In the rapidly changing, high-growth environment that characterizes Ocean County today, the library system has focused much of its effort in the past few years on programs that connect people and provide the building blocks that create healthy communities. It has done so by effectively partnering with cities, towns, schools, agencies, organizations and businesses throughout Ocean County to strengthen its approach to serving residents.

The Ocean County Library has made a commitment to its residents and staff to plan for the future. The previous plan, **Connecting People...Building Community** addressed the changing needs of the communities the library serves with a detailed plan for enhancing services, collections and facilities. There are countless achievements associated with that plan.

In response to continued population growth and changing demographics, the Ocean County Library is shaping its future. The Library will meet the challenges of growth and be attuned to the trends and developments that keep our service relevant. This plan builds on notable successes and renews Ocean County Library's commitment to **connecting people...building community**.

How We Planned

A 15-member planning team consisting of library administrators, branch managers and staff met in a series of planning sessions to develop this revised and transitional strategic plan. Additional input to the plan was provided by meetings with two staff focus groups. The Planning Team was assisted in their deliberations by Leslie and Alan Burger, consultants from Library Development Solutions. In addition to working with the Planning Team, the consultants also visited most of the library branches and held discussions with library staff during those visits to identify issues affecting the delivery of library service and discuss community needs. Because a great deal of the information gathered during these visits consistently focused on OCL's technology plans and needs, John Blyberg, another consultant from Library Development Solutions separately analyzed this area. John's report offered a series of technology recommendations for the future.

Planning Committee members reviewed and discussed the following:

- System accomplishments during the last five years

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- Current local and national trends affecting the way that the OCL provides access, services and resources
- The library system's strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats
- The library's vision and values
- Priorities, goals and objectives for the future

Achievements

The Ocean County Libraries continue to be popular and heavily used community resources. Increasing numbers of residents come to the libraries to attend youth or adult programs, borrow a book or movie, use one of the many computers, participate in volunteer programs or take advantage of other library services. Year after year the popularity of the library system has grown as it has expanded access to Internet resources, popular materials, and offered an ever-expanding array of programs for all ages. During the last five-years there are many achievements of which OCL can be proud with some of the most significant being:

- An emphasis on recruiting staff that reflects the diversity of the communities served by the library
- An excellent inter-branch delivery system that gets materials in the hands of customers more quickly
- Excellent support from the Ocean County Library Commissioners and Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders as well as local governments
- An interconnected system of 20 branches and a headquarters conveniently located to serve over 500,000 county residents
- An increased emphasis on outreach services to ensure that the library has a presence wherever people are gathering
- A commitment to closing the digital divide by offering the public access to computers, wi-fi and technology classes that improve information literacy
- An active volunteer program that enables 860 people of all ages to assist the Ocean County Library in delivering service to the community
- An ongoing commitment to engaging staff in guiding the library's future
- More efficient methods for ordering materials that enable quicker delivery to each branch
- A popular summer reading program that supports literacy by involving more than 7100 adults, teens and children in 2007
- Successful partnerships with communities, schools and other organizations that result in improved programs and library services
- National and state recognition for award winning programs such as the 2007 National Medal for Museum and Library Service
- Recent renovations that resulted in a destination library in Toms River
- Expanded programming for all ages in all branch locations that attract more than 170,163 and another 134,292 people who attend OCL

sponsored programs outside of branches. Over 304,000 people attended OCL programs in 2007

- Expanded access to information resources at the branches, at home, work or school, 24/7, through increased digital content on the library's web site
- The establishment of a system-wide Friends of the Library steering committee
- Assistance to Hancock County Library, Mississippi, affected by natural disaster
- Increase in circulation, program participation and library visits
- Opening of the Whiting Reading Center in 2007 and the redesign and renovation of the Manchester Branch

Trends

The Planning Team discussions considered trends and changes in Ocean County communities that will have a significant impact on the future of library services. Some of these trends may become critical currents that will impact library service in Ocean County for many years, including:

- Increasingly greater demand and expectation for more computers, associated technology services, and technology instruction, since the need to go online has become a daily one for most residents
- A continuing and growing "digital divide" in Ocean County, in which access to and use of electronic information varies greatly
- Increased diversity among Ocean County residents with many people speaking English as a second language, resulting in the need for foreign language reading and viewing material and ESL instruction
- Increased population of older adults who are moving to Ocean County's retirement communities, resulting in a need for specialized services and facilities to meet their needs
- As people live longer and the library serves multiple generations simultaneously the need for a more varied service program that allows the library to appeal to a variety of interests and needs
- Increased demand and expectations for libraries that are convenient, welcoming, comfortable and accessible

Strategic Directions

The Planning Team identified the four strategic areas for renewed focus during this plan

- Great Collections
- Dynamic Technology
- Staffing for Change
- Organizational Transformation

The first three areas of emphasis build on the work that was done in the previous plan. The addition of organizational transformation reflects the investment needed to ensure that OCL continues to effectively address and manage change.

Providing Great Collections

Recent studies have demonstrated that people strongly connect libraries with reading and books. As a result they expect libraries to have the materials they want to read, view or listen to when they want it – popular titles that are being discussed on TV or the web, books that reflect current community trends and interests, and movies that provide the potential for hours of entertainment. This leads to the continued importance of library collection development and collection management as an important strategic direction for the Ocean County Library. Great collections are a key indicator of great library service and correlate positively to increased community support.

The current centralized model that drives OCL collection development will require constant evaluation and enhancements to provide the best possible collection for Ocean County residents. OCL needs a selecting and buying model that allows it to respond quickly to customer demand and interests, with a balance between system-wide buying, cataloging and processing and customization to meet the needs of local communities.

Dynamic Technology

Closing the digital divide is seen as an important function for the Ocean County Library. Library planners recognizes that technology is an integral part of the library service program, As technology transforms the way in which people seek and use information, the library needs to rethink the way in which it applies and supports technology to support public services and library operations. It needs to adopt new service models that harness the use of web 2.0 and other software applications to provide library information services when and where it is most convenient for library customers. It needs to invest in additional public access computers to meet the exploding demand for access to electronic resources, including the Internet, word processing, email, online job applications and forms, proctored tests and all technology related needs. It needs to build a technology infrastructure that supports communication, service delivery, work flow and provide a technology budget and staff to provide realistic responses to resident's growing needs. The need for more desk- top and notebook computers, computer instruction and the budget and infrastructure to meet this challenge is paramount in this revised plan.

Staff for Change

The OCL employs 600 staff in its headquarters and 20 branches. In all areas of the library staffing is being transformed as public expectations for the way in which library service is delivered changes. The early 21st century provides an unprecedented opportunity for libraries to be more fully integrated into people's lives. Customer expectations will require library staff that are open to new and

creative ways of providing service with specific skill sets that combine knowledge of collections and technology with the ability to develop relationships that keep people coming back for more.

The role of public service staff has changed significantly in the past few years as people become more comfortable with the World Wide Web and more familiar with easy-to-use digital resources like Google and Wikipedia to find information. Staff are no longer just information providers but are information facilitators and navigators, there to assist customers in using the library resources, including databases, books, DVDs, computer and printers and all other library resources. Under this plan OCL will make a renewed commitment to hire the right candidates, train them well and retain them by providing opportunities for rewarding careers.

Organizational Transformation

As OCL grows, there is a fear that it will become bureaucratic as it grows in size and that change and innovation will become more difficult. The OCL has learned that measuring results within a dynamic, growing and ever-changing organization responding to a quickly growing community is difficult.

This plan will focus on organizational transformation, an examination of and commitment to the current OCL structure with a commitment to creating a structure that allows the library to respond quickly to changing needs and all staff to contribute to the library's development and growth. The administrative team and staff will find the "right" relationship between the branches and the OCL support department that will allow for streamlined efficient services.

Our Vision

Connecting People...Building Community

This powerful statement captures the essence of the Ocean County Library and its role in the communities it serves. Through an investment in exceptional resources, services, and staff, an ever-expanding and exciting variety of programs and an inter-connected system of destination libraries. The Ocean County Library is committed to providing great library service in the communities and online.

Customer Bill of Rights

The customer bill of rights is at the core of OCL's commitment to exceptional service. We are committed to connecting people and building community. We are equally committed to creating a positive experience for every person who interacts with the Ocean County Library.

OCL Customers will:

- Be treated fairly and with respect in all interactions with the library staff
- Be continuously surprised by what they can find at the library

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- Receive what they want each time they visit one of our libraries and will leave totally satisfied
- Receive great library service from all staff
- Discover great collections and the latest materials as soon as they are published
- View the library as a place of opportunity for everyone
- Feel connected to OCL through a long-term personal relationship that makes each one of them feel special and unique
- Trust and feel confident about their interactions with library staff
- Find readily accessible, innovative technology at all OCL locations
- Understand all the OCL provides and can do for them
- Consider library service as an excellent investment for their tax dollar

Ocean County Library Staff Values

Staff is the key to the provision of exceptional service. Our staff values reflect our commitment to our customers. Each of our 600 staff is committed to these values.

Community

- I ask my community for input
- I take the library's message and value to the community
- I commit to being a partner with the community
- I make sure all segments of the community know and use the library

Respect

- I am fair, courteous, and helpful to all
- I listen to and care about what others have to say
- I do what it takes to meet their needs

Integrity

- I keep my word
- My behavior reflects the library's standards
- I can be trusted to do my job well

Excellence

- I seek ways to do an outstanding job
- I find creative solutions
- I am a positive and productive team member
- I applaud the good work of others

Customer Service

- I am welcoming to everyone
- I make the customer's day

Staff Bill of Rights

Just as we are committed to **connecting people . . . building community**, we are equally committed to creating the best staff possible to ensure that we accomplish our vision. The staff bill of rights is a statement of commitment from library management regarding our approach to investing in staff.

OCL Staff will:

- receive the training they need to be competent, knowledgeable, and confident service providers including leadership training and project management
- encounter a supportive work environment that encourages risk-taking and innovation
- be treated with respect and fairness
- have the technology they need to support their work
- receive mentoring in their career development
- get great customer service from OCL support departments

Connecting People...Building Community

Strategic Plan Goals

The 2008-2011 plan of service focuses on four goals to help move OCL closer to its vision of connecting people . . .building community.

- **The Library is the Heart of the Community**
- **The Library Nurtures Growth and Change**
- **Ocean County Residents Use and Champion the Library**
- **The Library is Committed to Organizational Excellence**

Goal 1

The Ocean County Library is the Heart of the Community

Objective 1.1 Ocean County Libraries are the destination of choice for personal enrichment, access to information and technology, reading and viewing material and connecting with others

- Develop “real time” alternatives to delivering information in convenient ways to customers, e.g. instant messaging, text messaging,
- Create a centralized, system-wide telephone reference service
- Create a new county-wide annual signature library event, in which all branches participate, to focus public attention on OCL
- Reduce waiting time for public access computers by adding more capacity in each branch either through purchase of more desktop or notebook computers
- Develop additional opportunities for personal enrichment by sponsoring events such as job searching, college admissions, starting a new career or business, money management and other topics
- Meet community demand for current reading, viewing, listening and social media materials (e.g. video games and other interactive technologies)

Objective 1.2 The Library welcomes and serves everyone

- Survey residents in all locations to determine new hours and adjust hours to reflect community needs
- Provide an easy-to-use method for gathering and responding to suggestions from customers

- Establish a “single customer service desk” program to handle all functions (Manchester model) in select single level branches
- Recruit and hire staff who reflect the diversity of the communities served by the library and strive to meet the OCL Diversity Plan mission
- Develop a “Visit and Stay” library initiative for each branch to increase the average length of library visits

Objective 1.3

The Library is responsive to community needs

- Develop an ongoing systematic method to gather information about community needs
- Investigate home delivery (books-by-mail) service for all residents
- Expand new services to attract people in self-contained communities of older adults
- Provide additional computer instruction opportunities to Ocean County residents to help close the digital divide

Objective 1.4

The library is an inviting welcoming destination where people enjoy browsing and visiting

- Revise the facilities master plan to reflect changing trends in building and renovation
- Invest in more modern and flexible display units to adapt to changing needs
- Renew and refresh the restrooms in branches
- Develop standards for creating destination libraries in all Ocean County communities and invest in library make-overs

Objective 1.5

The Library is recognized for its great, diverse collection of reading, viewing and listening resources that respond to the community at the time they need it

- Design a funded process for central collection development to meet unique community needs for materials and replacements
- Work with library suppliers to increase the fulfillment rate and decrease the lag time from order to receipt of materials
- Allocate a portion of collection funds for on-demand purchasing from booksellers to meet immediate demands for new material
- Provide the ability for customers to make an online request of suggested titles for purchase

- Objective 1.6 OCL provides easy access to up-to-date technology resources**
- Monitor, review and reduce wait-times for computers in all locations by adding combined word processing and Internet-ready notebook and desk top computers
 - Revitalize the Trendspotters Task Force with a new mission to develop a public forum on current technology issues of interest to community members such as Web 2.0 and other emerging technologies,
 - Review computer management systems and consider replacing Cybrarian with a system that better matches the library and customer needs
 - Provide compatible software that is as up to date as that used by the public schools, to ensure familiarity and ease of use for students
 - Enhance the library catalog with book cover illustrations, spell checking, user-generated tags and other desirable features
- Objective 1.7 Ocean County residents find it easy and convenient to use their libraries**
- Provide a 24/7 e-branch that enables customers to place holds, request home delivery, search databases and interact with staff
 - Extend the library presence outside of its current library buildings by establishing kiosks in multi-use spaces, shopping malls, and other heavily-trafficked community locations
 - Expand the collection of e-books, downloadable books, movies and music and all digital resources
 - Provide ATM machines and café service in libraries
 - Implement a credit/debit card processing system for all fees and fines
- Objective 1.8 OCL provides an online catalog that makes it easy for users to locate materials, manage their accounts, and manage their reading, listening and viewing preferences.**
- Develop standards and criteria for selecting the next generation integrated library system for OCL
 - Identify a short list of vendors that can meet the system requirements
 - Issue an RFQ/RFP to solicit proposals from qualified vendors
 - Evaluate proposals, interview vendors and review product offerings

- Choose a vendor for the new integrated library system
- Develop a timeline and make the transition from the current vendor to the new vendor by 2010

Goal 2 The Library Nurtures Growth and Change
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Objective 2.1 The Library collaborates on services with community members

- Schedule annual meetings with local leaders in each branch to build on the “meet the mayor” programs already in place
- Work with local leaders to coordinate and publicize community events
- Community partners will collaborate with OCL and sponsor half of all library programs by 2011
- Update and renew action plans for local collaboration in each branch
- Contact local school systems and home school groups to coordinate and publicize school/library collaboration and partnerships in support of student achievement

Objective 2.2 OCL is where democracy happens

- Sponsor a series of community forums to assist residents in developing leadership skills to work on hot-button issues within their communities such as education, housing, immigration, health care
- Provide voter registration in each branch
- Increase community service by connecting people with volunteer opportunities
- Work with local elected officials to host “meet your elected official” session at each branch
- Assume a leadership role in NJ public library issues

Objective 2.3 The Library is a place of opportunity

- Continue to support and expand Family Place program
- Provide services to support the needs of new immigrants such as citizenship classes, free legal advice, conversation classes, ESL classes, literacy instruction
- Ensure that www.theoceancountylibrary.org is linked on every school and town web site home page in Ocean County
- Invest in early literacy programs to ensure that every child enters kindergarten ready to read

- Provide after school homework assistance programs both in the library and on the library's web site
- Partner with *SCORE, counselors to America's small business*, to provide counseling for business start-ups and entrepreneurs
- Partner with the agencies serving youth to offer innovative programs and services
- Increase the levels and variety of youth participation at OCL
- Continue discussions with home schooling families to help meet their needs
- Increase the use of the libraries by special needs, at risk, and underserved families and individuals through communication and outreach

Objective 2.4

OCL fosters and encourages work with diverse groups to heighten and increase acceptance and understanding in our communities

- Celebrate diversity and increase acceptance, understanding and inclusion of cultural groups in our communities through a series of targeted programs that inform as well as celebrate cultures and traditions
- Continue to revise and refine the OCL Diversity plan to meet changing needs
- Increase the acquisition and availability of Spanish language materials to meet local reading and literacy needs
- Review the need for world language materials, establish a dedicated budget to meet these needs, and provide marketing materials to promote these collections

Goal 3

Ocean County residents use and champion the Library

Objective 3.1

Increase community awareness and use of the Library

- Increase the number of Ocean County residents with library cards to 75% by 2010
- Initiate a "One Card-One Student" initiative as part of the campaign to increase the number of library card holders
- Offer "Get a Library Card Online" or other program for customers to get a card online

Objective 3.2

The Library is an essential resource for educational success and personal learning

- Develop effective strategies and collaborate with schools and organizations to promote and support literacy and reading
- Every child in Ocean County will be aware of the Library's Summer Reading Program through increased marketing efforts
- Every child in Ocean County will be able to get their school's summer reading list at the Library
- Promote the Library as a youth-serving agency and a viable partner with schools and community organizations to provide youth with activities and resources for healthy development

Objective 3.3

The OCL will build a network of library advocates who can speak out on behalf of the Ocean County Library

- Create www.iloveoceancountylibrary.org as an advocacy and affinity site for residents to connect with each other and tell stories about the library
- Develop a presentation and a speakers bureau of select residents and staff of all ages who can promote the library in public meetings in their communities
- Work with the branch and system wide Friends groups to plan for coordinated fundraising and awareness building events

Goal 4

The Library is Committed to Organizational Excellence

Objective 4.1

Invest in continuous program of high quality, relevant staff development

- Create an "OCL University" for staff training and development, with a leadership training component, and monitor its progress
- Develop a checklist of all core competencies that OCL staff need and begin training to meet those standards by 2010
- Provide project management opportunities for all staff to aid in developing leadership and management skills
- Implement core technology competencies for all staff

Objective 4.2

The library invests in practical and effective communication tools

- Provide resources to create an OceanNet 2011 project to position OceanNet as the primary dynamic internal communication forum for all staff

- Develop an OceanNet 2011 wiki to capture and allow discussion of policies, procedures and institutional knowledge
- Ensure that all staff have easy access to computers and email
- Create a county-wide customer email database, launch a monthly, lively e-newsletter and send occasional email alerts to customers
- Implement priority elements of the 2007 Marketing Plan

Objective 4.3

The OCL is an effective and transparent organization

- Develop new civil service titles for non-MLS staff in the Library that more accurately reflect current and anticipated responsibilities
- Create a more flexible and system wide approach to staffing and scheduling
- Develop and staff a robust Human Resources Department to support all HR functions such as recruiting, benefits, training and development, succession and replacement planning, career development and evaluation, compliance, employee relations
- Implement priorities of the LMA Techwork 2006 and 2007 reports, especially time and attendance and staff scheduling software
- Implement priority elements of the 2007 Blyberg technology report, including organizational changes to the IT Department
- Ensure the Communication Plan is familiar to and used by all staff

Objective 4.4

Every staff member contributes to the OCL vision and is a valued participant in the library's success

- Revise the staff performance recognition program in consultation with staff or create a new one that rewards employees for accomplishments, leadership and excellence and celebrates success – provide resources to make this a significant incentive by 2009
- Support staff morale and teambuilding by scheduling social events and instituting additional incentives to acknowledge great customer service

Objective 4.5

OCL recruits and retains high energy, dynamic leaders and staff

- Recommit to hiring and training multi-lingual staff to meet the needs of Ocean County's diverse communities

- Initiate a formal mentoring program to help develop new leaders
- Develop a new succession and replacement plan to address all leadership positions

Objective 4.6

The OCL regularly measure outcomes of the strategic plan and all initiatives

- Develop a program to inform all staff about this strategic plan, and their responsibilities
- Measure the plan results and revise the objectives at least annually
- Develop outcomes-based measures to assess library accomplishments
- Celebrate plan accomplishments

Appendix 1

The following are reports that have been used in preparation for this plan or are referenced in the plan. They are all available in the Ocean County Library in Toms River.

Report	Content	Author
Blyberg Report -2008	Information Technology Assessment	John Blyberg
LMA Tech Report-2006	Management Information Assessment	LMA Techwork, Inc.
Marketing Plan 2007	Marketing for OCL	Consultants Kathy Dempsey Dr. Christie Koontz
Marketing Report 2007		Marketing Committee
	Communicating the Marketing Plan	Deborah Blackwell
	Marketing To Staff	Alice Parfitt Elsworth Rockefeller
	Enhanced Visibility	Linda Feaster
	Marketing To Special and Underserved Populations	Angela Zebrowski Susan Quinn Heather Andolson
	Program and System Events	Scott Rodas Marilyn Bass
	Technology Enhanced Marketing	Glynis Wray Marilyn Bass
	Internal Procedures for Printing and Graphics	Heather Andolson Judy Clayton Alex Zubritsky
Communication Plan-2008	Internal Communication Procedures	Staff work group