

The Oshkosh Public Library's current strategic plan seeks to move the organization forward in ways that support literacy and learning, help individuals achieve their goals and improve life in our community.

Many of the projects in this plan establish a foundation built on clear purpose and a culture of continuous learning. This foundation will help OPL to meet the demands of the future with intention, as one engaged organization pursuing goals that benefit patrons and the community. This type of work takes time and while many projects in the 2021 Action Plan were not completed, progress was made in ways that will propel these efforts forward in 2022.

## **Goal 1: A Community-Driven Library**

We are inspired by our community. We are committed not only to strategically using our resources to support community needs, but also to further existing initiatives.

### **Objective B: Gather and use data and information to guide decisions, provide assessment measures and allow for clear reporting.**

Listening, observing and evaluating information is helping OPL to identify patron and community needs and respond. Several service responses during 2021 grew out of monitoring what's happening in the community and more intentionally listening to and tracking what our patrons and the public have to say. Activities included weekly Community Scan reports and documenting patron feedback in the library.

- When COVID-19 vaccines became available, the library worked with county health officials to set up a weekly vaccination clinic that continues today.
- As the pandemic led people to spend more time at home, the library developed a collection of board games and puzzles that have proven popular.
- In response to patron requests, a laminator was added to OPL's business center services and a shredder will be added soon.
- Public access to free notary service was expanded when all Information Services staff were certified and it was made available during most regular library hours.

### **Objective C: Increase and strengthen community partnerships to build the library's reputation as a trusted collaborator and a place where people and ideas come together.**

Forming community partnerships will help the library to stay apprised of community needs; reach new audiences; support community initiatives and develop services that benefit the community.

The library has ongoing relationships with organizations such as Learning in Retirement, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, WinnebagoLand Genealogical Society, Oshkosh Area Writer's Club and the Boys & Girls Club. In 2021 library staff revived or established new partnerships with organizations including, Oshkosh YMCA, the Winnebago County Health Department, Oshkosh Area

Community Pantry, Aging and Disability Resource Center and Oshkosh Seniors Center. Activities included regular library card clinics, ongoing COVID-19 vaccination clinics and Memory Café. OPL is developing a new partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and Fox Valley Job Centers to offer services to job seekers, and the Winnebago Legal Assistance Clinic has resumed.

A draft partnership guide has been created to make partnership development more strategic and intentional. It includes expectations, best practices and resources to help staff identify partnership opportunities, establish clear goals and responsibilities and measure results.

**Objective D: Increase the library's presence in the community.**

Community engagement and outreach efforts expand access to services, highlight what the library offers, provide literacy and learning activities and create opportunities to engage in community listening.

- Card clinics continued at Evergreen; sessions added at the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry, 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue YMCA and Carmel Residence.
- Assisted with Connect Through Tech and tech classes at the Oshkosh Seniors Center.
- Presented Lunch and Learn sessions to City of Oshkosh staff.
- Participated in launch of the AARP Age Friendly Community initiative.
- Participated in Day by Day Warming Shelter Resource Fair, Time of your Life Expo, Winnebago County Fair, Live at the Leach, Family Movie Night at the Leach, Paine Art Center's Faire on the Green, Neighborhood Night Out and Oshkosh Farmers Market.
- School visits for Summer Reading Challenge promotion, family nights, back-to-school events, reading to classes, and presentations about library resources.
- Conducted family outreach activities at Bella Clinic and Christine Anne Center.
- Community presentations on genealogy, Great Reads and National History Day resources.

**Goal 3: A catalyst for learning and growth**

Our commitment to our community can be found in our building, in our virtual spaces and in all the work we do and the resources we provide. As a community catalyst, we understand that it is our role to learn from and respond to the needs, goals and aspirations of the people of our community.

**Objective A: Increase visits to the physical library**

People are drawn to a place that offers excellent service and a welcoming environment. As work began on a new customer service model major themes emerged that will lay the foundation to help the library address the evolving needs of our patrons and community.

- The library's value statements were recast as a first step to engage staff more deeply with the library's mission, vision and strategic plan. Longstanding values such as literacy, learning and access were expanded to better define the library's role in their advancement; values related

to equity, patron-centric service and support of community needs were added to reflect emerging priorities. These values will form the basis for the new customer service model.

- Another key focus of the customer service model grew out of OPL's involvement in a collaborative state library collective in 2021. American Rescue Plan Act funding, which OPL helped to secure as a member of the City Library Collective, will help to fund staff education in social work concepts needed to better serve the needs of library patrons. The Whole Person Librarianship model will be the basis for training and these concepts will be integrated into the customer service model.

### **Website Redesign**

2021 saw the launch of OPL's website redesign project and completion of Phase 1 - Exploration. This comprehensive plan aims to create a more patron-friendly site with improved design, navigation, accessibility, speed and user experience. The redesign also sets the library up to better track usage and make continuous improvements. A team of marketing, design and web development professionals from OPL and the Winnefox Library System are leading this effort.

Phase One of the redesign project involved auditing site content; reviewing analytics to examine how the site is used; and developing user personas. The redesign team developed surveys for both library staff and community members to help define goals and identify what library users expect from the site.

The redesign is now in Phase 2: Content, Design and Testing. Progress will be shared with staff throughout the process, to keep them informed and generate excitement for the new website.

### **Goal 4: A provider of and connector to trusted information**

We are committed to creating, providing, and connecting the people of our community to trusted information. We will be our community's lifelong learning platform.

#### **Objective B: Create trusted content that informs community members and showcases the library's unique skills and collections.**

Libraries are more than books; but readers are still our people. To cultivate relationships with readers, OPL is offering more personalized services and positioning staff as experts in helping readers find books they'll enjoy. Readers look to the library to find out what's new, what's popular and what our librarians and staff recommend.

- Staff Picks and links to reading resources on our website are the most popular items in the library's eNewsletter.
- Our annual Great Reads video brought together staff from multiple departments to share the books they recommended from 2021. The video has been viewed 145 times on YouTube since its release in December and Oshkosh Media is playing it on their Life TV channel.

- Thanks to solid relationships with area media, OPL staff has been featured more frequently on television, online and in print, highlighting recommended reading for all ages. Staff have been featured on Local 5 Live, Oshkosh Media, Go Oshkosh Kids and in the Oshkosh Herald.
- The library has expanded its menu of personalized reader services, bringing Book Bundles to all ages and launching Teen Lit Loot Boxes, a free monthly subscription service offering personalized book selections, treats and goodies for pickup at the library.

**Objective B: Create trusted content that informs community members and showcases the library's unique skills and collections.**

The Oshkosh community has a deep connection to its history and OPL continues to support that interest with rich collections and staff expertise. Sharing the stories of Oshkosh past in engaging ways enriches the community and helps to build on the library's reputation as a resource for local history and genealogy research.

- Completing an inventory of Winnebago County historical materials is the first step in bringing valuable local history records out of the basement and into the public realm. These documents, including court records, maps, newspapers, microfilm and tax records are now listed in the library's catalog, where they can be accessed for research. The resources will now be considered for digitization.
- A Digital Yearbook Collection was added to OPL's online resources in 2021, offering a look at life at Oshkosh High School in the early to mid-1900s. Current events, social activities, literary musings and advertisements of the day are not only entertaining but valuable for genealogy and local history research
- Sharing local history information in a dynamic way is successfully engaging audiences and building a following in the community. Local history talks to Learning in Retirement are a popular draw and a recent presentation on the Athearn Hotel brought in 130 people. The video series Librarian Learns, which takes an insider-style look at people, places and events in Oshkosh history, has a solid following on YouTube and also plays on Oshkosh Media's Life TV channel.