



BOURBONNAIS PUBLIC LIBRARY

FOCUS GROUPS

NARRATIVE REPORT

Add Your Voice - Strategic Planning

Background

The previous two strategic plans for Bourbonnais Public Library District (BPLD) were heavily weighted toward the collection and increasing its size and the size of the facility. From the first plan in 2003 to the next one in 2010, progress was made in both of these areas but not to the extent planned.

This year the library hired J.K. Consulting to conduct four focus groups made of up staff, trustees, and members of the community. Using the Appreciative Inquiry method, information was gathered on current opinions of the library and hopes for its future.

Current Approach

Using the 4-D model, Discovery - Dream - Design - Destiny, we started with discovery by asking participants what they liked best about BPLD. Then the focus was shifted as the groups were asked to dream, to move from what is to what might be.

After dreaming of what might be, we moved to the design step by posing the question, what would be needed to meet these dreams?

The last step was for destiny - asking everyone what items could realistically be addressed in the next 3-5 years. Another way of thinking of the categories is: Inquire Imagine, Innovate, and

Implement:

- Inquiring what is
- Imagine what might be
- Innovate what should be
- Implement the innovation

Each focus group prioritized their responses on flip charts. Then the responses for all the groups were merged and prioritized to develop conclusions as to how the library could best serve the community.

Overall Impressions

During the 2017 focus groups, two different areas took precedence: Community Partnerships and Marketing/Promotions. This was a change from the two previous strategic plans where the focus was on increasing collection and facility.

Prior to convening the focus groups, the expectation was that technology would be a main point of conversation. Instead, it was a subject that was briefly mentioned and then the groups moved on. Collaboration and marketing, on the other hand, were not only mentioned but sparked lengthy conversations in all groups.

Procedures

Each group was encouraged to answer the four basic questions one at a time. Answers were recorded on flip charts and before the participants left for the night, everyone recorded his or her first, second, and third priority from the answers for each question. These comments are listed by category on the document entitled Focus Group Answers. They are also listed by count and weight on a separate spreadsheet, entitled Bourbonnais Scoring Matrix, charting the highlighted preferences by first, second, and third choices.

When all the focus groups were completed an analysis was conducted to visualize what major themes stood out from the four groups as a whole.

THEMES THAT STOOD OUT BY PRIORITIES

DISCOVERY

1. EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

- The staff listens to patrons
- Relationship with customers: elderly, special needs, and students
- Welcoming atmosphere/staff attitude
- Director (Kelly)

2. COLLECTION

- Large print books
- The number of new books
- Interlibrary loans and sharing resources

- Textbooks
- Online resources
- Audio visual
- Materials for church school
- Research for businesses

3. PROGRAMMING

- Reading with students
- Storytime
- Networking for training
- Book clubs
- Intergenerational and all ages
- Crafts
- Children's activities

4. SERVICES

- Supplement school libraries
- Research/reference
- Placing holds
- Public access computers/printers
- Internet/wi-fi
- Meeting rooms for community groups
- Tutors
- Voting precinct

DREAM

1. COLLABORATION

- With schools
- With businesses
- Neighboring libraries
- Field trips / Park district
- More volunteer opportunities
- Partner with colleges

- More inter-community partnerships
- Become the heart of the community
 - Location
 - Be the leader/organizer

2. PROGRAMMING

- Resources for schools for STEM/STEAM/makerspaces
- Teaching computer skills and social media
- Rent out musical instruments
- Teaching other cultures
- After school options: life and college prep
- Skill sharing and intergenerational programs
- Job searching and "Adulthood 101"
- Community artists teaching skills
- Distance learning for credit

3. MARKETING

- Promoting reading and books
- Email blasts on new arrivals
- Fundraising
- Displays and exhibits, more

4. SERVICES

- Larger A/V collection
- More technology options i.e. e-readers
- Expand collection in all ways
- Sunday hours
- Home-bound delivery service
- Check out laptops and other devices
- Crafters selling what they make—gift shop
- Virtual reality room
- Bookmobile/bikemobile
- Van for library services and field trips

- Added space and staff
- Drive-thru pick up

5. FACILITY- EXPANSION

- Modernization i.e. projectors and smart technology
- More various sized conference rooms, flexible gathering spaces and auditorium
- More study rooms
- Expand teen area
- Expand children's area
- A slide (as in playground equipment)
- Go green options: solar power, recycled materials for furniture, rooftop plants
- Nature area/courtyard
- Nooks and crannies, comfortable seating
- Café/coffee shop
- Skylights
- More defined entry to children's area
- More parking

DESIGN

1. MARKETING/PROGRAMING

- Social media presence (guru)
- Marketing majors from Olivet Nazarene University - interns
- More newspaper coverage
- Tell your story, sell the library
- Sponsorships
- Hire a PR outreach person
- Expand website and make interactive
- More publicity
- Need an active fundraising campaign including trust funds, endowments, wills and estates

2. COLLABORATIONS

- Partner with all schools and colleges

- Corporate partnerships and hospital
- More community partnerships with other agencies and units of government
- Scheduling system for volunteers and events
- Work with Olivet Nazarene and their sports department
- Work with Friends of the Library
- Be the community center partnering with other county and township entities
- Partner with civic clubs

3. SERVICES AND PROGRAMING

- Dolly Parton's Book Donor Program
- Technology access for low-income students
- Job search skills
- Volunteer opportunities
- Expanded hours
- Literacy movement for adults and kids
- Infusion of higher technology
- Library pets and comfort animals
- Online registration tied to the calendar
- Bring in authors, musicians, and presenters
- Creative writing, mentoring, training
- After school programming

4. BUILDING AND FINANCES

- Identifying space re-design needs
- Flexible space/multi-purpose rooms
- Build up or out/add square footage
- Courtyard/outdoor space
- Reading nook areas
- Café/coffee shop
- Plan facilities for future needs - acoustics
- Design a plan based on growth projections and step by step strategic priorities
- Staff - more part-time to cover added options

- Structure staff jobs around library program being more intentional on job descriptions and titles reflecting work valued
- Hire a grant writer
- Hire an HR staff member

DESTINY

1. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Outreach with school personnel
- Tutoring sessions in White Oak Room
- Staff member to work with community
- Hosting open houses and participate in community festivals
- Go to school or other outside options to read stories or perform
- Use college students/internship program opportunities
- Library as a community leader bringing people and agencies together
- Be the central conduit for multiple community agencies
- Liaison between youth services and schools
- More school partnerships (tutoring)
- More invitations to community leaders. Bringing in community groups and administrators
- Work together with others so as not to compete

2. MARKETING

- Tell your story – i.e. How did BPLD impact someone positively?
- Email blasts
- Infographics
- More online presence – beyond Facebook
- Partner with Olivet Nazarene's media department
- Sponsorships i.e. magazine donations
- Understanding of demographics (i.e. Analytics on Demand by Gale)
- Welcome packets for new residents: Work with the Chamber of Commerce and/or Village of Bourbonnais

- Distribute in the community - outside of the library
- Re-branding - what it is to be BPLD
- Get newspapers to cover library events, programs, and activities
- Bulk mailing of newsletters
- Co-market with schools and other agencies

3. BUILDING

- Transformation in the library setting, meeting rooms/study rooms
- Multi-use spaces
- Better interior signage i.e. book locations
- Bring in a space planner/designer
- Use White Oak room for teen programs
- User Experience study on space design priorities, computers, teen and youth areas

4. SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

- Virtual classrooms/distance learning
- Bring in presenters i.e. authors
- Continuing education - planned training for public and staff
- Free community classes i.e. CPR
- Library van (with logo)
- Utilize staff's skills and talents for programming
- Partner with DCFS, Hope Home, Any Mom, Daycares, etc.
- Bourbonnais Historical Society

RECOMMENDATIONS

After condensing answers down from sixteen sets of responses, priorities can be categorized in order as:

- Community outreach
- Marketing/promotions
- Programming
- Services
- Facility

Rich Harwood of The Harwood Institute has pointed out that many of us are so focused inwardly that we've put our own activities and initiatives ahead of those that would strengthen our communities.

Keeping in mind the number one goal for all groups was community partnerships and collaborations, BPLD, it would seem, needs to shift the focus outward.

While the trend today, for most libraries, is to focus their attention on best practices, internal organizational matters and strategic planning geared towards collection and facilities; BPLD should consider a shift in focus to turn outward to become more focused on community needs.

Step one is establishing partnerships and collaborations with a wide variety of community groups and entities.

Step two involves marketing the library - tell your story, promote yourself and your activities. By taking the lead in strengthening the community, the library in return will gain support in meeting the needs of a larger staff and facility.

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