

THE PLAN

Invent the Future!

The **Anchorage Library Foundation** and the **Friends of the Library** challenged us to imagine what would happen if we had a world-class, 21st Century library. We want to thank thousands of our Anchorage neighbors who shared ideas in more than 6,000 surveys, and through focus groups, community meetings and personal interviews.

- 15 Focus Groups
- 4 Sounding Board Meetings
- 1 Summit
- 2 Town Hall Meetings
- More than 6,000 surveys
- Interviews with community leaders
- Hundreds of e-newsletter subscriptions

The **Anchorage Public Library Community Plan** was released in December, 2009. Visit the project website to read the plan:

www.AnchorageLibraryFoundation.org

SOME SAID ...

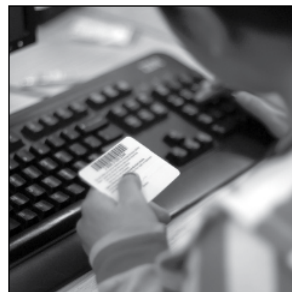
What if the library was a center/nexus point for social networking: People with common, shared interests gathering? The library is a trusted space ... People have knowledge, wisdom that is not in books, not online. A library could be a clearinghouse for people as resources.

– Focus Group participant



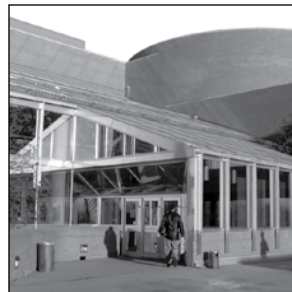
The library of tomorrow will need to not just be about books ... but a lively community center focused on arts, politics, and yes, even sports.

– Online Survey respondent



The library needs to prioritize having staff in the community and staff to build, nurture and maintain community partnerships.

– Focus Group participant



While we're infrequent users of the library, we would go there more often if the hours were more convenient, if the libraries (including the branches) were more like the bookstores in Seattle – with a bakery/coffee shop, and if there were more convenient places where you could drop off books.

– Focus Group participants



Look at the Loussac and its four branches. Name five other buildings in town where anyone in the community can find so much knowledge, beauty, enchantment, hope, entertainment, democracy and opportunity free for the asking – a universe, with a support staff to boot.

– ADN editorial (Oct. 11, 2009)

I would really appreciate more in the way of help in selecting current fiction. The fiction/literature displays could be more like what one sees at the bookstore. • The library of the future has to provide convenience and social spaces. Smaller libraries peppered around town with social spaces – fireplace, comfortable seating, coffee and a book. • Look at the Loussac and its four branches. Name five other buildings in town where anyone in the community can find so much knowledge, beauty, enchantment, hope, entertainment, democracy and opportunity free for the asking – a universe, with a support staff to boot. • This facility is nice and convenient, but it's expensive to rent this room. That creates a barrier; the library system needs smaller, simple meeting areas. • What if the library was a center/nexus point for social networking: People with common, shared interests gathering? The library is a trusted space ... People have knowledge, wisdom that is not in books, not online. A library could be a clearinghouse for people as resources. • The library of tomorrow will need to not just be about books ... but a lively community center focused on arts, politics, and yes, even sports. • I loved music in the park this summer. • The library needs to prioritize having staff in the community and staff to build, nurture and maintain community partnerships. • Google and Wikipedia are widely understood, user-friendly; the card-catalog process uses a different approach. • Library website interface should be geared more toward Google-like search process. • Incentives for frequent users of the library, we would go there more often if the hours were more convenient. • There were more convenient places where you could drop off books.

HIGHLIGHTS of the Anchorage Public Library Community Plan

Photos by Agnew::Beck, Bill Wilson or courtesy of the Anchorage Library Foundation.

Our Library needs your help

Spread the Word! Talk to community leaders, elected officials and neighbors--help get the entire community behind this effort.

Partner with the Library! Collaborate with the Library to expand your audience and broaden the impact of your community events.

Support the Library! Become a member of the Friends of the Library to buy materials and sponsor library programs. Donate to the Anchorage Library Foundation to invest in the long-term growth of the Anchorage Public Library.

www.friendsapl.org
www.anchoragelibraryfoundation.org
 Call 343-2983 to learn more.

“A public library outranks any other thing a community can do to help its people.”

– Andrew Carnegie

This information is provided with funding from the Anchorage Library Foundation.



ANCHORAGE 21st CENTURY LIBRARIES

The future of Anchorage Public Library: We can survive and thrive!

The **Anchorage Library Foundation** and the **Friends of the Library** developed the **Anchorage Public Library Community Plan** to shape the future of our city's Public Library. The plan comes as the Anchorage Public Library experiences record-high usage and provides more services with less resources. Our Library can help build an even more vibrant, strong and successful community. We need your involvement and support to chart a course toward more relevant, convenient, innovative and community-oriented libraries in this 21st Century. Read on to learn how!

www.AnchorageLibraryFoundation.org

THE STRUGGLE

Anchorage's public libraries provide a good return on the dollars invested!

According to an ISER study, the library delivers **\$1.42-\$2.46** in economic benefit for each **\$1** invested by:

- Strengthening communities
- Fostering economic growth
- Serving as a center for humanities
- Cultivating the workforce of the future
- Improving children's literacy

THE GOOD

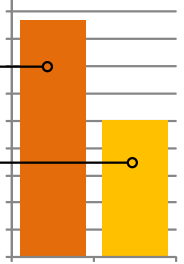
Record-High Usage

60% of Anchorage residents have a library card. Library-use is at an all-time high!

Highly productive staff members each process about **1,000** more items than their counterparts at similar “peer libraries.”

Our libraries are our most popular city facilities with **74 %** more visits to libraries than to the Sullivan Arena!

871,036 visits per year, compared to **500,000** at the Sullivan Arena.



THE BAD

Not enough books, non-print materials and electronic resources

Not enough Internet computers and bandwidth to support public computer use

Not enough service outlets (We have only **4 branches** compared to **9** in other similar communities.)

A lot of people have library cards but they don't visit often.

THE UGLY

Extremely low staffing level

40% less full-time staff are employed at our libraries, **89** compared to **143** among peer libraries.

We spend **22% less per person** on new library materials and don't maintain collection quality.

32% of our budget pays the Muni for overhead charges for support services. These charges account for more than half of the increases in our budget since 2004.

Only **55%** of our budget is allocated toward staffing vs. **66%** among peers.

Note: Our library's performance was measured against the performance of 35 “peer libraries” (serving populations of 250,000-350,000).

Municipal charges for support services include costs for overhead services like grounds keeping and IT costs, which are out of the library's control.

OUR LIBRARY CAN SURVIVE and THRIVE INTO THE FUTURE

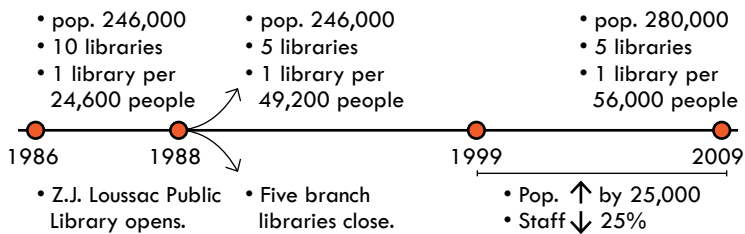
Here's how:

1. Create a more welcoming, community-centered library.
2. Encourage a new generation of library users while engaging traditional users.
3. Enhance customer service.
4. Let people know what the library offers.
5. Reduce operating costs and secure new sources of funding.



OVERCOME HISTORY

The library's fate hangs in the balance.



Our library's history is relatively short. The city first allocated tax dollars for a library in 1946 and since then, its fate has rested on the boom and bust nature of Alaska's economy. Our library has been stable in good times and faced severe cuts otherwise.

In 1986, when the Z.J. Loussac public library opened, library services were offered from ten facilities (one for every 24,614 people). But within two years, five branches were closed. The library still operates only five facilities (one for every 56,000 people now). Over the last decade, library staffing levels have fallen by 25% while the population increased by nearly 25,000. And additional staff cuts still hang in the balance.

The library becomes even more important during downturns. When jobs and dollars dwindle, people turn to libraries for help. Job-seekers access free online employment resources; and frugal folks find unbiased consumer information at the library. As incomes shrink, people flock to libraries for free recreational reading, listening, and viewing materials.

Unfortunately, even during economic booms, support for public library service in Anchorage seldom matches up. And during tough economic times, the library sees deep cuts. The result is that the library struggles to survive when we need it the most.

How do we stack up?	Anchorage Public Library (FY 2008)	Mean for 35 Peer Libraries (FY 2008)	% Diff.
1. Circulation	1,599,025	2,563,341	-38
2. Library Visits	871,036	1,387,530	-37
3. Registered Borrowers as % of Pop.	59.89%	55.83%	7
4. Circulation per Registered Borrower	9.37	15.46	-39
5. Holdings (# of Volumes)	605,000	763,842	-21
6. Total Staff (Full-Time Equivalents)	86.0	142.97	-40
7. Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 11,895,415*	\$ 10,269,556	16
8. Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$ 41.74*	\$ 35.53	17
9. Materials Expenditures per Capita	\$ 3.58	\$ 4.58	-22

SURVIVE

Our Library is in a struggle for survival.

If left unchecked, current funding trends will lead to a library that is at best mediocre and at worst irrelevant. Although the Library is among Anchorage's most heavily used public services and has numerous supporters, it will suffer irreparable damage if it fails in the short-term to maximize the value of existing resources, to better meet the needs of traditional users, and offer the technology-based services needed to engage a new generation of users.

1. Create a more welcoming, community-center library.

- Require active involvement in community organizations as part of the job descriptions of all library managers/supervisors.
- Collaborate with community groups to co-host programs/events.

2. Encourage a new generation of library users while engaging traditional users.

- Upgrade tech resources (bandwidth, electrical outlets).
- Improve convenience of finding, checking out and returning books and materials and provide more drop-off points.
- Create a teen center.
- Expand and promote foreign language resources.

3. Enhance customer service.

- Create opportunities for direct, ongoing feedback from users.
- Train staff to encourage enjoyment of library resources.

4. Let people know what the library offers.

- Create prominent book display sections for popular materials.
- Use big outdoor signs and the library website and calendar to showcase services and programs.
- Use social networking tools to reach specific groups.

5. Reduce operating costs and secure new sources of funding.

- Reduce Municipal charges for support services (32% of the library budget); serve as a test site for Municipal cost-cutting.

THRIVE

We can strive beyond the status quo to become

a strong, stable library of tomorrow. In order to thrive, we must embrace a new sense of purpose and diversify our funding sources to become the library Anchorage needs and envisions. We must sustain the gains we achieve toward providing relevant information-services to our community. And, we must form new partnerships and new approaches to secure stable funding and support to operate our library and invest in innovation.

1. Create a more welcoming, community-centered library.

- Create an inviting entrance to Loussac library and more engaging learning environments for kids and adults.
- Extend and meld library and neighboring Cuddy Family Midtown Park to create a flow of services between the two.
- Sponsor meetings and lectures. Offer space for trainings, study groups, book club events and announce via library calendar.

2. Encourage a new generation of library users while engaging traditional users.

- Create programs with the help of civic and neighborhood organizations, cultural and ethnic groups.
- Designate staff to reach out to people and groups who don't regularly use the library.
- Target library materials and resources to appeal to wide range of diverse Anchorage residents.

3. Enhance customer service.

- Explore a range of options, from bustling, traditional neighborhood branches to virtual (online) libraries.

4. Let people know what the library offers.

- Link to our next generation of library users via smart-phone applications, working with the Consortium Library and other exemplary library organizations like Urban Libraries Council.

5. Reduce operating costs and secure new sources of funding.

- Increase cost-efficiency with radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology and automated materials handling systems (AMHS). Use the savings to improve public library services.
- Establish a core of partners to address community needs (literacy, job training, accessing media).
- Partner with the Municipality to stabilize long-term funding in accord with population growth and service needs.
- Explore alternative public funding mechanisms.
- Design a method for determining which programs/services are funded by taxes, one-time gifts, grants, or long-term funds.
- Create endowments for ongoing services such as storytelling/youth programs and Alaska Collection services.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

Together, we can thrive.

The Anchorage Public Library is faced with an enormous task if it wishes to transform itself into a world-class, 21st Century library. While the library can improve a few things on its own, lasting success requires evolving into a new kind of institution, with strong ties to a range of partners.

The Municipality of Anchorage

Secure stable funding reflecting population growth and service needs; address the rapid increase of Municipal overhead charges.

Other Governmental Entities

Partner with the Alaska Legislature, the State Library, the School District and others to implement innovative service models and secure needed funding.

The Private Sector

Develop new products and services that support business needs such as job training.

Community Organizations

Proactively reach out to nonprofit and other community organizations to connect with segments of the population that have not traditionally used library services; work so the library can realize its promise as an organization that spans boundaries to address community problems.

Other Libraries

Continue the close relationship with the Consortium Library and add new alliances to improve access to traditional library resources and new technology-based products and services.

Philanthropists

Take full advantage of the Anchorage Library Foundation as a link between the library and the philanthropic sector. Build partnerships to provide funding for innovative service models, capital projects, and endowments for operational support.

The People of Anchorage

Serve as a catalyst for individual and community improvement by bringing people and ideas together. Be an active, integral part of the community, guided by customers and their needs.

