FY2014–FY2016
STRATEGIC PLAN

DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
a place to grow
dekalblibrary.org
THE PLANNING PROCESS
During the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013, DeKalb County Public Library embarked on a strategic planning process. The Library began the process by evaluating accomplishments set forth in its 2008–2012 strategic plan, researching current plans of peer libraries and monitoring trends in services at public libraries throughout the country. Integral to this process was gathering information from library patrons, staff and community stakeholders. To this end, the Library conducted focus groups with staff members and patrons. Focus groups were followed up with a survey that asked patrons about their current utilization of library services, their satisfaction with current services and sought their opinions on future areas of focus. Information gathered was then compared to the results of a comprehensive national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center on “Library Services in the Digital Age” released in January 2013.

2008–2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
• Opened eight new, expanded and/or renovated library branches: Northlake-Barbara Loar, Toco Hill-Avis G. Williams, Tucker-Reid H. Cofer, Embry Hills, Hairston Crossing, Salem-Panola, Stonecrest and Scott Candler.
• Expanded programming for all ages — children, teens, adults and seniors.
• Hosted more than 100 authors each year through the Georgia Center for the Book.
• Received numerous competitive programming grants for scholar-led book discussion groups, family literacy series, health literacy programs and traveling exhibits.
• Added a teen representative to the Board of Trustees, the Library’s governing authority.
• Launched a Senior Advisory Board.

MISSION
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VISION
We envision a DeKalb County where every person has the opportunity to reach his or her own full potential in an economically strong community which values family, diversity, and cooperation.
• Upgraded the Library’s network infrastructure to fiber, installed self-check machines in 18 branches and rolled out Wi-Fi in all branches.

• Introduced the eBranch — the Library’s fully revamped website. Traffic to the site has increased by 42% since 2008.

• Incorporated security camera systems into all newly constructed and renovated branches and added camera systems to three existing branches.

• Grew the DeKalb Library Foundation by more than 250% with donations reaching close to $250,000 in 2012.

• Ran a successful Design-A-Library-Card campaign that resulted in three patron-designed library cards and a follow-up Pete the Cat “Cool Cat” library card design that serves as a fundraiser for the DeKalb Library Foundation.

• Partnered with the Center for Puppetry Arts and the DeKalb County Board of Health to create the original puppet show “Captain Healthy and Safety Dog” to educate school-aged children about basic health and safety standards.

CONTINUED CHALLENGES

• Ninety-five percent (95%) decrease in funding for library materials and the lasting, cumulative effect of a $10 million loss on the overall quality of the Library’s print, digital and AV collections.

• Reduced operational hours introduced in April 2011 as a result of budget cuts.

• Walk-in traffic and circulation trending slightly downward over the past three years.

• Minimal staffing levels.

• Aging technology infrastructure — outdated hardware, software and inadequate bandwidth.

• Many aging facilities with on-going maintenance issues of major mechanical systems and much needed re-freshening of furnishings, paint and carpeting, despite the recent infusion of bond construction money.

5. Top five reasons to visit the library (respondents could check multiple answers):
   1. Check out book, magazine — 85.1%
   2. Check out a DVD, CD or audiobook — 57.8%
   3. Use library computers — 33.6%
   4. Get information for personal use — 29.6%
   5. Quiet place to read/study/work — 27.2%

6. Top three reasons for visiting the website:
   1. Search catalog/place a hold/check account — 82%
   2. Check branch location/hours — 46%
   3. Find information about library services — 34.7%

7. How often do respondents visit the library:
   • Weekly — 30.2%
   • Several times per month — 22.9%
   • Several times per week — 22.2%
   • Once per month — 10.1%
   • Several times per year — 6.8%
   • Daily — 5.3%
OUR COMMUNITY

From 2000 to 2010, DeKalb County saw modest population growth of 3.9%, bringing the population to 691,893 residents. A 2012 population estimate brings the total population to 707,089. Similar to other metro counties and fueled by the baby boomers, DeKalb's fastest growing population segments are those aged 45–64 and those 65 and older. The percentage of children under 5 remained steady at 7% of the population, while the percentage of children aged 5–9 dropped from 7 to 6.5%. Those aged 30–44 saw the largest drop, moving from 31% of the population in 2000 to 24% of the population in 2010.

According to the 2010 Census, African Americans or Blacks make up 53%, a 2.6% increase from 2000, of DeKalb's overall population and Whites make up 29%, a 6% decrease from 2000. Both the Asian community, now 5% of the total population, and the Hispanic community, now 9% of the total population, grew by approximately 30% between 2000 and 2010.

Additional information from the most recent U.S. Census tells us that:

- 18.1% of people in DeKalb speak a language other than English
- 39% of those 25 or older have a Bachelor's degree or higher
- 88.3% of those 25 or older are high school graduates
- Per capita income is $28,843
- Median household income is $51,712
- 17% of the population lives below the poverty level

OUR PATRONS

- We have 171,191 patrons who have registered or used their card in the last two years
- 65% of registered patrons are female
- 37% of registered patrons are male
- 19% of patrons are children, ages 4-12
- 5% of patrons are teens, ages 13-17
- 64% of patrons are adults, ages 18-55
- 9% of patrons are seniors, ages 56 and older
1. The role of the library in the community — (respondents asked to select three from list of 10):

1. Provider of current books, movies, etc. — 69.8%
2. Source of free, reliable information — 65.8%
3. Place for lifelong learning — 43.7%
4. Educational support center for all ages — 37.6%
5. Place for families and children — 30.2%
6. Technology center — 18.2%
7. Community gathering place — 18.2%
8. Cultural venue for the arts — 8.7%
9. Forum for exchange/discussion of ideas — 4.5%
10. Other — .8%

2. Priorities for the next three years:

• Expand hours.
  o More nights, weekends, Sundays
• Increase collections — especially eBooks.
  o Print, AV, online resources
• Keep branches open.
  o Maintain and increase staffing levels, continue with staff training, offer excellent customer service
  o More comprehensive volunteer program
• Increase funding.
  o Advocate for importance of libraries
  o Explore alternate sources of funding
• Stay current with new technologies and help patrons learn how to use them.
  o Bandwidth, improved Wi-Fi, up-to-date computers and software

OUR MOST RECENT STATISTICS (FY2012)

• Patrons borrowed 3,562,153 items from the collection.
• Patrons made 3,190,289 visits to branches.
• The Library’s eBranch (website) was viewed 1,452,324 times.
• PCs in branches were used 926,802 times.
• Attendance at programs was 94,303.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US

Highlights from the focus group sessions and survey:

• The top three reasons why patrons visit the Library are to
  o check out books or magazines (85%)
  o check out DVDs, CDs or audiobooks (58%)
  o use library computers (34%)
• Courtesy and professionalism of library staff was overwhelmingly the highest rated service, receiving 4.62 on a 5 point scale.
**APPENDIX**

**Survey Results:**

1. Survey Demographics

![Survey Respondents by Gender](image)

- 1,660 surveys were collected on January 15, 17 and 19, 2013.
  - 652 surveys were done on paper.
  - 1,009 were done online. When compared to average traffic for 3 days in January, this represents 3.5% of patrons visiting a branch or the library’s website.
  - Additionally, a total of 44 patrons participated in six focus group sessions held throughout the county in November, December and January.

- 97.1% of respondents indicated they had a DCPL library card.

- 68.8% of respondents have a computer with internet access at home, 15.6% rely on library computers for internet access.

- 41% of respondents own some sort of eReader device.

- In the event of continued funding shortfalls, 60% of respondents preferred having limited hours of operation at more locations and 40% preferred having fewer locations with more extensive hours.

- 77.7% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay additional taxes to support improved library services.

- Patrons were also highly satisfied with the number, location and condition of library facilities throughout the county (4.3 out of 5).

- Services that need improvement included the Library’s
  - collection of eBooks
  - hours of operation
  - collection of movies and music

- When asked what role the Library plays in the community
  - 69% of patrons responded “provider of current books, movies, etc.,”
  - 66% responded “source of free, reliable information,” and
  - 48% responded a “place for lifelong learning”

- Focus group participants were quick to say that they appreciated the many services they receive at their branches and in particular praised the high level of customer service they receive when visiting.

- Focus group participants did not want to see any additional reduction in hours or have any branches close.

- Recognizing that these rely heavily on adequate funding, focus group participants felt that priorities for the next three years should be:
  - increasing operating hours
  - keeping branches open
  - increasing collections, especially eBooks
  - staying abreast with technology

### THE NEXT THREE YEARS

The poor fiscal climate continues to dominate the landscape for public libraries across the country and DeKalb County Public Library is no exception. The prolonged economic slump has stunted the Library’s ability to respond adequately to demands for increased service. Therefore, for the FY2014–2016 strategic planning cycle, DeKalb County Public Library will focus its limited resources and staff efforts on its core activities, capitalizing on its strengths and working to improve the most serious deficiencies. If successful, the Library will be well-positioned to move forward quickly once its fiscal situation improves.
RESOURCES & TECHNOLOGY

To fulfill the Library’s mission of meeting the information and technology needs of our patrons, many of whom have no other access, adequate funding is critical. The Library must be able to regularly upgrade and update its technology infrastructure to meet increasing patron needs in a timely and responsive manner. Funds to continually expand the Library’s physical and digital collections of books, audiobooks, periodicals, databases, movies and music for children, teens and adults are crucial to the Library’s ongoing success and relevance.

GOALS:
• Restore materials funding to 2007–2008 levels by FY2016.
• Expand the Library’s digital collections by 10% each fiscal year.
• Increase bandwidth levels to adequately meet patron demand on the Library’s network.
• Invest in the technology infrastructure by improving the replacement cycle of outdated hardware and software.

EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

The Library is uniquely positioned to provide programs and services that support and enhance lifelong learning for patrons of all ages. To sustain its commitment to lifelong learning, the Library adapts to evolving community needs when planning and developing programs and services.

GOALS:
• Provide essential resources, tools and experiences for parents and caregivers to be their child’s first teacher.
• Respond to community needs when planning programs by expanding successful programming initiatives such as job search skills, basic computer classes, book discussion groups, author lectures, ESL conversation groups, etc.
• Through improved communication and outreach, position the Library as the “go-to” place when DeKalb County residents need help accessing and navigating information resources.
• Through continued partnerships and cooperation, strengthen local connections among library branches, schools, adult learning providers and community partners.

ACCESS & ADVOCACY

Public libraries are essential for building strong communities and serve as unique gathering places in the community. The Library is committed to serving patrons in all areas of the county with safe, well-maintained facilities that are open at convenient hours.

GOALS:
• Maximize the capital investment made in library facilities by restoring night and weekend hours to previous levels.
• Complete the two remaining bond construction program projects (Brookhaven and Ellenwood) and secure adequate, ongoing operational support.
• Improve communication with patrons, community stakeholders and local decision-makers to better demonstrate the value of public libraries in building strong local communities and neighborhoods.
• Work with the DeKalb Library Foundation to increase private donations and identify additional funding streams.
• Continue an emphasis on maintaining library facilities and providing appropriate levels of security.

DEDICATED STAFF

Professionalism and courtesy of library staff is consistently the highest rated of services offered by DeKalb County Public Library. Well-trained staff offer excellent customer service and enhanced library experiences for patrons. Staff deserves continued training and development activities, as well as fair compensation.

GOALS:
• Provide additional customized, library-specific training opportunities for library staff.
• Increase employee retention by working with the County HR Department to bring compensation of library staff in line with other local and regional jurisdictions.
• Update the performance management system to evaluate and recognize employee contributions to the library’s strategic plan.
• Maximize the use of volunteers and interns to augment and support services provided by library staff.
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