

Solano County Library Strategic Directions: Conversation, Connection, Community

Between January and July 2011, the Library undertook the development of a new strategic plan. Building on discussions with the community and Library staff, Library Administration and a planning committee developed a series of strategic directions that set service priorities for the coming years. The strategic directions for Solano County Library are:

- **Build partnerships to make a difference in people's lives.**
- **Inspire and educate by sharing our passions.**
- **Lead through change and learning.**
- **Celebrate our diverse and distinctive environment.**

Strategic Reality Check Process

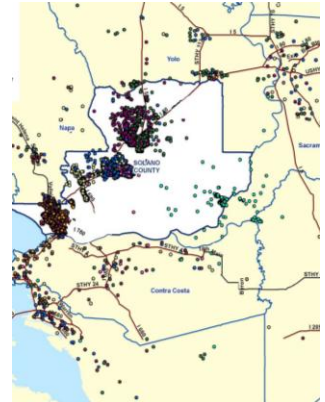
In developing this plan, the Library followed a four-step process developed by Joan Frye-Williams and George Needham. These library consultants and strategists presented the methodology to the Library supervisors and managers in January 2011. The process that the Library followed included:

Service assessment: Analyzing the Library's service related data, including current usage statistics, demographic information of the entire County, other assessments and strategic plans from other institutions and organizations.

Community check-in: Hosting community meetings, to ask specific questions to solicit ideas of what makes a vibrant and healthy community. The feedback from these meetings was analyzed and formed the focus for discussion at subsequent staff meetings.

Staff check-in: Holding staff meetings to discuss the professional techniques and resources that the Library possesses to enable us to satisfy the vision expressed by the community.

Realign service: Using the information from the first three steps to determine broad strategic directions for the Library and to realign service to match the directions. This final step becomes a continuous, regular assessment, ensuring that Library service stays relevant to our community.



Analysis of Community and Staff Feedback

The planning committee analyzed the responses expressed in the Community meeting and presented those results to staff members. Discussions with staff focusing on techniques, resources, and principles helped us determine four general strategic directions that address the community's expressed desires. These strategic directions are described briefly below.



Solano County Library builds partnerships to make a difference in people's lives.

The participants in the community meeting clearly indicated that they supported the values implied in the adage "It Takes a Village": They wanted to deepen the connection between and among individuals and organizations that serve the public in order to enhance community life. These participants talked about seeing the need for collaboration and resource sharing in order to improve the quality of life for all residents. The participants felt strongly that County residents would respond positively to the chance to give back to the community through meaningful volunteer activities.

To this end, the Library will increase efforts to reach out to the community and respond to their feedback about relevant services. We will collaborate with other institutions that support our vision, offering an opportunity for mutual enhancement of our contributions to life in Solano County. The Library will effectively communicate information about our services to the community to ensure that residents are aware of and take full advantage of what we offer.

"We need to connect all the dots. Wherever you can, connect one group with another group, they don't have to have the same agenda. Living here is the ultimate connection. We are one. Connect the dots so we can see the big picture."
~Community researcher

Solano County Library inspires and educates by sharing our passions.

Participants in the community meeting were quite clear on the importance of education and personal growth. Their comments focused on the value of bettering oneself through a variety of learning opportunities and with the help of many public organizations, a value enthusiastically endorsed by the Library.

The Library will offer services that strengthen educational and personal growth experiences for all residents. The Library will demonstrate our support for the residents by responding to their interests in personal growth and continuing to provide varied enrichment experiences that help them attain it.

“We need to do more job development here, from the most basic entry levels upward. There has to be something more than just minimum-wage training here.”

~ Economic development representative

“I want something that excites and engages our children.”

~Parent

Solano County Library leads through change and learning.

Community participants offered their views on the value of Library service and expressed confidence in our reputation for service and integrity. The Library places a high value on excellent service and a well-trained and motivated staff. It is the Library staff’s knowledge and their willingness to share this knowledge that makes the organization successful and our service relevant.

The Library will provide a skilled and knowledgeable staff whose first priority is proactive service. We will employ our knowledge to build relevant collections in a variety of physical and digital formats, to connect users with the information they need, and to create a welcoming environment that encourages people to explore everything the library has to offer.



“We have to adapt. We need to be quick on our feet to adapt economically.”

~Public agency head

Solano County Library celebrates our diverse and distinctive environment.

Community members expressed their appreciation of and their desire to preserve the unique environment and rural open spaces of Solano County. They are fully appreciative of the ethnic diversity of the people who live here and the richness that brings to the County's culture. They also value the mix of rural-urban neighborhoods and expressed an interest in using those features as an economic engine to attract and grow small businesses. Local government, businesses, and service organizations have indicated through programs and investments that cultural diversity and an open environment are part of the locale's attraction to new residents and businesses.

The Library will promote actions that establish the Library as a civic focal point and a resource hub for Solano County's communities. We will investigate methods to bring Library resources to where people are, adapting services to support the county's unique neighborhoods.

"I live in Vacaville and work in Fairfield. My commute has open areas filled with beautiful hills and cows grazing on them. I'm not going to see that in the Bay Area."
~Business leader



Next Steps

The Library staff will develop detailed work plans that will document the activities of all the units within the department and match them to the strategic directions described in this report. These work plans will be the basis for ongoing reports that will evaluate the progress that our organization is making in serving the needs of the residents of the County.

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Solano Community Foundation
Solano Transportation Authority
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Solano County Library Foundation
Solano County Board of Supervisors
Solano County Office of Education
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UC Master Gardeners
URS Corporation
Vacaville Jazz Society
Vallejo Adult School
Vallejo City Unified School District
Vallejo Sanitation

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