

Ocean County Library Strategic Plan 2020 – 2021

Connecting People • Building Community • Transforming Lives





Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Executive Summary	5
Ocean County Library's Mission and Goals	6
Challenges	7
Measuring Success	8
Facilities.....	8
Technology	8
Public Services.....	9
Library Materials.....	10
Public Relations	10
Training Office	11
Staff	11
Acknowledgments	12

Welcome

Since 1979, the Ocean County Library has produced eight master or strategic plans, each aimed at analyzing and defining the values that shape our service to the community. Plan development has historically been a collaborative task shared by library administration, library staff, consultants, and members of the community. As a result of their efforts, the Ocean County Library has grown and adapted to community needs over the past nine decades.

2020 has proven to be an extraordinary year. Many of the Library's initiatives had to be postponed or re-configured due to the pandemic. Covid-19 prompted a shift from in-person meetings, programs, and outreach, to socially distant, technology-based activities. In order to slow the spread of the coronavirus and to adhere to the Governor's Executive Order, libraries closed to the public March through June.

Library staff and administration took the opportunity of working from home to learn to navigate the online environment via the rollout of Microsoft Teams. They were able to take trainings coordinated by the Training Office. Digital resources for the public expanded. Information services continued via phone, text, and chat.

The Ocean County Library has been no stranger to crisis, whether local, County-wide, or global. Superstorm Sandy proved that staff are resilient, resourceful, and committed to service. Time and again staff deliberated how best they might manage to meet the needs of our communities even when unable to welcome them into our physical buildings.

The Technology Team had already implemented self-service kiosks in all branches. Public services coordinators researched and developed procedures for virtual programs. Collections expanded limits for digital content, including streaming resources, ebooks, and informational databases. Public Relations increased use of social media.

The Facilities Team made sure the buildings continued to be safe and secure during the closure, and prepared the branches for reopening by limiting furniture, removing highly touchable items, constructing shields for public service desks and workspaces, and obtaining masks, cleaning supplies, and gloves for staff. The Finance Team ensured that bills continued to be paid and payroll continued to be processed. Branch Managers continued to lead, encourage, support, and motivate their staff amid the challenge of ever-shifting information and circumstances.

During the COVID-19 closure, the Public Relations department worked hard to maintain the presence of the library in our community while our doors were temporarily closed. The Public Relations department reminded Ocean County that our digital services would travel "anywhere you need to be." Along with the Printing & Graphics Department, Public Relations used their resources to share the new procedures in place to keep both staff and patrons safe through our reopening.

Director Quinn realized the library's extended closure would be a good time to draft a new short-term Interim Strategic Plan to prepare the library for the realities of the Covid and Post-Covid world. The plan would, of necessity, be streamlined, focus on a year to year-and-a-half timeline, and incorporate lessons learned during the pandemic. Staff and administrative input would be key, rather than relying upon the expense of consultants. Community feedback, unfortunately, would be postponed until focus groups could once again be coordinated.

All staff, regardless of job title, had the opportunity to share ideas, concerns, and priorities to be considered for the Interim Strategic Plan. All staff maintained a focus on the needs of the public during a difficult and unsettling time. Much gratitude is due for their time, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness.

Executive Summary

In 2020, Chief Librarian Rita Oakes, under the leadership of Library Director Susan Quinn, coordinated the interim strategic planning process. This involved a thorough review of prior Ocean County Library strategic plans, reaching out to recent attendees of the American Library Association and Public Library Association conferences, establishing a team to research current strategic plans of library systems throughout the United States of similar size, including star libraries, and reviewing webinars and online resources.

Branch Managers, Department Heads, and members of the Management Team convened virtual meetings with their staff and asked the following: 1. What does the Ocean County Library do well? 2. What can the Ocean County Library improve? 3. What do our communities need? 4. What are we not providing that we could provide? 5. What groups or agencies should we connect with?

In addition, staff were asked to prioritize the following topics: 1. Interpersonal behaviors; 2. fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion; 3. virtual programming and technology; 4. work from home protocols and expectations; 5. the digital divide; 6. succession planning/mentoring; 7. post-pandemic issues; 8. social isolation; 9. community engagement.

The three topics deemed most critical by staff for the duration of the Interim Strategic Plan were post-pandemic issues, the digital divide, and fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The next phase required consolidating the identified issues into a framework to easily capture System and local branch activities in support of staff priorities. Branches and departments were given a template to develop a tactical plan of more specific action steps, while keeping in mind the library's long-standing mission and goals.



The Library's Interim Strategic Plan is a transitional planning document designed to navigate the organization through the challenges of the next twelve months.

***Connecting People,
Building Community,
and Transforming Lives***

Library Goals

- The Library is the Heart of the Community.
- The Library Nurtures Growth, Change, and Lifelong Learning.
- The Library Creates Advocates and Library Champions.
- The Library is Committed to Organizational Excellence.

Challenges

Challenge: Re-imagine and Adapt to the Covid-19 and Post Covid-19 Reality to Meet the Needs of the Future

- Explore alternative service models, such as contactless service
- Refine virtual programming and outreach
- Explore programming options for customers unable to engage virtually, such as dial-a-story or other phone programs
- Review library operating hours and staffing continually

Challenge: Transform Our Communities

- Narrow the digital divide by providing hotspots and tablets for loan
- Foster equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Provide ongoing tutorials for maximum use of resources
- Maximize smartphone apps
- Become a Dementia Friendly Library

Challenge: Transform Our Staff

- Provide ongoing staff and Management trainings
- Re-establish Diversity Committee
- Maximize creativity, productivity, and engagement
- Build resilience and flexibility
- Provide opportunity for staff career planning
- Provide opportunities for staff innovation



Measuring Success

Facilities*

- Collaborate with Technology to review floor plans to adapt and/or increase self-service options for check-ins, check-outs, and holds
- Maximize efficiency of work spaces for social distancing
- Review public spaces for maximum flexibility in anticipation of ever-changing needs
- Review and prioritize repair and refresh of interiors in branches and departments
- Continue planning for construction of new Stafford Branch
- Explore warehouse options for moving support functions offsite for greater efficiency



Technology**

- Collaborate with Facilities to review floor plans to adapt and/or increase self-service options for check-ins, check-outs, and holds
- Upgrade self-service and remote printing options for the public
- Explore providing phone-in programming
- Pilot lending of hot spots and Chromebooks to members of the public who lack digital connectivity
- Improve range and strength of wi-fi signal
- Maximize smartphone apps
- Implement RFID tagging to provide safe and efficient processing of materials
- Provide technology support for Library staff to conduct virtual programs

*For more detail, please see *Ocean County Library Facilities Plan, 2020-2025*

**For more detail, please see the *Ocean County Library Technology Department Strategic Plan 2020-2022*



Public Services

- Implement contactless delivery options, such as doorside service
- Provide virtual library cards
- Continue to quarantine returned materials based on most current recommendations
- Maintain flexibility of the types of services offered and staffing levels
- Provide guidelines and training to conduct virtual programs
- Create Virtual Programming Team
- Provide ongoing training for Friends and Volunteers on advocating and championing the Library
- Continue to provide “Make and Take” programs
- Provide STEAM and STEM virtual programs
- Re-establish Ocean County Library Diversity Committee
- Expand Books-by-Mail to Home Borrowers
- Expand Connecting Generations Pen Pals Project
- Become a Dementia Friendly Library
- Pilot phone programming for Seniors and Home Borrowers
- Conduct virtual outreach to schools and organizations
- Curate podcasts by interest and/or age level
- Provide resources for job seekers



Library Materials

- Promote and maintain digital and streaming services for eBooks, eMovies, eMagazines, eNewspapers, online databases, and other resources
- Research databases to better assist educators and students with virtual and in-person learning
- Collaborate with Public Relations and Readers Services to conduct online book discussions
- Improve PAC search functionality



Public Relations

- Promote availability of virtual services, programs, products, and resources
- Provide dynamic online presence for the Library
- Increase use of social media in English and Spanish
- Use YouTube and local TV stations to provide online access to storytimes, Library instruction, and programs
- Create rolling set of video advertisements that will be featured videos on our YouTube channel
- Sharpen our animation skills for more dynamic promotional videos
- Create catchy hashtag campaigns, ex: #anywhereyouneedtobe #connectbuildtransform #likealibrary

Training Office

- Provide training opportunities for staff on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Provide staff with tools to develop and enhance skills, competence, talents, and abilities
- Provide trainings on safety & security, resilience & stress-reduction, and wellness
- Expand and curate offerings of remote learning opportunities
- Prepare staff for career advancement
- Foster peer to peer relationships and community in the virtual learning environment

Staff

- Continually train in new technologies and resources
- Attend and participate in trainings offered by the Training Office or other agencies
- Create subject-specific tutorials in areas of expertise
- Cross-train across departments
- Model positive, inclusive behaviors



Ocean County Library Strategic Plan 2020-2021

Compiled and edited by Rita Oakes, Chief Librarian

Design and layout by Jason Cascais

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Susan Hutler

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Paul F. Wolleon (2021)

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Cindy Simerlink, Branch Manager and entire Tuckerton staff

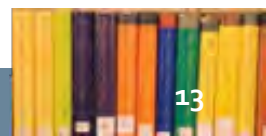
Laura Kostiha, Branch Manager and entire Upper Shores and Bay Head Reading Center staff

Melanie Bobrowicz, Branch Manager and entire Waretown staff

Christi Aldellizzi and the entire Collections staff

Kate Sanchez and the entire Public Relations and Printing & Graphics staff

Judy Macaluso, Cait Byrnes, and the entire Senior Services/Homebound and Volunteer Services staff



BARNEGAT

112 Burr Street · 609-698-3331

BAY HEAD READING CENTER

136 Meadow Avenue · 732-892-0662

BEACHWOOD

126 Beachwood Blvd. · 732-244-4573

BERKELEY

30 Station Road · 732-269-2144

BRICK

301 Chambers Bridge Road · 732-477-4513

ISLAND HEIGHTS

121 Central Avenue · 732-270-6266

JACKSON

2 Jackson Drive · 732-928-4400

LACEY

10 East Lacey Road · 609-693-8566

LAKESWOOD

301 Lexington Avenue · 732-363-1435

LITTLE EGG HARBOR

290 Mathistown Road · 609-294-1197

LONG BEACH ISLAND

217 S. Central Avenue · 609-494-2480

MANCHESTER

21 Colonial Drive · 732-657-7600

PLUMSTED

119 Evergreen Road · 609-758-7888

POINT PLEASANT BEACH

710 McLean Avenue · 732-892-4575

POINT PLEASANT BOROUGH

834 Beaver Dam Road · 732-295-1555

STAFFORD

129 N. Main Street · 609-597-3381

TOMS RIVER

101 Washington Street · 732-349-6200

TUCKERTON

380 Bay Avenue · 609-296-1470

UPPER SHORES

112 Jersey City Avenue, Lavallette · 732-793-3996

WARETOWN

112 Main Street · 609-693-5133

WHITING READING CENTER

Whiting Commons Shopping Center · 400 Lacey Road, Suite #5 · 732-849-0391





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