

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE: July 5, 2000
TO: Members of the Library Board
FROM: Don Napoli and Deb Futa
RE: **Service Directions for 2001 (Item A)**

Introduction

On December 13, 1999, the Library Board approved a new long-range plan, which is to serve as a working document through the year 2004. Using as priorities the service responses and vision statement within that plan, below are outlined the projects and goals for the next 18 months, the remainder of 2000 and through the year 2001.

Many initiatives are already in the process of being implemented. As just one example, under the Current Topics heading, we have redefined title limits on new materials purchases and increased the number of copies to cope with increased demand in specific areas. To merchandise the collections, we added slat wall panels at Main, Centre and Sights and Sounds (formerly Audio-Visual Services) as well as more visible and attractive displays. In this one area, we are constantly tweaking and refining our cataloging, processing and acquisitions processes, using system data to give us more accurate information.

St. Joseph County Public Library Vision Statement

To be recognized as the best public library, meeting and anticipating the needs and wants of our community!

Service Response I: Information Literacy and Information Access

“In order for our community to thrive in a future where information is accessed in many ways and technology is increasingly prominent, Information Literacy and Information Access is one of our service responses. This response addresses the need for training and instruction in skills related to locating, evaluating and using information effectively. Teaching the public to find and evaluate information will be stressed, and we will provide state-of-the-art information resources.” (From the SJCPPL Long Range Plan)

Activities

Upgrade 1/3 of all computer equipment annually

SJCPL adopted this equipment replacement philosophy over the past several years as we observed the rapid changes in technology. New public computers have already arrived for placement in the renovated Sights and Sounds area. The number of these public access computers will also double, from six to twelve. Later in the year, the Automated Services department will assess needs and write specifications to replace other equipment. As part of the replacement process, older

equipment is rotated through the system until it becomes obsolete and is then sold to the Friends of SJCPL for its periodic discarded book/furnishings/equipment sales.

Web Access Management

Adding this module to our automated system will allow us to manage patron access to our leased databases using a validation process which our commercial vendors require. Library cardholders will be able to access all of our databases from any location in the world.

Centralized Processing of Materials

A cross sectional staff task force has recently finished a series of six meetings designed to streamline, centralize and standardize processing of all library materials. For many years, we've been aware that a genre paperback may be categorized differently between branch library locations or an item from the children's collection may be labeled differently in almost every children's collection. New items will, in the near future, receive standardized, final labeling in the Technical Services department as part of batch processing tasks. Cataloging entries will be defined more clearly to help our patrons located materials more easily. The project will be completed in phases, due to the enormity of the task. In addition to saving many clerical hours, we anticipate increased ease of access by our patrons.

Inventory Project

In order to obtain more accurate information about our collections and manage them more thoroughly, we will inventory the AV collection immediately after the department relocates this summer. During 2000, staff will also plan and begin to inventory the entire library collection. Our goal is to do this throughout the system so that each location is inventoried every other year.

Self Checkout at Main Library

We are in the exploration stage of mapping a transition in our materials security system to enable self-checkout at Main Library. Unlike Centre Twp. and Francis Branch where no conversion of materials security was needed, Main Library must undergo a change in processing materials in order to operate self-checkout machines. We anticipate having a plan in place by early fall.

Millennium Circulation

SJCPL will begin using the Millennium Circulation module of Innovative Interfaces, Inc. our automated system vendor, early in 2001. Fully Java-based, it will be easier for our circulation staff to use because all functions can be accessed from the checkout screen with a single command. It will also accommodate patron photos, should we decide to implement that feature for security purposes.

NetLibrary

Beginning in 2000, we will introduce our patrons to a new way of using information by providing access to a collection of 1,500 eBooks from NetLibrary, Inc. eBooks are electronic versions of published books that library patrons can search, borrow, read, and return over the Internet, 24 hours a day. This is a six-month free trial period that will end in December. We will begin to purchase eBooks for our collection in 2001, based on the success of the trial period.

Technology Assessment of Staff

In accordance with SJCP's Long Range Plan, and in conjunction with our ongoing technology training, we will develop a "technology assessment/training profile" for all appropriate positions. Competencies will also be developed and implemented

Service Response II: Current Topics & Titles and Lifelong Learning

"The Current Topics & Titles service response will help fulfill the community residents' appetite for information about popular culture and social trends and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences.

The Lifelong Learning service response helps address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunity for all community residents. While Lifelong Learning applies to people of all ages, special efforts will be made to encourage specific groups to use library resources to support their formal and informal learning." (From the SJCP Long Range Plan)

Activities

Conduct Surveys and Focus Groups

Part of activities in the current long range plan involve establishing baselines for a number of use factors. In the fall of 2000, we will have the plan in place to establish these baselines through a number of public surveys, focus groups, and studies.

Redefine Readmobile Service for 2001

The Readmobile program was originally designed as a research project serving at-risk first through third graders in three elementary schools. Its purpose was to create library users by bringing library services to children. Schools were chosen as the target population because of the accessibility of having a ready-made audience for the project. The Readmobile recently completed its fourth year of service to 700 children at Monroe, Studebaker and Harrison elementary schools. The vehicle, itself, is a great marketing tool and spends summers at daycare centers, parks, neighborhood centers and daycare centers.

During the fifth year of service, we plan an evaluation of the current program with an eye toward a change of focus or an expansion of the service in some way. Because of the limited number of children this service now reaches, the high cost of maintaining the service per student, and our inability to measure whether or not the program is effective in accomplishing its original goals, we need to seriously consider whether to change the focus of the program, expand it with the same resources to reach more children, or expand the program with additional vehicles, materials, and staff to reach more children. Additional vehicles increase the Library's financial commitment exponentially because, in addition to the initial acquisition cost of the vehicle and its on-going maintenance, there would be costs associated with constructing somewhere a facility to house multiple vehicles, the additional collections needed for multiple vehicles, and the staff that goes with these additional resources. Staffing levels would also have to be increased substantially in that department, if we were to go in the direction of expansion.

By April 2001, the Readmobile and Extensions Services staff, working with the Library Administration, will construct a plan for ongoing Readmobile service in the community.

Review/Revise Collection Development Policy

Our collection development policy is almost ten years old and, with the rapid expansion and ease of access to electronic resources, should be reviewed for a number of factors to make sure our practices are still valid.

Evaluate and Implement strategies to Increase Circulation

Many of these strategies are already underway such as the merchandising and purchasing changes mentioned above. Other possibilities include additional display units, slat wall end panels for merchandising in the Troyer and mini-branches and increased marketing efforts. These strategies are all ongoing.

Explore new Public Program Options such as a Reading Festival

After the PLA conference, many of our staff members who attended came back excited about the Charlotte Public Library's two week long reading festival, named Novello. While the Charlotte festival is on a fairly grand scale, our staff would like to initiate a similar program which we hope will grow in popularity. Many other programs are under discussion along the lines of our enormously popular Science Alive program. This initiative will also be ongoing.

Service Response III: Commons

“The Commons helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community. This includes community participating or attendance at library programs and events, use of meeting rooms by community groups, and the use of the library as a gathering place for enjoyment or fun. We believe that providing a commons environment also includes offering a variety of spaces such as cafes, hands-on children's' activity spaces, presentation spaces, videoconferencing or teleconferencing capabilities, and warm and inviting spaces for conversation and discussion.” (From the SJCPL Long Range Plan)

Activities

Security Training Program

In creating inviting spaces, they must not only be attractive and useful, they must be safe. Our security training program will have at least two major components; an introductory session for all newly hired staff members and at least one refresher session on a specific topic each year. Plan are already underway to send our Facilities Manager through a certified training program which will enable him to design and implement staff training.

Update Security Manual

While the central elements of our security manual are still very valid, the whole document needs an update with new information. We hope to add more information on dealing with difficult patron behavior and offer suggestions on staff responses.

Renovate Children's Spaces

Renovation of Children's spaces at six locations is already in the planning stage. Design development has begun with the bidding process to take place in the fall. Award of a contract is slated for the November Board meeting and construction should begin early in 2001.

Renovate Main Library Lower Level

One major objective last year was to move Friends of the Library booksales out of Main Library space. Once the Friends completed their move at the end of 1999, we were able to recapture the space used for storage and sales of material.

In 2001, we plan to overhaul the lower level of the Main Library to accomplish several objectives: establish a staff/public training room for technology training (also fits Information Literacy Service Response), create small meeting rooms to accommodate 5 to 12 people; update the conference room to use state-of-the-art technology for videoconferencing and/or presentations; replace worn carpeting in all areas; brighten spaces for greater public appeal; create additional staff offices and work areas.

Rewrite Public Service Policy Manual

We have talked for some time about the need to update and reorganize our public policies. As part of our mission to be a commons, we hope to completely overhaul the public service policy manual. We want the focus to be more customer-centered and less rule driven. We plan for the new manual to contain policies only with a separate companion manual for procedures and suggested responses to circumstances.

Other Activities

Plan and Implement Quality Service Training

Service is the underpinning of everything we do. Developing the service training program for staff will involve several steps, including focus-group type conversations with staff members to gather their input about what we currently do and how it can change. The final training program will also be incorporated with at least one session for supervisors dealing with coaching for quality service. Finally, we hope to identify job skills associated with service, which can be measured on a performance review.

Conclusion

SJCPL has embarked on an ambitious plan of service for the next 5 years. The goals outlined above are plans for the next eighteen months but even those could change if technology changes or if unforeseeable circumstances arise.

