

Monroe County Library System

Strategic Plan

2024 – 2029

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Overview

The Monroe County Library System (MCLS) last developed its Strategic Plan in 2017, intended to guide the library for five years. However, as the year 2021 approached, the ongoing impact of the global pandemic necessitated postponing the next Strategic Planning process.

On June 11, 2024, senior staff from a variety of departments and library branches met to discuss the opportunities, trends, and challenges facing MCLS. Collectively they created a shared vision and identified major goal areas for MCLS. Input was collected from a diverse array of stakeholders - including staff, patrons, and the community – to gather comprehensive perspectives. Together they established a list of five major goal areas with key objectives in each goal area. Finally, the team identified possible one-year tasks that will be completed in each of the major goal areas. The following reflects the main points of their deliberations and decisions.

Guiding Principles

The mission of the Monroe County Library System is to enrich the quality of life for all residents by providing free access to informational, educational, and recreational resources. The library continues to promote intellectual freedom by safeguarding the development of independent, literate citizens through the provision of open and confidential access to information. The library strives to meet the growing information demands of the citizens of Monroe County, embrace the expanding role of the library in the social fabric of a global world, and be a transformational force to all walks of life.

Major Goal Areas

Financial Infrastructure

Marketing/Outreach

Public Service

Team Development

Technology

Underserved Populations

Financial Infrastructure

Key Objectives

1. Seek a stable and diversified funding base
2. Manage resources and funds responsibly
3. Prepare for millage renewal or increase in 2028
4. Keep abreast of other county agencies' plans for funding
5. Lobby for legislative support of libraries

One Year Tasks

1. Monitor budget in concert with Board Finance Committee
2. Track ongoing penal fine revenues
3. Complete annual state aid report for the Library of Michigan
4. Evaluate requests for tax abatements on a case-by-case basis
5. Increase cross training for office manager/finance/retirement staff
6. Plan ahead for infrastructure improvements (roofs, AC units, bookmobile)

Marketing/Outreach

Key Objectives

1. Keep marketing taglines updated
2. Consider expansion of Community Outreach
3. Identify and expand services to underserved populations
4. Market current library services

One Year Tasks

1. Create a marketing tagline
 - a. Focus on milestone anniversaries
 - b. 90 Years of Excellence
2. Consider expansion of Community Outreach
 - a. Consider additional staff to support expanded outreach efforts
 - b. Consider a designated budget for marketing
3. Identify and expand services to underserved populations
 - a. Senior living facilities
 - b. Homeschoolers
 - c. Second language English speakers
4. Market current services
 - a. Strive for cohesive content across social media platforms
 - b. Expand our digital presence (consider additional staff for this)

Public Service

Key Objectives

1. Evaluate individual branch collections
 - a. Coordinate with Collections and Technology to use new software to evaluate individual branch collections
 - b. Utilize new technology to help with collections maintenance and evaluation.
 - c. Utilize staff expertise when evaluating collections
2. Reevaluate Branch Footprints
 - a. Consider adjusting branch layouts to accommodate more tables and/or study space where possible.
 - b. Evaluate collections and patron needs versus space usage
3. Expand Library of Things
4. Establish a process with staff to make sure information is relevant, up to date, and practical for patrons
5. Consider a systemwide amnesty policy – perhaps for school aged children

One Year Tasks

1. Evaluate individual branch collections
 - a. Consider handheld scanners and dedicated laptops for inventory and collection management
 - b. Use new software to individually evaluate each branch collection for local use
 - c. Implement double check-in as a systemwide practice
2. Reevaluate Branch Footprints
 - a. Evaluate space and usage including ADA
3. Expand Library of Things
4. Establish a process with staff to make sure information is relevant, up to date, and practical for patrons
 - a. Create a list of all study rooms/meeting rooms/community rooms available at all branches with information on how to book and township requirements
 - b. Have Branch Heads regularly review their branch pages on the website
 - c. Consider allowing patrons to sign up for a library card online
5. Consider a systemwide amnesty policy – perhaps for school aged children

Team Development

Key Objectives

1. Keep MCLS staff online resources updated
2. Create training opportunities to enhance essential skills for MCLS staff
3. Establish practices to attract and retain qualified candidates for employment

One Year Tasks

1. Keep MCLS staff online resources updated
 - a. Update MCLS staff portal
 - i. Review and simplify Emergency Manual
 - Update flow chart for incident reports
 - ii. Review and update the “Who Gets What” page
 - iii. Review and update Collections page
 - Update training on weed vs. float
 - iv. Review and update Circulation Manual
 - Establish standardized protocol for billed items (forgive fines, change patron to Limited for 1 year with note on account, who to contact with questions, etc.)
 - b. Create database of performers/resources for programming
 - i. Include performers that have been used or suggested by branches. Allow ability to rate, with space for comments. Jess, Jennifer, and Lucy will be responsible for updating. Possibly use Teams.
 - ii. Update “Overdue” page of MCLS website
2. Create training opportunities to enhance essential skills for MCLS staff
 - a. Ensure all staff are trained to always provide patrons with at least one option to pursue. “I don’t know” as a final answer is equivalent to “I don’t care”
 - i. Create training or talking points for supervisors to share with staff, so all patrons leave with an answer to their question
 - ii. Branch Heads evaluate staff for technology training needs, ensuring patrons can be provided with optimal technology support at all branches of the library system
 - iii. Create Tips/Troubleshooting sheet for Libby/Hoopla for staff
 - iv. Create training on book challenges or have this be one of the topics for the monthly portal training mentioned below
 - b. Ensure all staff are trained on distribution models for materials
 - i. Create video or flow chart to share with staff
 - c. Establish systemwide timeline for branches to review operating procedures, portal, and MCLS website
 - i. Create schedule for reviewing the following bi-annually: emergency manual, panic button/code words
 - ii. Create schedule for reviewing the following monthly or every other month: portal (including circ manual) and website,
 - d. Establish systemwide training for Teams
 - i. Create training to include managing notifications, making branch/interlibrary communication better, using the app, when to email vs. Teams

- ii. Create separate channels for float, disbursing program leftovers, missing items, emergencies
 - e. Establish systemwide standards for using Ryan Dowd’s customer service and empathy-forward training
 - i. Require Ryan Dowd core training for all new hires
 - ii. Require all employees to watch six trainings per year
 - f. Ensure all staff are trained on team building and handling workplace conflict
 - i. Research sources for training on conflict in workplace/team building
 - g. Establish systemwide standards for using double check-in procedures
 - h. Ensure all staff are able to use effective communication methods between branches and Daume
 - i. Evaluate communication methods and determine a method that all staff should use to have efficient and timely communication between staff at branches and Daume - telephone, Teams, email?
- 3. Establish practices to attract more qualified candidates for employment
 - a. Research hiring practices among other public library systems, confer with college employment counselors?
 - b. Create format for MCLS internal promotional training/mentoring
 - c. Revise staff evaluations
 - i. Research evaluations used at libraries throughout nation
 - ii. Create a user friendly, streamlined staff evaluation that allows each employee to create a personal mission statement that aligns with the library’s mission. This should emphasize why our work is so important every day. (Ex: Jennifer’s mission to “Be the good part of someone’s story today.”) Align staff goals with MCLS mission. Make staff expectations clear.
 - d. Encourage the hiring of a dedicated Human Resources person for MCLS

Technology

Key Objectives

1. Better manage our online presence including the website and Online Resources and work with staff to keep online resources up to date
2. Review network infrastructure and make changes where necessary to provide a robust network for staff and patrons
3. Review and implement new software and services for our ILS
4. Review and implement changes to end-user technology services including printing, children's computers and staff workstations
5. Establish a cloud-first initiative for the MCLS data center and server infrastructure. Move services to cloud-based options where available, move server infrastructure to a cloud-provider, move the MCLS and MCERS websites to hosted WordPress solutions, and make other changes as necessary to provide the best value for the money spent on server infrastructure
6. Implement refreshed technology security policies including Zero Trust and Least Privilege policies. Utilize MFA for secure staff access to technology services
7. Evaluate and refresh the support structure of the MCLS Technology Department. Provide better documentation, better delineation between user support and infrastructure support, establish protocols for addressing and resolving technology issues, prioritize critical projects and work to be proactive and not reactive
8. Develop and implement a proper Disaster Recovery Plan

One Year Tasks

1. Contact Boxcar Studios to begin work on an updated theme for the MCLS website
2. Website staff convene to discuss content on the website and where/what to move/delete
3. Move the MCLS website to a hosted WordPress solution in conjunction with the refresh
4. Move the MCERS website to a hosted WordPress solution
5. Visit and evaluate network closets and rooms at branches
6. Contact a security IT vendor to plan for a security and vulnerability assessment
7. Work with DMC to establish a plan of action to move the MCLS server infrastructure to the cloud
8. Implement Multiple Factor Authentication for Office 365
9. Develop and publish an AI policy for MCLS
10. Work with MCLS staff to develop training for Office 365
11. Contract a consulting company to begin work on a Disaster Recovery Plan

Underserved Populations

Key Objectives

1. Increase library outreach efforts to underserved and marginalized communities
2. Reduce barriers to library access
3. Tailor programs to demographic trends

One Year Tasks

1. Research underserved and marginalized communities in Monroe County. Begin to develop targeted outreach programs, partner with local organizations and community leaders, and create tailored services for specific groups such as immigrants, low-income families, or senior citizens.
2. Investigate the usage and effectiveness of Unique services.
3. Analyze census data to identify the predominant age groups, cultural backgrounds, and income levels within the community. Design programs and services that cater specifically to these groups, such as language classes for non-English speakers, early literacy programs for young children, or financial literacy workshops for low-income families.
4. Alleviate barriers caused by fees to promote equitable access to library resources
 - a. Develop and offer programs that align with the community's demographic profile, including age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

Next Steps

1. The 2024 Strategic Planning Committee staff will review this document.
2. The Director will present the Strategic Plan to the Board of Trustees for final adoption.
3. Work groups will actively address specific elements of the Strategic Plan and will report progress to the staff and community as appropriate.
4. After adoption, the Strategic Planning Committee will meet annually to review the One Year Tasks and set new goals for the upcoming year. These results will be shared with the staff and community as appropriate.