

Strategic Plan

Bergenfield Public Library



Adopted June 14, 2012

Board of Trustees

**Bergenfield Public Library
50 W. Clinton Avenue
Bergenfield, New Jersey**

2012 Strategic Plan

Bergenfield Public Library

Introduction

In 2005 the Trustees and staff of the Bergenfield Library welcomed the community to an expanded and newly renovated building. Planning efforts were focused on building design, writing grants, funding, finding temporary space and finally completing the project. Bergenfield now has a library better in tune with the community's needs for added space for children and teens, tutoring rooms for English as a Second Language students and quiet study rooms.

But communities do not stand still. They are constantly changing and, if the library is to serve the community, library services must continue to change. Today's Bergenfield Library is a far cry from the small room in Mutual Hall on Front Street that housed the first lending library in 1918, or the public library housed in the municipal building until the opening of the present facility in 1968. Community leaders had the foresight to know that a public library would play an important role in the growth and well-being of their town.

In the years since the renovation, instead of expanding hours and services, library staff and Trustees were confronted with serious budget cutbacks. At the same time there have been enormous changes in technology impacting libraries. In an economically stressed environment the community needs its library more than ever. More job seekers are using the library. More people come to the library seeking help with basic computer skills and information on how to use newer technologies. More parents rely on the library as a safe place for their children to stay after school. More families and seniors use the library to save money.

The challenge for today's library is not only to respond to change, but to plan for meaningful change that addresses current economic realities, anticipates the future and builds on the strengths of both the library and the community.

"It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan."

--Eleanor Roosevelt



President's Message

The mission of the Strategic Planning Task Force was to work with educators, community organizations, business people, religious leaders, technology-oriented residents, library users and non-users to develop a plan that would meet the current and ever changing needs of our diverse community.

The Library Board of Trustee's approval of this document is confirmation of its ongoing commitment to maintaining a vibrant, up-to-date library in these times of technological change and serious fiscal restraints.

The Board would like to thank the participating members of the general public, community leaders and our staff.

Special thanks to members of the Task Force: George Armbruster, Marcela Deauna, Nancy Eike, Grisel Almonte, Tom Neats, Nelson Reynoso and Mary Riskind. This enthusiastic, dedicated group has worked on this project several hours every week for the past year.

The Task Force would like to express its gratitude to our Task Force leader, Mary Riskind, who brought out the best in everyone.

Lucille Bilotti Tandler
President
Library Board of Trustees

The Planning Process

Bergenfield Library's planning process began in April and May 2011 with a two-day Strategic Planning workshop sponsored by the State Library and led by the Ivy Group, a library consulting firm. The goal was to train directors and Trustees across New Jersey in the fundamentals and tools of strategic planning. The Bergenfield Library Board of Trustees established a task force comprised of Board members and civic leaders from the community.

Our Vision

Bergenfield Public Library will be the community's premier information and cultural center, improving the lives of all who live, work and learn in Bergenfield by providing cultural and intellectual and technical resources.

The Library collected data to assess Bergenfield's services and funding, particularly in comparison to other BCCLS libraries for similar size communities; background data on community demographics; and data on social and technological trends that will impact the delivery of library services.

By July 2011, the task force had come up with a list of more than 30 prospective individual leadership interviews and focus groups to be conducted. These were completed over several months, with input from every segment of the community: Borough officials, the business community, Friends of the Library, civic leaders, educators, ESL students, families who use the library and staff.

The task force met almost weekly to transcribe and compile the information gathered to determine service priorities.

From this extraordinary wealth of ideas and information, the committee generated goals, objectives and activities to satisfy community needs. In clarifying the goals of the strategic plan, the committee agreed on a vision to guide the Library's future and a mission statement to describe the Library's purpose in the community. After much discussion and review by outside consultants, these were honed into the work presented in this document.

This is a strategic plan that will span at least five years. Adopted by the Board of Trustees on June 14, 2012, the plan will be reviewed annually. This is not a plan that can be executed exclusively by library staff. For the plan to be successful, the collaboration and support of individuals and organizations throughout the Bergenfield community will be essential.

CURRENT LIBRARY USE

2011 in Statistics

Circulation

Total Adult	134,967
Total Youth	135,969
Total Circulation	270,936

Programs

Total Adult	976
Total Youth	411
Adult Attendance	4,552
Youth Attendance	6,923

Summer Reading Club

Participants	461
Total Books Read	8,238

Resources Added in 2011

Books	5,798
Audiobooks	204
DVDs	843
Music CDs	274
Magazines/Newspapers	128

Collections

Books	139,631
Audiobooks	2,465
DVDs	7,121
Music CDs	3,355
Magazines/Newspapers	5,239
Total Items	161,996

Services

Library Visits	167,293
Reference Transactions	19,633
Annual Public Service Hours	2,511
Internet Computer Uses	15,804
Registered Borrowers	14,790

Our Mission

The Bergenfield Public Library is the lifelong learning and cultural center for our community. Our mission is to provide materials, information, services and programs for enjoyment, learning, cultural and personal enrichment. Our library is a source for the best in popular reading and non-print materials for people of all ages. We accomplish this in a welcoming environment as we embrace technology and other means of delivering our services.

We aspire to enhance the quality of life for all our residents, promote their well-being and assist all in attaining their maximum potential. We provide enjoyable and fulfilling experiences for our children to stimulate a love of reading and learning. We recognize and build on the strengths of the diverse community that is Bergenfield.

What You Find at the Library

- Knowledgeable and welcoming staff
- Books, magazines and newspapers
- Movies, music, audiobooks, downloadable audiobooks and e-books
- Programs for children and adults
- Public Internet computers
- Research assistance
- Quiet study rooms
- Free access to online electronic resources
- English as a Second Language tutoring
- Job support and networking programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Ongoing book sale
- Public Notary Services
- Special collections, including large print books, books and films in world languages
- Local History materials
- Graphic novels and video games
- And much, much more

Shared Services for Quality Services

FOUNDING MEMBER OF BCCLS, BERGEN COUNTY COOPERATIVE LIBRARY SYSTEM

- Access to over 3 million items available through the BCCLS cooperative
- Access to still more libraries through Open Borrowing and the State Library
- Online requesting 24 X 7 from home, work or school
- Free delivery to any member library
- Reciprocal borrowing – your card is honored in person at any member library
- Cooperative purchasing of online newspapers, magazines and other information sources
- Downloadable audiobooks and e-books
- World Language Catalog
- State-wide Summer Reading Program
- Staff training through LibraryLinkNJ

Current Environment: Challenges and Opportunities

We are changing as a nation.

- America is getting older. As the population ages, women outnumber men.
- America's ethnicity is changing quickly and dramatically. Minority business start-ups are increasing at two times the national rate. Across the country, demand for ESL outstrips available resources.
- Nationally, increasing poverty is widening the digital divide. Forty per cent of Americans lack Internet access at home. The definition of literacy is expanding to include computer and technical literacy.
- Libraries are "players" in workforce development.

--The Ivy Group

Changes at the local level reflect national changes.

- Bergenfield's population grew at a much slower rate than for New Jersey, but the diversity of Bergenfield's population grew over the last decade. Hispanic and Asian populations increased at more than double the rate of increase state-wide, suggesting that Bergenfield is a magnet for New Americans. Of Bergenfield residents, 25.5% self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, 25.6% as Asian and 7.7% as African-American. Nearly 38% of the population is foreign born, compared to 20.3% for the state.
- Census data tell us that 45.9% of Bergenfield speaks a language other than English at home. Spanish is the predominant non-English language and Tagalog a distant second.
- In the last decade Bergenfield's population has aged, but not as much as the rest of the state. For instance, 13% of Bergenfield is age 65 or older versus 13.5% for the state. The male population is 47.8% with a median age of 37. The female population is 52.2% with a median age of 40.8.
- In 2010 5.7% of Bergenfield residents had income below the poverty level. In Bergenfield 13.7% are female-headed households, often associated with poverty.

--2010 U. S. Census data

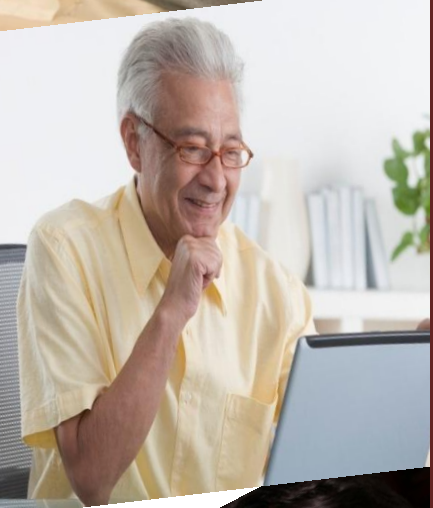
National and local changes have had an impact on the library's environment.

- "People are losing their jobs. They aren't buying books."
- "With the economic situation, more people are coming in to look for jobs online and check out items because they are not buying them."
- "We were just getting comfortable with the desktops and they are on to the next thing. There is not going to be a need to use the regular PC. Tablets are more portable."

--Interviews and focus group comments

Average value of materials borrowed by a Bergenfield cardholder in 2011 was \$765.

Per capita expenditure in 2011 was \$57.01



Our Promise

- Enrich, educate and empower users
- Stimulate imagination, discovery and a love of reading
- Offer a welcoming, user-friendly facility
- Provide quality service
- Offer up-to-date technology
- Foster civic pride

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES

PROMOTE

Goal One: Promote the Library's Programs and Services

Build awareness of the Bergenfield Public Library as a place where community members of all ages and backgrounds have access to materials, programs and services relevant to their needs and interests.

Objectives & Activities

- A. Increase library circulation, library card registrations, number of active cardholders and program attendance
 - Create three new outlets for distributing information about the library to the community
 - Create targeted brochures and other marketing materials for distribution
 - Recruit and train volunteers to be part of an outreach program to speak to community groups about the library
 - Offer "Open Houses" targeted to specific community groups or populations
 - Participate in at least one community activity each year
 - Target one high-value library service each year for special promotion
- B. Increase the number of people the library reaches electronically each year by 5% as measured by website hits, by e-mail, and followers on Facebook and Twitter
- C. Put tools in place for continuous improvement of services
 - Provide customer service training and professional development opportunities for staff
 - Improve signage to assist patrons in using facilities effectively
 - Conduct ongoing surveys of library users

"The library is the university of the common man."

SUPPORT

Goal Two: Support Lifelong Learning

Support individual growth and lifelong learning for all members of the community.

Objectives & Activities

- A. Increase participation in adult reading clubs
 - Explore adult programs and services at other libraries designed to encourage adult reading
- B. Offer programming for adults and children in non-traditional time slots
 - Provide three weekend or evening programs of an educational, cultural or entertainment value for adults throughout the year
 - Offer one popular children's program series each year in a non-traditional time slot
- C. Reflect the community's cultural diversity
 - Increase World Language collections each year
 - Present at least one program and a related display each year that reflects the cultural diversity of the community
 - Establish a network of volunteers who speak a language other than English to assist with translation for non-English speakers using the library
- D. Increase children's services targeted to special needs populations
 - Study special needs populations to develop at least one new service appropriate for such families
- E. Increase e-book usage
 - Offer a Tech Day program to introduce new technologies available through the library such as e-books



BUILD

Goal Three: Build a Stronger Community

Partner with schools, cultural groups, volunteer organizations, local businesses and other groups to promote and enhance the well-being and civic life of the community.

Objectives & Activities

- A. Continue existing successful partnerships with schools and local organizations
- B. Build partnerships with at least one ethnic group in the community a year
 - Sponsor a celebration of the cultural heritage of one ethnic group in the community each year
 - Increase the number and diversity of volunteers in the library
- C. Explore ways to promote local businesses
 - Create a list of local businesses and entrepreneurs and make it available to library users
 - Collaborate with Bergenfield restaurants to sponsor “A Taste of Bergenfield Day”
- D. Partner with local service groups to promote their services
 - Collaborate with youth-serving organizations to promote the well-being of Bergenfield children
 - Provide opportunities for local service organizations to promote their services and recruit new members
- E. Partner with local schools to benefit the library and students
 - Provide volunteer opportunities for students to engage with the library
 - Sponsor a joint program or activity with local schools to promote reading
- F. Partner with local institutions of higher learning to bring information on planning for college relevant to Bergenfield residents
 - Sponsor a program on financial aid for Bergenfield students in partnership with local colleges or universities
- G. Collaborate with local health-serving organizations to sponsor at least one program on community health issues

“It is a very stressful time. I think the library provides stability for our community. It’s something you can depend on. It kind of bridges the old and the new. A library can facilitate transitions, the constant change that is happening in our lives.”

EMPOWER

Goal Four: Improve the Technical Literacy of Library Staff and the Community

Empower members of the community to take advantage of current technologies to further their own learning and development.

Objectives & Activities

- A. Provide access and training for staff sufficient to meet the needs of the community
 - Continuously train staff on current technologies to remain current with software and hardware offered through the library
 - Provide professional development opportunities for staff to learn about newer technologies that patrons are using at home or work
 - Explore options using video or audio conferencing to access other sites for programming or training
- B. Provide opportunities for basic computer literacy for members of the community
 - Offer basic computer literacy classes for seniors, job seekers and others
 - Offer programs for residents on how to use newer technologies
 - Explore options using video or audio conferencing to access other sites for programming or training
- C. Develop and implement a Technology Plan for the library
 - As a BCCLS member library, prepare for and fully support the cooperative's conversion to the Polaris automation system
 - Revise the library's Technology Plan each year to reflect development and advances in technology

"Libraries should be on the cutting edge of technology. If you are not on the cutting edge, it is going to be difficult to make it up later."

"I think it's wonderful as long as the library keeps up. As was demonstrated by Borders, you have to keep up."

"It is critical that libraries provide electronic access to the public. The need to stay responsibly current and not outdated is appropriate and critical."

SUSTAIN

Goal Five: Ensure Financial Sustainability

Explore ways to ensure the long term financial health of the library.

Objectives & Activities

- A. Establish a fundraising planning committee
 - Explore with the Friends of the Library the feasibility of establishing a Library Endowment and/or Library Foundation
 - Collaborate with the Friends of the Library and/or other community organizations on at least one fund-raising activity or event each year
- B. Find additional sources of funding for the library
 - Generate at least \$10K in additional materials, services or grants in year one and increase by 2% each year of the plan
 - Explore new cost-saving alternatives for building operations



WHAT THE PEOPLE TOLD US

How Bergenfield Uses Its Library

Story Times and Other Programs for Children

"As a child my mother took me and my siblings to the municipal building clinic. After we got our shots we were allowed to stop at the library which was in the same building. Our special treat was a book to take home to read."

"I've taken my daughter to story time. It is so bright and cheerful. She really enjoyed herself. And the live animals."

"I took my children for story time, various craft programs and for summer reading programs."

"The library for my children is like going to a candy store."

"Intellectually it is important for kids, for kids to know that it is important to read, a place to see books. If you don't have a library, what are you showing kids?"

"The children's programs are very, very valuable. They help the kids develop a love of reading. The story programs and the sense of being surrounded by books are wonderful things. The library is a wing of our educational system."

Study, Research, Learning

"Our children used the library throughout their school years for study, research and entertainment."

"In the past I used the library for research and for political debates."

"The library benefited my son because he could explore things that maybe we didn't have around the house, even though we always had plenty of books, but the library provided a broader exposure."

"A few years ago I discovered the Library's proctoring. It was very convenient and saved me money and time."

"You have to keep changing and growing. They talk about how we have to be lifelong learners. I can't afford a subscription to the New York Times. But I can go to the library and get it."

"The library is one of the best resources for the schools, all schools, including private schools."

"I frequently read the newspapers and magazines in the library."

"My son-in-law finds the quiet rooms helpful for his studies."

"One time I was searching for an article on an unusual topic. I was unsuccessful calling a big city library. I called the Bergenfield Library Reference department. They came through for me quite quickly. Bergenfield did a first rate job. I was quite impressed."

Adult Programs

"The Tuesday morning programs give people a place to interact and keep their brains challenged in a low key kind of way. This is so functional for people."

"Through the library the State provided access to online instruction for job searching."

"The library provides social activities, very interesting discussions by the Friends. It gives Seniors a social outlet, a place where they can share a common interest."

Reciprocal Borrowing/BCCLS

"You can access materials from BCCLS which is a huge role that made the library what it is. You have 74 BCCLS libraries and other places that you can get materials from."

"BCCLS is great. We are one of the libraries that definitely gets value from that program."

"The cooperative system is a great tool."

A Safe Place

"I was one of those middle school students who used it after school for the same reason that most youngsters use it today."

"The library is a safe place for latchkey kids."

"It provides a structured environment for our kids."

"The library is a safe haven. I know what it's like. The kids are noisy after school. It is a small price to pay for keeping our kids safe."

English as a Second Language

"The library has changed my life. I'm thankful to the library (for the ESL classes). Now I have a nice job."

"The ESL program has been key for people who don't have English skills."

"The ESL people find the library by word of mouth and from people who have been through the program themselves."

"The ESL books and CDs helped me very much. I would listen to the CDs in the car and read at home."

"My ESL teacher, she helped me and told me a lot about the citizenship test and how to practice. I passed."

"Teachers in the ESL program helped me to speak better and helped me practice questions often for the citizenship test, which I passed on the first attempt."

Community Connections

"There is the social aspect. Seeing the diversity and realizing we are really the same. "

"Without a library what's lost is a sense of your own place, a place to go if you need to look up a newspaper article. Or tax help, with the forms. Maybe one person takes advantage of one thing and someone takes advantage of another. Not everyone takes advantage of everything, but that's what's lost if the library isn't there."

"Displaying something that people can identify with. When they walk in they can say, yes, this is my world. This is my history, this is my flag. Symbols. It means a lot to people. They show that the building they are in, the caretakers are sympathetic to them or understanding. Welcoming is a good way to put it."

"The library serves as a portal for people to the community."

Technology

"One of the important things is providing a place in the community where people who do not have access to computers or electronics can come for either school or job search capabilities."

"It's a resource, especially for those people who might not have access to the Internet. Their only resource is the library."

“Electronic access is good, especially for the kids after school to do homework and research. It’s important for the library to provide these new technologies for people. We have to adapt. Everything is changing so fast.”

Saving Money

“If I want to invest in a CD or DVD, I’ll check it out here first and make my decision. That’s been very helpful because that’s a financial investment and before I make that investment, I’ll check it out here first.”

“We buy books for our children, but they grow out of them quickly. The library offers access to a wider variety of books and authors than we could possibly have at home. Children’s interests change rapidly. So from a cost perspective as well, the library is a big help.”

Personalized Service

“Very often when you don’t know something, you don’t know where to begin. A librarian will help you find what you are looking for and will help direct you.”

“Yes, they can go online, but it is nice to have that person here who can accommodate your needs and perhaps come up with something that you hadn’t thought about.”

Volunteer Opportunities

“Students come in the library and volunteer for community service credit for school or Confirmation.”

“Special needs kids volunteer to get social and work experience.”

“The library is my favorite place to be and has been since I was a little girl. Volunteering affords me the opportunity to repay some of the many benefits I have received through the years. It also makes me feel that I have become a part of this great institution. That is a wonderful feeling.”

Property Values

“Being a realtor we promote the library and our town. We talk about the advantages and importance of our modern library to the buyers as well as the sellers, especially when selling houses. As a matter of fact, when we show houses to our prospective buyers, we bring them to the library just to look and see what is available for them.”

Community Well-Being

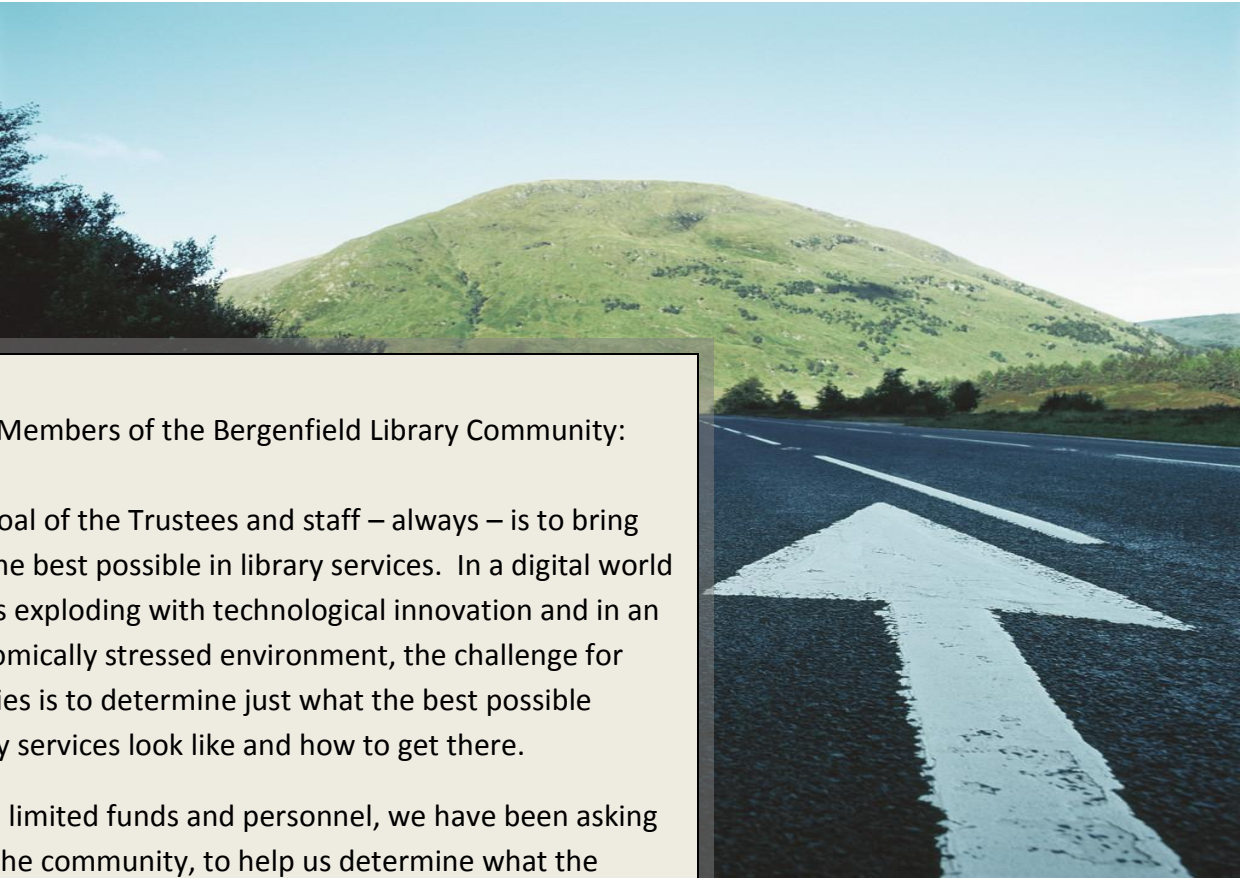
“Libraries are important for older people as well as for ones who are less well off economically.”

“Some of our residents don’t have computers. They cannot afford to buy books. Our library is equipped and the service is free. It’s an important place to learn.”

“The folks that are served by institutions such as the library are folks with fewer resources.”

“Helping people to better themselves can have economic benefits.”

“Improving lives through knowledge is priceless.”



Dear Members of the Bergenfield Library Community:

The goal of the Trustees and staff – always – is to bring you the best possible in library services. In a digital world that is exploding with technological innovation and in an economically stressed environment, the challenge for libraries is to determine just what the best possible library services look like and how to get there.

Given limited funds and personnel, we have been asking you, the community, to help us determine what the library's service priorities should be. The response from people across the community has been generous and thoughtful. What you see here is the distillation of the many ideas that were contributed.

The community has spoken and spoken wisely. I believe this plan is a map to bridging the future of library services, a roadmap to success.

To those who served on the committee, those who agreed to interviews and those who participated in the focus groups, I offer my appreciation and congratulations for a job well done.

Mary Riskind
Director



Credits and Acknowledgements

Bergenfield Library Board of Trustees

Lucille Tendler, President
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Members of the Strategic Planning Task Force

Grisel Almonte
George Armbruster
Marcela Deauna
Nancy Eike

Thomas Neats
Nelson Reynoso
Mary Riskind
Lucille Tendler

And now, on to Phase Two, implementing the plan!