



Chi cago Public Libra ary

2015-2017 Strategy

Building *the* Library
of the Future

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LETTER FROM MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL



Dear Friends,

From day one of my administration, I have worked to transform our Chicago Public Library into 21st century centers of learning. Gone are the days where libraries were simply brick-and-mortar warehouses for books. At today's library, residents can learn how to use a computer, apply for jobs, receive help in starting a small business and take citizenship classes. Our children can go to their library to receive 24/7 access to homework help in English and Spanish, learn how to code and create digital media, and try out a 3D printer.

We have not only reshaped our libraries to meet the needs of the times, we have also improved core services. Chicago Public Library recently revamped its online presence, allowing residents to access digital materials, renew books and build communities online. We are building new libraries in Albany Park and Chinatown and launching new service models, like our Back of the Yards library co-located with the neighborhood high school.

Our efforts are starting to get noticed. In May 2014 CPL received the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the country's highest award given to libraries for community service, from First Lady Michelle Obama. The Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf, Germany has ranked the CPL system as the best in the United States. And CPL received a Social Innovator Award from the Chicago Innovation Awards due to the first-of-its-kind Maker Lab, which allows residents to learn about and experiment with 3D printing.

Like parks, schools and playgrounds, our libraries are critical anchors in communities across Chicago. CPL is a global leader in providing innovative services and learning opportunities to residents of all ages, and through CPL's Three-Year Strategy, we look forward to building upon this success for years to come.

Sincerely,

Rahm Emanuel
Mayor
City of Chicago

LETTER FROM COMMISSIONER BRIAN BANNON & PRESIDENT LINDA JOHNSON RICE

Dear Friends,

Since the Chicago Public Library first opened its doors on January 1, 1873 with a collection of 3,157 volumes, it has been focused on providing free access to all, a departure from previous Chicago libraries that charged fees for membership. And it has worked to serve its patrons effectively, launching in 1874 a system of using horse-drawn carriages to deliver requested books to patrons at neighborhood storefronts.

A lot has changed since those early days in an abandoned water tower at the southeast corner of LaSalle and Adams. CPL's footprint, now 80 locations strong, reaches every neighborhood of the city. Books have been supplemented, over the years, with records and videocassettes, DVDs and CDs, and today, digital collections spanning all media. Research has migrated from card catalogs occupying countless drawers to an online directory with limitless potential. Throughout its 140-year history, CPL has demonstrated a remarkable ability to evolve with the changing times and the needs of Chicagoans. And it has always done so while maintaining its commitment to access for all and excellent patron service.

It is with that history as our foundation and that spirit inspiring this work that we present CPL's Three-Year Strategy. In the three years to come, CPL's timeless mission will remain unchanged: Welcoming and supporting all people in their enjoyment of reading and pursuit of lifelong learning, and striving to serve them well and effectively by providing equal access to information, ideas and knowledge through books, programs and other resources. But CPL will also respond to the current and evolving needs of patrons trying to learn, thrive and grow in the 21st century by nurturing learning, supporting economic advancement and strengthening communities.

Doing so will involve big initiatives, such as the upcoming launch of Wi-Fi hotspot lending intended to help close the digital divide, and more modest changes, such as the recent increase in the number of books and e-books patrons can borrow at one time.

This document is intended to be an evolving roadmap for CPL's next three years. It will be powered by the efforts of the Library's dedicated staff, the passions of its loyal patrons, and support from City leadership and the CPL Foundation. Join us, as we build the library of the future.

Best,

Brian Bannon
Commissioner
Chicago Public Library

Linda Johnson Rice
Board President
Chicago Public Library





Executive Summary

The 21st century

economy is a knowledge-based economy, an economy where innovation is prized, where the might of workers' minds trumps the mettle of their machines. And cities, dynamic, shifting, growing and nimble, are driving that economy. Already, half the world's population lives in cities. By 2050, that number will grow to two-thirds. This new economy transcends geographic borders. Globalization is accelerating innovation. And cities are becoming the incubators of that innovation. The most successful cities, in fact, supersede national governments as the economic engines driving our global economy.

To compete in this borderless economic frontier, cities must ensure that their residents are informed and creative, entrepreneurial and innovative, lifelong learners able to absorb and utilize new information.

That's where libraries come in. Libraries have always been, and continue to be, in the knowledge business. That does not, however, mean they have been static and unchanging institutions. Over the years, libraries have evolved to support knowledge creation and dissemination in

relevant ways. In 1873, the Chicago Public Library was a small cistern with a few thousand books housed in an abandoned water tank. Today, the institution has grown to 80 locations that offer 98,000 computer tutoring sessions, support 2.8 million computer sessions and draw 11 million visitors per year. CPL houses multimedia collaboration spaces designed for teens, a Maker Lab that allows patrons to do 3D design and printing, and a website that allows patrons online access to a plethora of library materials, including eBooks, audiobooks and periodicals.

In a knowledge-based economy, libraries house crucial currency – knowledge in multiple forms – with books and literacy support as core assets. And they're more popular than ever. At a time when total annual attendance at all U.S. professional and college sporting events is 218 million, U.S. libraries are attracting 1.4 billion visitors per year.

IN A RECENTLY COMPLETED LARGE-SCALE PATRON SURVEY...

95%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID

They had used CPL for books in the past year

93%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD

Used library buildings

91%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD

Used the CPL website

1 of every 4 patrons had used the library for programs

And they liked what they found...

79%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID

They were very or extremely satisfied with CPL

90%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID

They would be very likely to recommend the library to a friend

72%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID

The library was very important in their lives

That popularity is not an accident.

Throughout its 140-year history, as CPL has evolved, staff have always been innovative in finding new ways to serve changing patron needs. But that evolution is most successful when it is planned. And this strategy is intended to guide CPL's evolution over the next three years. CPL's guiding principles – access for all and serving patrons effectively – remain constant, and timeless. And they bookend the three priorities that reflect Chicago's current needs, on which CPL will focus in the next three years:

- Nurture Learning
- Support Economic Advancement
- Strengthen Communities

CPL's staff and leaders believe that by using those three priorities to guide their work, they will ensure that CPL supports Chicago's position as a global city.

Chicago Public Library Foundation Library

In 1986 a group of visionary leaders, acting out of a conviction that private resources were essential to maintaining the Chicago Public Library as a world-class institution, founded the Chicago Public Library Foundation. In the nearly three decades since, the Foundation has provided almost \$60 million in crucial support to CPL for highly visible and successful programs that span the Library's 80 locations and provide lifelong learning and enrichment for patrons of every age.

Over the next three years, CPLF's robust partnership with the Library will continue to support the Library's ambitious program strategies: to provide access for all, nurture learning, to support economic advancement, to strengthen communities and to serving patrons effectively. With the Foundation's support, the Library will continue to pilot new programs and services and sharpen its focus on innovation, while maintaining its commitment to open access and patron-centered outcomes.

Each year, thousands of donors – generous individuals, foundations and businesses – provide funding for many of the program initiatives highlighted in this three-year strategy, including Teacher in the Library, CyberNavigators, YOUmedia, the Summer Learning Challenge and the Maker Lab. Popular programs such as One Book, One Chicago and Bookamania are only possible through this private support.

Established in the spirit of true public/private partnership with the City, the Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization. In 2013, the Foundation provided nearly \$6 million in support to CPL, helping it reach patrons in every neighborhood, and set a standard of service admired the world over.



Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

Over the past year, CPL embarked on a highly collaborative strategic planning process. They performed a mission check, identified areas of intended impact and conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Library's programs, services and operations. The Library involved users through surveys, interviews, and observation. The strategy team engaged CPL staff through group meetings, surveys, focus groups and the first ever all system wide staff survey. Finally, the team did a multi-layered external environmental scan. This scan included local, national and global library experts, and experts in public, private and non-profit institutions, including other civic organizations, the Chicago Public Library Foundation, and other libraries and library industry leaders. This strategy discusses in detail the two foundational strategies and three focus areas that will guide the Library's work over the next three years. In a fast-changing environment, CPL will seize the opportunities created by that change and build on its strong legacy and unique assets.



Chicago Public Library has long been one of the premier library systems in the world: a world-class institution for a world-class city. In just the past year, CPL was:

- Awarded the 2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, "the nation's highest honor given to museums and libraries for service to the community," according to the White House
- Ranked the best library in the United States and the 3rd best in the world by the Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf, Germany
- Awarded the Social Innovator Award from the Chicago Innovation Awards for its Maker Lab, which expanded the ways in which the library was able to provide access to ideas and information

CPL's employees are proud of these honors. But excellence is not a one-time achievement. Rather, it is a continuing effort that requires adjusting to both the changing needs of patrons, and the varying resources available to the library. The ability to meet Chicagoans' shifting needs with the resources at hand requires thought, foresight and planning.

Chicago Public Library is world-class

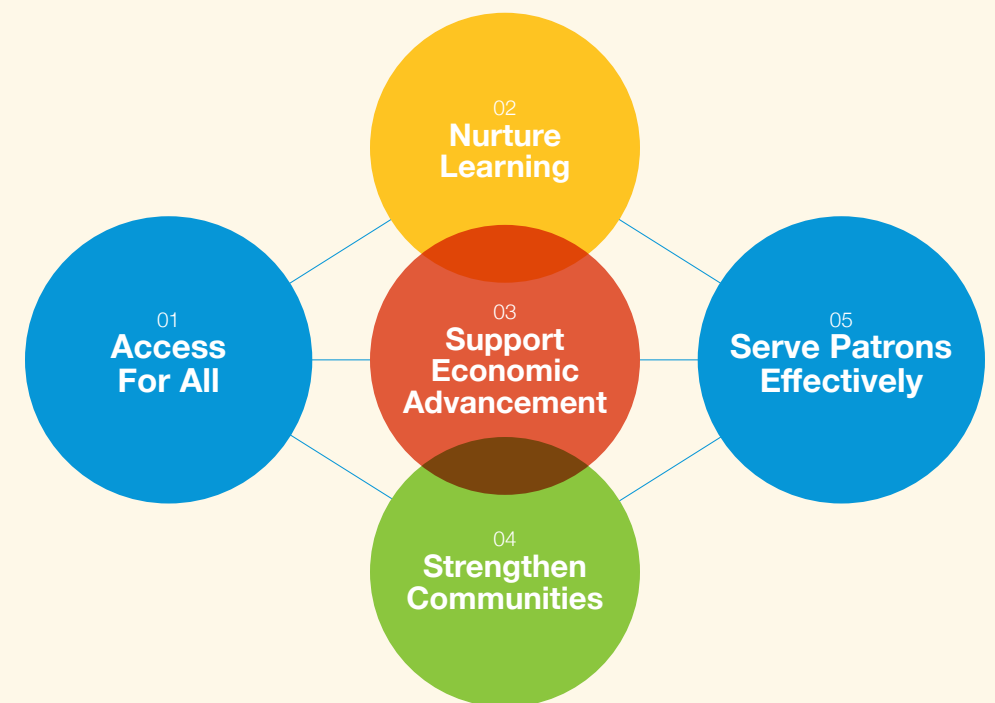
Overview of the Strategic Vision

Chicago Public Library works to ensure that it is a resource for all Chicagoans. In the next three years, CPL will work – both internally, and in partnership with other cultural, civic and educational institutions in Chicago – to create and implement innovative solutions that meet changing patron needs. This strategy maps out how CPL will be able to do that.

At the highest level, CPL will continue to ensure that it provides access to all Chicagoans through its content, programs, facilities and tools. And it will work to serve patrons effectively by providing an enjoyable and welcoming environment, a staff that is responsive to their needs and robust digital resources while ensuring good stewardship of its resources, including budget, staff and other assets. These priorities remain constant and have been foundations for CPL's work throughout its history.

As it evolves, CPL will also need to strategically concentrate its work in areas that meet the current needs and priorities of the city and its people. Specifically, it will work to:

- Nurture Learning
- Support Economic Advancement
- Strengthen Communities



Access for All

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR CPL

Providing every Chicagoan with access to knowledge, information and experiences is fundamental to the mission of the Chicago Public Library, and the foundation of a functioning democracy. CPL's commitment to open and free access is central to all of its programs, services and operations. Broad access empowers patrons to explore their interests, support their love of reading, engage with new ideas, achieve their learning goals, find employment, start new businesses and improve and contribute to their communities.

In order to provide broad access, CPL is committed to minimizing barriers to use. All Chicagoans – irrespective of their background – should feel welcome at any CPL branch, able to learn, experiment and immerse themselves in knowledge. That access strengthens the core of Chicago's democracy, connecting every patron with the information he or she needs to participate and succeed in all aspects of society. When Chicagoans can access high-quality resources, and are thus empowered by knowledge, learning and experience, the city will prosper.

HOW WE DO IT

CPL makes knowledge and information available and accessible to every Chicagoan through high quality:



Books, print, & digital materials



Programs, reference, & referral services



Facilities



Technology



Helpful Staff

CPL provides access by stocking relevant collections of books, driven by patron needs and interests, in a convenient and usable format and offering substantial digital content like electronic books and online research resources. The Talking Books Center at CPL provides additional access to Chicago residents of all ages who cannot read standard print materials comfortably due to visual or physical limitations. In addition to content, CPL provides patrons with access to world-class, unique and engaging classes, workshops, events and programs in neighborhood branches, regional libraries and the Harold Washington Library Center.

CPL facilitates that access by ensuring that its buildings are safe, clean and welcoming. Whenever it builds a new library branch, CPL ensures that the facility's design and layout reflect community needs. As the type and format of relevant knowledge changes, CPL will continue to respond with services and programs that make that knowledge accessible for all Chicagoans. Within each library location, CPL strives to provide access to relevant technology tailored to meet local patrons' needs. In order to maintain and expand those efforts, the Library will continue its leading role in providing free public computing and cutting-edge technology, and experiment with new initiatives like Wi-Fi hotspot lending that expand access to the Internet. The Library will also create engaging digital environments through its new website, where patrons can access content, explore interests, create communities and strengthen skills.

To Ensure Access, CPL is...

01

Designing programs, services and collections based on Chicagoans' evolving needs and interests by efforts that:

Give people access to new technology, including such recently introduced initiatives as:

- The Maker Lab, which allows users access to 3D design and printing technology.
- A new website which allows CPL to create a new, more robust online community and phone apps to ease access to CPL content.
- Small programmable Finch Robots – which can be borrowed from any branch library and were developed at the Carnegie Mellon University Create Lab – that facilitate computer science and programming education.

Provide one-on-one homework help in every neighborhood branch and online through the Teacher in the Library program, the largest free homework help program in the country.

02

Delivering services, not only within the walls of the library, but also in patrons' homes, schools and workplaces through its online presence. Services allowing patrons offsite access include:

Zinio, a distribution service that digitizes magazines.

Hoopla, a service that allows libraries to offer patrons access to movies, television, music and audiobooks.

Electronic books.

Brainfuse, a service that improves online homework help, offers paper reviews and encourages test preparation.

03

Improving and encouraging innovation in operations, services and collections by improving, rebuilding or redesigning library buildings, including:

Investing in new libraries in Chinatown and Albany Park.

Making improvements to Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, the Harold Washington Library Center, the Conrad Sulzer Regional Library and many other existing branch libraries.

Redesigning spaces at branches throughout the city to better meet patron needs.

04

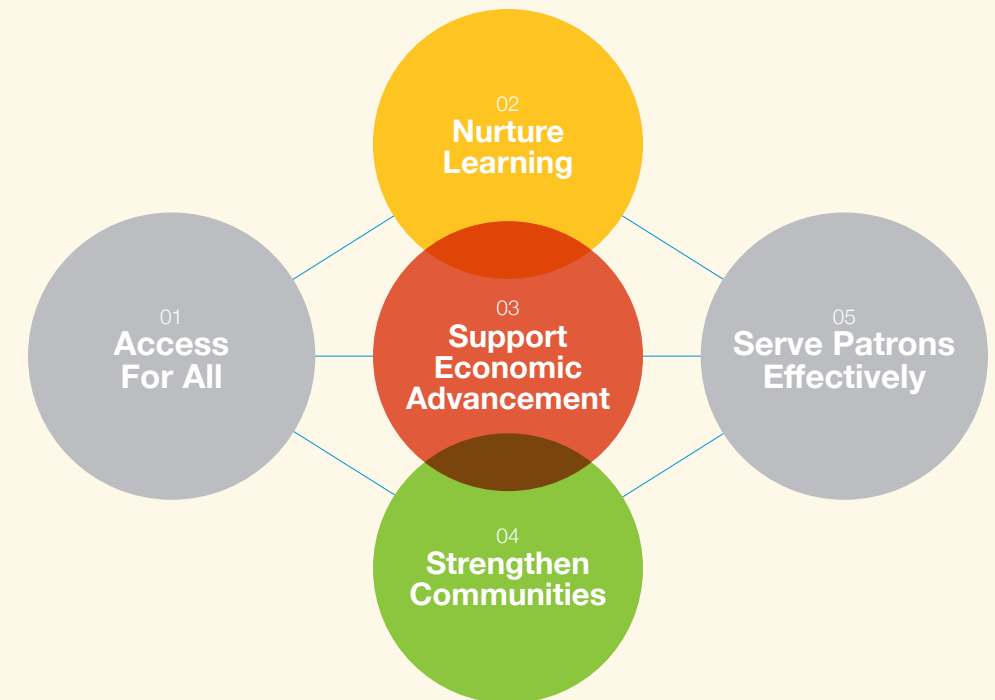
Promoting fully inclusive policies that support a principle of free and open access by:

Changing policy to ensure that outstanding fines no longer bar patrons from enjoying computer access.

Increasing the number of items that patrons can check out at one time.

Beginning to lend Wi-Fi hotspots in an effort to mitigate the digital divide.

Strategic Focus Areas



In the next three years, Chicago Public Library's strategy will revolve around three initiatives that will help patrons of all ages, and from all walks of life, thrive in a rapidly-changing world:

- *Nurture Learning*
- *Support Economic Advancement*
- *Strengthen Communities*

By leveraging its unique assets – including its reach into every community in the city – CPL aims to meet Chicago's critical needs, support the city's strategic priorities, and do so in an effective cost-efficient way.



Nurture Learning

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR CPL

Chicago Public Library has always been a key educational resource for Chicagoans. Everyone from toddlers to seniors use the library as a place to read, learn and discover. And indeed, as the need for continuous, lifelong learning becomes more pronounced and the ways in which people learn change, CPL has the opportunity to support that learning in a variety of ways: workshops, labs, peer-to-peer connections, in-person sessions, online and other self-directed activities. In a time when learning has become more personalized, CPL, in collaboration with other institutions in Chicago, supplements traditional education with high-quality programs designed and delivered in-house.

HOW WE DO IT

CPL leverages its deep professional knowledge to help patrons build literacy and foster other 21st century skills: digital, cultural and information literacy; critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation; and communication and collaboration. And it does so by utilizing learning resources like children's classes and Storytime; the Summer Learning Challenge, designed to combat summer learning loss; the Maker Lab, which offers patrons access to 3D design and printing; and YOUmedia, a teen learning space that brings together people and digital creation tools to foster creativity and collaboration. It also provides patrons information and resources to facilitate personalized learning, and continues to make new investments to maintain its best-in-class collections, buildings and technology.

In sum, CPL nurtures learning in different ways for four groups of patrons: families with young children, school-aged children, teens and adults.

For Chicago's Families with Young Children, CPL is...

01

Focusing on professional development for children's librarians to ensure a well-trained staff with early-childhood development expertise.

02

Providing best-in-class programs and services that advance early-childhood learning. Examples include:

Maintaining and growing effective programs that utilize staff expertise (e.g. Story Time).

Using expert-level Reader's Advisory skills to offer individualized, developmentally appropriate book recommendations to all patrons, families and schools.

Equipping staff to use the latest early-childhood research to develop innovative programs that support the multiple ways children learn. For example, the Summer Learning Challenge includes not just reading goals, but hands-on science experiments, interactive storytelling activities and immersion in digital literacy.

Collaborating with early-childhood organizations and the CPLF to scale effective programs and deliver enhanced services.

03

Delivering family-focused workshops to enhance caregivers' ability to help their children build a foundation of literacy to underlie future success. Examples include:

Sharing evidence-based practices that support early literacy skills for children that parents/caregivers can practice at home.

Hosting workshops for parents/caregivers on child-related topics (e.g. special needs resources).

04

Offering relevant supportive resources including a current, diverse and responsive collection of books, toys and age-appropriate digital materials that supports learning. More specifically, CPL is:

Using patron data and staff knowledge to further develop its book collection and other content to support learning (e.g. blocks and age-appropriate technology).

Referring families to high quality online tools that support learning.

05

Creating a family-friendly environment, using the latest research to develop spaces that support how children, play, discover and learn.

06

Explicitly communicating staff training and skills to patrons and outside stakeholders to ensure that they are utilized maximally.



For Chicago's School-Aged Children, CPL is...

01

Maintaining safe and technology-enhanced spaces for learning and exploration. Doing so will require CPL to:

Ensure locations and hours are accessible.

Provide access to technology in every community.

Provide spaces for studying, exploring ideas and learning.

Redesign spaces, where feasible, to support the ways that kids learn both alone and in groups.

02

Providing expert staff who are trained to support literacy and learning, instill a love of reading and abet children's curiosity and exploration.

03

Offering an array of evidence-based programs and services that advance learning through reading, discovering and creating, including through partnerships with organizations such as schools and cultural institutions. Examples include:

Offering engaging summer programs that help reduce summer learning loss.

Offering out-of-school experiences to advance literacy and 21st century skills.

Coordinating with partner organizations like CPLF to scale effective programs and enhance learning opportunities that meet students' learning goals.

04

Stocking a full complement of relevant resources including a current, diverse and responsive collection of books, digital content, games and technology. Examples include:

Providing a current, diverse and responsive collection of books and other content to advance learning and promote the joy of reading.

Ensuring that reference content and state-of-the-art reference services are current, diverse and responsive for children and their caregivers.

05

Offering programs for parents and other caregivers, designed and delivered in partnership with organizations like schools and museums, to enhance caregivers' ability to support their school-aged children. Examples include:

Providing targeted online resources for home use, such as live, Internet-based homework help.

Hosting workshops for parents and other caregivers on child-related topics (e.g. special needs resources).



For Chicago's Teens, CPL is...

01

Providing knowledgeable, well-trained library staff with the expertise to support teens' development, interests and learning. Examples include:

Equipping staff to serve as mentors for teen patrons.

Designing teen librarian role and providing professional development focused on adolescent development.

Implementing evidence-based practices for supporting teens' success in school, promoting civic engagement and post-secondary education and career planning.

02

Creating engaging and welcoming spaces to support teens' learning and discovery in a social setting.

03

Offering interest-based activities and mentorship to develop teens' 21st century skills, supporting academic needs and fostering personal growth. Examples include:

Empowering teens to drive and design activities at the library.

Giving teens resources and tools to read, learn, discover and create.

Partnering with world-class organizations for collaborative programming and to expose teens to a broad range of experiences.

04

Facilitating access to relevant and engaging materials, including state-of-the-art technology and digital resources. Examples include:

Developing engaging collections based on teen interests and feedback.

Offering resources such as computers, relevant books and magazines, Wi-Fi and digital resources like Hoopla, a service that offers users remote access to movies, television, and music.

Optimizing dedicated teen content discovery areas in all locations, including online – YOUmedia will more than double to 12 sites and lay the foundation for teen services citywide.

Providing access to technology, resources and collections that inspire exploration, creativity and learning.

05

Providing connection to college and career pathways, including structured career exploration opportunities such as experiences with special emphasis on digital media, arts and technology careers.

Nurturing learning is not a single act, but rather, a series of decisions made to provide different patrons with the support and services they need to learn and grow throughout their lives. Chicago Public Library's efforts to nurture learning extend to its youngest patrons. In recent years, CPL has made heavy investments in Storytime, which uses picture books, finger plays, songs, dramatic play and other activities to engage babies and toddlers.

It is also expanding YOUmedia, a 21st century teen learning environment created in partnership with the MacArthur Foundation, where mentors facilitate learning and development with media creation tools and software, from five locations to 12. YOUmedia allows teens to learn and apply digital media skills to creating digital products – from songs to podcasts and 3D printed products. Chance the Rapper, who hails from Chatham and was discovered through YOUmedia's open mic events at Harold

For Chicago's Adults, CPL is...

01

Maintaining a well-trained staff that provides reference and research guidance, including referrals to outside organizations. Examples include:

Equipping and training staff to refer patrons to relevant, high-quality resources throughout the city and bring those resources to the library as needed.

Providing personalized recommendations based on patron interest through Reader's Advisory.

02

Stocking current, diverse and engaging books and digital content that meet the needs of Chicago's adults and are responsive to their interests by making book purchasing decisions through a patron-driven acquisition process.

03

Designing and offering programs and services to build digital information literacy and 21st century skills. Examples include:

Providing one-on-one support and workshops on digital skills and information literacy.

Using CyberNavigators, a cadre of computer tutors funded by CPLF that work in dozens of libraries, to help patrons build digital literacy and technology skills.

Training staff to support current and future patron technology needs.

Washington Library Center, not only extols YOUmedia in interviews, he immortalizes YOUmedia in the lyrics to his track "Acid Rain."

And over the last several years with private support through CPLF, CPL has revamped its Summer Learning Challenge, turning this program into an innovative experience that includes books, science experiments, games, artistic efforts and online digital literacy building, and aligns with Common Core educational standards. It is

04

Designing and offering programs and services to build cultural literacy. Examples include:

Making unique, engaging cultural events accessible at central and neighborhood locations in partnership with world-class cultural institutions.

Bringing engaging cultural events to neighborhood branches in support of the City's Cultural Plan.

Continuing to offer world-class programs that focus on cultural literacy.

05

Designing and offering programs and services to build vital economic literacy. Examples include:

Partnering with organizations to deliver workshops and other services on-site at libraries, including:

- Affordable Care Act Navigators.
- Ladder UP tax return preparation and financial services help.
- Citizenship Hubs workshops and information on becoming a U.S. citizen, in partnership with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Facilitating personalized support across learning goals around vital economic topics, including understanding of financial, legal, healthcare and citizenship areas.

06

Designing spaces to support learning needs of adults.

07

Engaging patrons through surveys, observation and interviews to learn about their needs and interests, and proactively designing collaborative approaches with relevant organizations to meet those needs.

also designed, using evidence-based guidelines, to reduce the "Summer Slide," the learning loss routinely suffered by students while out of school during the summer. In 2013, the revamped program drew record participation, with more than 71,000 kids engaged in reading and learning. And in addition to the countless science experiments attempted and artistic endeavors completed, Chicago's kids collectively read more than 2 million books (equaling 56 million minutes of reading), meeting the citywide goal set by Mayor Emanuel.





STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Support Economic Advancement

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR CPL

Chicago, along with other major global cities and urban centers, is undergoing rapid transformation. Once a base for manufacturing and service industries, it is quickly becoming a hub for the growing information and idea industries. As this happens, the necessary workplace skills, the preferred business and service models, the essential local-to-global networks and the definitions of what makes a place an attractive business hub are also undergoing dramatic transformation. Given these changes, Chicago is evaluating its assets and development strategies to ensure that it's able to succeed in this changing and fluid economy.

Chicago Public Library is a key partner for Chicago's economic development initiatives that focus on people and quality of life. Chicago's "Neighborhood Small Business Growth Strategy" focuses on maintaining a vibrant base of small businesses, a major source of local job creation. Similarly, the "Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs Strategies" and the "Chicago Technology Plan" focus on creating a competitive, mobile and globally-focused entrepreneurial environment within the city. These strategies focus on building on local strengths, with a mix of residential, commercial and cultural activities to create a vibrant city with a high quality of life. CPL takes its role in the City's plans and strategies very seriously. CPL is a highly regarded public institution, and the Library provides a broad range of information services and support for diverse constituencies throughout the city. CPL is exploring innovative ways to support Chicago's economic vitality by leveraging those resources.

HOW WE DO IT

CPL plays a key role in providing tangible support to Chicagoans who are looking for a new job, seeking to advance in their current job, start a new business or grow their existing small business. In many communities, CPL can help build economic opportunities by supporting people in acquiring basic skills, getting job referrals, finding employment and developing their businesses. CPL can do this through programs (like CyberNavigators and resume workshops hosted in the library), services (like research assistance) and the investments it makes to maintain and improve its best-in-class collections, buildings and technology that support patron needs.

CPL's staff – with its unique talents and expertise – supports all Chicagoans in their quest to achieve their economic and life goals. CPL helps job seekers, entrepreneurs and small business owners build skills and knowledge to achieve their economic goals.

For Chicago's Job Seekers, CPL is...

01

Supporting the development of technology skills. Examples include:

With support from CPLF, offering one-on-one CyberNavigator support for patrons to develop basic technology skills (e.g. email, search) that enable them to participate in today's labor market.

Helping patrons understand and master a set of standard digital skills, including information literacy, that will help them fully engage in their chosen career path.

02

Creating an efficient process for connecting job seekers to high-quality resources and services. Examples include:

Providing access to computers equipped with online connectivity and industry standard software.

Leveraging technology (Wi-Fi, printers) to support job search.

Providing an easy-to-navigate referral service that connects job-seekers to best-in-class career services provided by workforce development organizations and educational institutions.

03

Offering professional online and in-person assistance in the form of trained, experienced staff and digital experts. Examples include:

Partnering with leading workforce organizations to provide additional assistance and best-in-class training for staff and digital experts.

Providing online tools that help patrons achieve their career objectives.

04

Hosting workshops and services to advance career skills and employment in partnership with best-in-class workforce organizations. Examples include:

Partnering with expert workforce organizations to deliver training on additional skills (e.g. interview prep, resume writing, industry-specific skills).

Publicizing CPL services to other organizations and business leaders to raise awareness (e.g. for Alderman, Chambers of Commerce).



Chicago Public Library is well positioned to support Chicagoans' economic advancement. It helps adults navigate job searches with tools, tips and training, it hosts workshops and classes to support career development and learning. But it doesn't stop there. It is working to connect library branch managers to City College leaders, so that branch managers can guide education and job seekers to the appropriate educational supports. And it is working in partnership with tech incubator 1871 to launch an effort to provide entrepreneurs with research support and an incubation space at Harold Washington Library Center. This space will allow entrepreneurs to learn from one another and support other patrons' business planning and development.

Finally, it has modified some policies to make the library a friendlier place for patrons to work, including making more space available for collaboration, offering better access to computers and printers, and banishing the ban on beverages.



For Chicago's Small Business Owners, CPL is...



01

Providing research services and relevant materials and collections delivered by expert staff. Examples include:

Assisting patrons as part of reference services in finding the materials they need to support their business goals (e.g. patent information).

Providing current, diverse and responsive books and other content that support small business needs.

02

Offering guidance and referrals to organizations throughout the city that have small business-focused resources and relationships. Examples include:

Guiding patrons in navigating the range of information and organizations available throughout the city.

Referring patrons to organizations with small-business-specific resources (e.g. zoning maps).

Connecting patrons with valuable relationships (e.g. Women's Business Development Center).

03

Providing space for working and collaboration, including meeting and networking space, for small businesses and supporting organizations. Examples include:

Providing space for small businesses, Alderman's offices, Chambers of Commerce, and other organizations to meet, collaborate and work together.

Making spaces available to the greatest extent possible (e.g. time limits, space use guidelines).

04

Facilitating access to supporting services including mentorship and workshops. Examples include:

Partnering with organizations like SCORE to provide one-on-one help in crafting a business plan.

Connecting business experts like *Geeks in Residence* to patrons to provide mentorship and coaching.

Strengthen Communities

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR CPL

Chicago Public Library locations serve as community anchors, spaces where people come together for civic and community activities. Every library location can be leveraged to increase civic and community awareness, engagement and activity. We know that engaged and empowered residents generate optimism about the future, produce good decisions on tough community challenges and contribute to both economic success and individual well-being. Because of its broad footprint, CPL is highly visible in every community in the city. And because of its commitment to free and open access, it is one of the most trusted organizations in the city. CPL is ideally positioned to shape and lead discussions, decisions and strategies encouraging active and purposeful civic engagement and community building. In Chicago, each community library is unique and represents the spirit of that neighborhood. The democratic nature of Chicago's libraries allows for diverse people to come together and exchange ideas in a safe environment.

HOW WE DO IT

It is critical that CPL examine thoughtfully the ways that its library locations support the community. This includes its locally-relevant collections, programs like One Book, One Chicago and book clubs, services and the space that it provides to host civic activities like polling and Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) meetings.

For CPL, strengthening communities means that every library location works to foster community collaboration and help its community to discover its potential. CPL serves communities in two broad categories: neighborhoods and groups whose shared interests bring them together to form a community.



Photo: Brooke Collins

For Chicago's Neighborhoods and Communities, CPL is...

01

Providing meeting space for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and neighborhood groups to convene, host activities and offer information and services to patrons. In order to ensure that availability of space is maximized, CPL is:

Easing rules and regulations that restrict availability and use.

Empowering managers to creatively and effectively use space.

02

Providing a safe and welcoming environment for all programs and services.

03

Hosting programs and resources that foster civic activities, including:

Supporting Citizenship Hubs at relevant branches and partnering with the Office of New Americans to provide resources and services based on patron need.

Hosting community meetings that foster civic engagement (e.g. CAPS).

Displaying materials on civic engagement during civic events such as early voting.

04

Housing host celebrations of neighborhood and cultural history through partnerships with local organizations. Ways to do this include:

Featuring rotating exhibits at Harold Washington Library Center to celebrate Chicago and make the most of the Library's collections.

Encouraging all locations to develop ways, through programs and content, to celebrate their local communities.

Partnering with neighborhood institutions for outreach at local events.

05

Fostering connections to resources throughout the city, especially for underserved patrons, with needed community resources (e.g. DFSS and other City services).

06

Facilitating connections between groups and patrons by:

Allowing groups to reach interested patrons at the library.

Referring patrons to sources of interest-specific information and resources.

07

Highlighting interest-based collections and relevant materials to support patron interests in physical and digital spaces by:

Partnering with local institutions to design displays of topic-specific materials.

Featuring showcases to cultivate patron interests and foster awareness of CPL's collections.

Providing dedicated sections of materials to support partnerships (e.g. ONA).

Partnering with organizations to display interest-based collections (e.g. DCASE Chicago Artist Month).

Empowering patrons to create interest-based collections online through creating lists and rating materials.



Strong communities are connected communities, engaged communities and inspired communities. And Chicago Public Library is offering a variety of services, programs and resources – some high profile, others less well known – that, taken together, make it the hub of many of the communities it serves.

Some resources – like Bookamania, concert and theater performances and tech and citizenship classes – are widely known, used and loved by many patrons.

Others are hidden gems that provide crucial support in strengthening communities. For example, the Municipal Reference Collection is a vast trove of information on community and civic statistics, data, ordinances, budgets and annual reports housed at the Harold Washington Library Center, and staffed by passionate, deeply curious librarians. That staff can supply a neighborhood advocacy group with demographic numbers to support a grant application for a community program. It can help an aspiring business owner better understand a neighborhood's need. And it can help neighborhood historical societies understand the histories of local buildings and institutions.

Whether hosting a program or helping to interpret and utilize data from the Municipal Reference Collection, CPL's engagement with its patrons and their worlds allows it to play a key role in strengthening communities.

Serve Patrons Effectively

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR CPL

Chicago Public Library is driven by the belief that the better it understands its patrons, the better its service design decisions will be. The institution's service and program design efforts are driven by a deep curiosity about its users and how they experience services in the library, outside the library and online. In order to satisfy that curiosity and increase its understanding of its patrons, CPL must invest in the people who create those services. CPL will also use data and evaluation tools to hold itself institutionally accountable for improving programs and services to meet patron needs.

HOW WE DO IT

CPL is focused on providing patrons the best programs, services and facilities to fit their needs. Serving patrons effectively is at the heart of the CPL team's commitment to Chicago and all its residents.

To do that, it is critical that CPL looks at how its staff and facilities meet patron needs. This includes staff development, policies that affect the patron experience and the design and use of library space.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To continue to serve its patrons effectively, CPL is:

01

Equipping staff with best-in-class leadership, technical and customer service skills to foster innovation and creative-problem solving throughout the Library system.

02

Performing annual strategic planning and external environmental scans, leading to clear work plans and metrics-based evaluations for priority initiatives.

03

Using data to regularly review and improve programs, services and operations to better serve patrons.

04

Developing increasingly engaging patron-focused libraries and digital spaces.

05

Growing the Library's strong brand and driving more comprehensive awareness across all potential patrons and stakeholders.

By maintaining a focus on patrons and responding to their needs, CPL will provide best-in-class service for all Chicagoans.

Throughout its history, CPL has been committed to effective patron service. And it has utilized various tools and technologies – everything from horse-drawn carriages, to roving bookmobiles, to phone apps that allow patrons to access eBooks remotely – to meet that commitment.

Providing effective patron service requires looking at the entire patron experience, and it requires making changes, both big and small, to improve that experience. For example, CPL recently changed its beverage policy to allow patrons to carry covered beverages into the library while they work. It also changed its computer access policy, to ensure that small fines don't block patrons, especially kids, from using library computers. And it increased the number of times a checked-out item can be renewed from three to 15, meaning patrons can now keep an item for as long as 45 weeks if no one else has requested it. And email reminders, sent two days prior to the due date, allow patrons time to renew or return materials without incurring a late fine.

Other changes are in the works. CPL is adding a new materials handling system that should decrease significantly the time patrons now have to wait to pick up a book they have requested from another location. It is building its capacity to use data and performance measures to track the success of its initiatives and programs. And it is working to gather input regularly from all stakeholders, starting with its front-line staff, so it can refine its processes and offerings. How will CPL know if it has succeeded in its efforts? It will ask patrons, using regular surveys to hold itself accountable, and ensure that it is indeed serving patrons effectively.





CONCLUSION

Chicago Public Library is the largest and most visited cultural institution in Chicago, a place woven into the lives of countless Chicagoans. Since its founding in 1873, CPL has strived to provide access to all and to serve patrons effectively.

But CPL is not a static, unchanging institution. Over the past 140 years, it has evolved nimbly, staying ahead of the curve to serve the changing needs of its patrons.

That evolution continues today. Working alongside the Chicago Public Library Foundation, the Mayor's Office and the City Council to adapt to the fast-paced, innovation-centered, 21st century knowledge economy, CPL has, in fact, become a model for other libraries. Systems around the country are borrowing from our work in human-centered design, outcomes measurement and partnership building.

Within the industry, we have received recognition locally, nationally and internationally for our innovative, patron-focused evolution. And our efforts have been recognized by our patrons, 79 percent of whom say that they are very or extremely satisfied with CPL.

This strategy details how we will build on our recent successes. We will maintain our focus on our foundational mission of providing access to all, and serving patrons effectively. And we will implement Mayor Emanuel's vision of transforming libraries into centers of learning that help Chicagoans thrive in the 21st-century economy by nurturing learning, supporting economic advancement and strengthening communities.

We will continue our evolution while being sure to delight, innovate and represent the best that Chicago has to offer. We will not work alone, but collaborate with other cultural institutions as we move forward. And we will be powered in this work by our greatest asset, our people.

THANK YOU

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