

Strategic Plan

2008 – 2012



TOMPKINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Table of Contents

Introduction by the President of the Board	1
Members of the Long Range Planning Committee.....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Mission Statement	3
Vision Statement	3
Organizational Profile and History	4
Strategic Planning Process.....	6
Tompkins County Demographic Trends	7
Public Library Trends	8
Program Goals and Strategies.....	9

Appendices

1. Strategic Technology Plan 2006–2011 Summary

Introduction

The Tompkins County Public Library is an extraordinarily vital component of the educational and cultural life of our community. The Library's Board of Trustees is responsible not only for the care and custody of this precious institution but also the identification and promotion of its vision for the future. Over the last year the Board's Long Range Planning Committee has carefully reviewed the library's current status and engaged all segments of the library community in a discussion of where we must direct our energies in the immediate years ahead.

The Library Strategic Plan for 2008–2012 emphasizes the steps we must take to meet the needs of our users. The changes that are rapidly taking place in this information society demand that the Library keep pace with the full range of materials and services required by people of all ages and backgrounds. We need to make our services as conveniently available as possible and to give our highly trained professional and support staff the resources they need to deliver high quality programs effectively and efficiently. The continued support of the Tompkins County Legislature, the Friends of the Tompkins County Library and the Tompkins County Public Library Foundation remain essential to this goal. The members of the Board of Trustees will do all in our power to implement the vision reflected in this Strategic Plan.

Henrik N. Dullea

President, Tompkins County Public Library Board of Trustees

Long Range Planning Committee

Nathan Fawcett

Library Trustee, co-chair

Barbara Page

Library Trustee, co-chair

Michael Stamm

Library Trustee, co-chair

Thomas B. Colbert

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Assistant Library Director

Nancy Schuler

Library Trustee

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Executive Director, TCPL Foundation

Janet Steiner

Library Director

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan reflects values found in earlier strategic plans: the critical need for an improved collection of library materials, the need to educate and train library users in information seeking skills; and the need to reach out to underserved populations through vibrant public programming. Each of the plans underscored the importance of the library's paid and volunteer workforce. Most importantly, each of the plans stressed the need to secure sufficient and stable funding.

This plan takes the point of view of the user. What do we want visitor to find when they use the library? How will their lives change for the better? How will our community be a better place to live because of the presence of a public library?

The revised mission and vision statements focus our attention on the value that our library offers the community and the role the library plays in building a strong community.

Through discussions with key stakeholders, analysis of progress made in the 2002–2006 Strategic Plan, reviews of the library literature and benchmarking with comparable libraries, the plan encompasses a broad array of specific measurable strategies which will guide the library over the next five years. The plan guides the allocation of resources and focuses our attention on the most important steps that the library can take to remain a valued and vital community asset.

Strategies to achieve the library's mission and vision may change over time. This plan is a living document which should be modified and amended throughout its lifetime. However, the plan also offers an opportunity to regularly measure our progress toward achieving our vision and should be viewed as a critical tool in assessing the health of the library.

Goal 1 People of all ages and backgrounds will find a variety of materials and programs to advance knowledge and enjoyment and to create awareness of cultural heritage, arts, and sciences.

Goal 2 People of all ages and backgrounds will find the tools for acquiring information and skills for lifelong learning.

Goal 3 People of all ages and backgrounds will find a welcoming civic space where they can come together with others to exchange ideas, promote mutual interests and build community.

Goal 4 People of all ages and backgrounds will be made aware of the library's outstanding professional services, diverse collections, and central role in the community through outreach, collaborations local organizations and public relations.

Goal 5 People of all ages and backgrounds will have a public library that effectively uses public and private resources and is supported by stable funding adequate to meet these strategic goals.

Goal 6 To meet these strategic planning goals, we will foster excellence within library staff and trustees.

Technology plays an essential role in enabling the library to meet its mission. The library has a separate Technology Strategic Plan, adopted in March of 2006 by the Board of Trustees. The

eight strategic directions in this report should be considered an integral part of the library's overall strategic plan. The Technology Strategic Plan is appended to this document.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Tompkins County Public Library serves community residents at each stage of their lives by providing free and open access to the world's wisdom, knowledge, and information. The library, through its collections and professional services, fosters an informed, civic-minded community and contributes to the educational, cultural, and economic well-being of the County.

Adopted: September 26, 2006

Tompkins County Public Library
Board of Trustees



VISION STATEMENT

The library functions as a welcoming civic space and portal of opportunity open to all people of all ages without discrimination in order to serve community needs for delivery of knowledge, culture, and enjoyment.

The library strives to be a keystone of the community and a cornerstone of the educational system. It provides innovative programs to bring people together to promote mutual interests and cultivate understanding through awareness of cultural heritage, arts, and sciences.

The library seeks to retain its identity as a repository for knowledge as well as materials unique to the community. It continually evolves and updates strategies to access information especially in cyberspace. It provides patrons with access to new tools for acquiring information and fosters the development of skills for lifelong learning.

The library aims to provide its patrons with outstanding professional services and to expand awareness of its resources through creative presentation of its diverse collections and evolving website.

The library serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas by facilitating collaborations with educational institutions and community organizations.

The library honors the public trust through the effective use of public resources and makes every effort to protect the confidentiality and privacy of its users.

Adopted November 29, 2006

Tompkins County Public Library Board of Trustees

Organizational Profile and History



Profile

The Tompkins County Public Library, (Ithaca, New York), founded in 1864 by Ezra Cornell, serves the 96,501 residents of Tompkins County and is the Central Library for the Finger Lakes Library System, serving libraries and users in Tompkins, Tioga, Cortland, Seneca and Cayuga counties. Our mission is to enhance the lives of all people in Tompkins County by connecting them to the world's wisdom, knowledge, and culture through free and open access to information and creative expression in many formats.

With over 40,000 registered borrowers, and an annual circulation approaching one million items, the Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL) is a vibrant and busy institution. The library offers a circulating collection of 240,000 items including books, paperbacks, magazines, videos, DVDs, music CDs, and recorded books. An extensive

interlibrary loan service provides patrons with items that are not owned by TCPL. Reference and information services are available in person, by phone or by e-mail. Access to comprehensive databases, the library's catalog, and the extensive resources on the web is available through free public Internet workstations. Specialized services in the library include Elvis, a computer for low-vision patrons, microfilm scanners and the Rosetta Stone, a language software program for learning English. Public programming for all ages includes author readings, story time, art shows, music, cultural celebrations and an annual Community Read in collaboration with Cornell University.

History

In 1862 Ithaca resident Ezra Cornell decided he would build a library for all residents of Tompkins County and

purchased a building lot on the southeast corner of Tioga and Seneca Streets. In April of 1864 the New York State Legislature chartered the Cornell Public Library Association (the sixth public library chartered by the state and the first in a village). Circulation officially began on March 4, 1867.

In 1868 the first meeting of the faculty of the newly chartered Cornell University met in the library. Early classes and commencement exercises of the University took place in the Library's large lecture hall.

Over the years the Library was home to many businesses and organizations and the large lecture hall was used as the Happy Hour Movie Theater from 1908 to 1929. This became a popular place for citizens to relax and enjoy the latest in entertainment.

During the Depression, financial pressures forced the library to close from July 1932, to January, 1933.

In the 1930's plans to build a newer library building were shelved due to lack of funds. In 1940 the decision was made to renovate the library building. By the 1950's however, public support was growing in the community for a new library building. A building fund was begun shortly before the Library Association sold the original library building to the First National Bank and moved to temporary quarters in the Sons of Italy Hall.

The Friends of the Library became established in 1946 and have developed into stalwart supporters and funders of the library, through their annual book sales. Over three million dollars has been donated to the library through the hard work and generosity of the Friends.

In 1967 the County Board of Supervisors approved the construction of a new \$1.7 million library building. It had been agreed that the new library was to be chartered and operated as a county library. In January 1968 the Cornell Li-

brary Association turned over its books, and assets to Tompkins County. The new library at 312 North Cayuga Street opened in February of 1969.

In 1982 the Tompkins County Public Library became the first public library in New York State to undertake a computerized card catalogue and check-out system. In 1990 a newer system was installed, and a third generation computer catalog, Polaris, was installed in 2005.

In 1983 an asbestos removal project resulted in the closing of the library for much of 1984. Limited library service was offered at Challenge Industries.

In February 1985 the library started circulating videotapes. A circulating compact disc collection started in 1987. In 1995 free Internet access began with a grant from Time Warner Cable. DVDs began circulating in 2001.

The Tompkins County Public Library Foundation, established in 1993, took on the role of private fundraising through donor cultivation, annual mail appeals, grants, investment and management of directed gifts, and special events all aimed at improving the financial health of the library.

By the early 1990s, the library had outgrown its space and a space feasibility study was conducted by Cohen Associates in 1996. The Cohen report substantiated the need for more space and outlined several options for the future, including expansion at the current site, building a new library, or moving into an existing space.

In 1998 the Tompkins County Legislature approved a plan to move the library to the former Woolworth Department Store, on the corner of Green and Cayuga Streets. Renovations began in the fall of 1999 and the library opened in its new space in November of 2000.

A fundraising campaign conducted by the Tompkins County Public Library

Foundation raised more than \$1.7 million in private support for the library.

The new library, twice the size of the old, attracted thousands of new users. In 2001 visitors increased by 45%. Circulation increased by 19% to 952,000 items; and the number of public programs and audience attendance skyrocketed. Staffing reached an all time high of 55.7 full-time equivalents. The library opened a Health Information Center, offered public art displays, sponsored Spanish story time, and initiated the Discovery Trail Partnership, a collaboration among seven museums and the library.

Despite its successes, county support for the library dropped in 2002 and 2003. An Alternative Funding Committee, appointed by the President of the Board of Trustees in 2002, studied the possibility of establishing a public library district in Tompkins County, which would have the authority to tax

directly for support of all libraries in Tompkins County. A modified version of this plan was placed on a public ballot in February of 2006 and was defeated. The proposal would have generated \$500,000 in permanent support for the library's collection and Sunday hours.

Current challenges include the following:

- staffing levels which have decreased to 48 full-time equivalents
- an inventory which is below that of comparable libraries
- open hours which are supported by county funding only to the minimum required under law

Despite these challenges, our library remains a beacon for the community, offering both traditional and innovative library services, free and open to all.



Strategic Planning Process

Appointed in January of 2006, the Long Range Planning Committee was charged with the following responsibilities:

- Update the 2020 Benchmarking Report, which was originally compiled in 1999
- Conduct a Space Needs Analysis of the physical library
- Evaluate the 2002-2006 Strategic Plan
- Develop a new Strategic Plan

The committee, made up of trustees, staff, Foundation and Friends of the Library, met on a monthly basis. They began by reviewing and revising the mission of the Tompkins County

Public Library and rewrote it to reflect the values and ideals of our library. Following the adoption of a new mission statement, a Vision Statement was crafted, which provided a framework for the development of the new strategic plan.

The 2002–2006 Strategic Plan was candidly reviewed by staff in terms of progress. Achievements were highlighted, and those tasks still remaining were considered for inclusion in the new plan. The committee noted that some of the goals were not measurable and therefore progress was difficult to assess.

The committee also recognized the valuable contributions of the library’s

Technology Committee which one year earlier had completed a Strategic Technology Plan. That plan is a critical component of the library’s over-arching strategy plan.

Collecting data about users was done using a series of focus groups with key stakeholders, in-person user surveys and on-line surveys using Survey Monkey. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were combined and incorporated into the development of the plan.

The committee also contracted with QPK Architects (the original architects of the library) for a professional analysis of the library’s current space configura-

<p>TOP STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Customer Service Free and open access Support from Friends of the Library and Foundation Facility/Location Up-to-Date Technology Public Programming 	<p>TOP WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funding for collection and staffing Strained labor relations, morale Understaffing Public misperceptions Limited collection size Physical access (Parking, lack of back door)
<p>EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New avenues for funding Marketing Partnering with other organizations New technology Coffee Shop Resource for energy and climate change issues Cyber generation Start-up businesses growing in Upstate NY Cultivation of County Legislature 	<p>EXTERNAL THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patriot Act High county and state taxes Competition for scarce county funding Changing demographics Perception of no need for library due to effects of technology on library usage Escalating health care costs consuming more of federal, state and local budgets Increasing costs of acquisitions and technology

tion. The evaluation includes collection capacity, usage of public areas and staff workspaces. Once the strategic plan is ratified by the library board of trustees, QPK will then suggest changes in allocation of space based on the new needs identified in the plan. The future relationship of the Tompkins County Public Library and the Finger Lakes Library System, which has a lease on space in the physical facility expiring in

2010, is a key question to be addressed in the next year.

Completed in December of 2007, a benchmarking study comparing our library with twenty-two other libraries in the United States with a similar sized workforce reaffirmed many earlier findings—not enough open hours, an inventory not sufficient to meet the needs of users, and greater than average private fundraising support. The

full study is available upon request from the library.

Finally, in conjunction with the Public Information Committee which engaged Claritas to conduct a demographic analysis of users of the library, important data about who uses the library now, and which potential audiences are key constituencies for library services in the future, were identified.

Demographic Trends in Tompkins County

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan 2004 states:

“According to the most recent U.S. Census, conducted in 2000, 96,501 people were living in Tompkins County. Approximately one in three residents were under 21 years of age. On the other end of the scale, one in ten residents were at least 65 years old. About half the adults had at least a bachelor’s degree.”

“Population projections for Tompkins County indicate a very gradual increase in population over the next thirty years. These projections take into account birth rates, mortality rates, in-migration, and out-migration and assume that current trends will continue into the future. While the total population is expected to increase to only 102,121 by 2030, the proportion by age will change more dramatically. The under-21 population is expected to increase from 33 percent (current) to 38 percent. The population 65 and older is expected to increase to one in every eight persons. Correspondingly, the population between ages 21 and 64 is projected to decline to less than half of all residents. Because this group represents the portion of the Tomp-

kins County population that forms the core of our labor force, this anticipated decline will impact employment and economic development in the future.”

Data drawn from the U.S. Census 2000, the American Community Survey 2004 and Cornell University’s International Student and Scholar Organization website reveal a growing population,

originating from non-English speaking countries, in the Tompkins County area. There are significant percentages of Southeast Asian persons as well as notable populations of Spanish, Korean, Russian, French and German speakers. Among the population of foreign-born adults, 7,510 residents, or about 8% of the overall county population, speak English “less than very well.”



Public Library Trends

Dynamic public libraries in the United States are focusing on values which have long been the foundation upon which public libraries have built. These values include a commitment to free and open access to information, an egalitarian approach to serving the community, a belief in the privacy and confidentiality of library records, a cherished belief in the power of words and stories, and a dedication to finding the most accurate, reliable and up to date information.

What is different is that these values are being articulated much more clearly through the development of long range planning, strategic positioning and marketing techniques. Public libraries continue to stress customer service, strive to be warm and engaging places, emphasize their roles as places where communities are built and civic engagement takes place. While technology has revolutionized many library processes,

including how information is stored and accessed, the public library remains an icon of American democracy.

Even the smallest of public libraries are capable of demonstrating their integral importance to their community due to the widespread availability of public Internet access. Libraries close the digital divide. It is public libraries which clearly express the importance of open and free access to information, regardless of whether it is in print or on the web.

Public libraries have been quicker than many industries to change their services and products, offering virtual as well as physical access to information. Libraries are often ahead of library vendors in identifying library products and software features that will be attractive to users.

A hundred years ago immigrants found their way into American society

and culture through public libraries; that role will continue to play out in many communities as new immigrants and diverse populations use the library. Today's immigrants will find the library a source of information about new opportunities and resources to help them improve their English skills. Through e-mail and web-based connection at the library, they will also have access to immediate news and information about their homeland and will be able to stay in touch with their own culture and heritage. Libraries must understand their community demographics and change collections, hours and services to meet the needs of new populations.

Libraries have always been cooperative and collegial with each other, sharing everything from expertise to rare books. Collaborations and partnerships with community organizations will continue to grow, not only because funders perceive that collaborations can achieve cost savings, but more importantly, that the magnitude of our mission can only be achieved through partnering with other like-minded institutions.

Funders, both private and public, are also demanding measurable outcomes. Anecdotal stories about life changing experiences due to public libraries are powerful, but these messages must be accompanied by data and ongoing evaluations of library services.

This strategic plan places the Tompkins County Public Library squarely amidst the exploration of new formats, new populations and new collaborations. It reflects some of the same strategic directions of earlier plans, but is more clearly focused. The plan adds dimension and emphasis, and requires a sharpening of our measurement and evaluations tools.



PROGRAM GOALS AND STRATEGIES

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|--------|---|
| Goal 1 | <p>People of all ages and backgrounds will find a variety of materials to advance knowledge and enjoyment and to create awareness of cultural heritage, arts, and sciences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor and implement new formats for library materials. b. Strive to reach stable and sufficient funding for the library collection. c. Ensure that library materials are available in a timely manner. d. Stimulate the interest in high quality library materials. |
| Goal 2 | <p>People of all ages and backgrounds will find the tools for acquiring information and skills for lifelong learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and implement a plan for increasing information literacy skills. b. Further develop the library's website for improved access to online information. |
| Goal 3 | <p>People of all ages and backgrounds will find a welcoming civic space where they can come together to exchange ideas, promote mutual interests and build community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that the library is open when most convenient for users. b. Review space allocation and re-organize and/or expand if needed. c. Create opportunities for community conversations through public programs. d. Ensure that the library offers a welcoming and positive experience for its users. |
| Goal 4 | <p>People of all ages and backgrounds will be made aware of the library's outstanding professional services, diverse collections, and central role in the community through outreach, collaborations local organizations, and public relations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to build collaborations within our community. b. Implement the strategic marketing plan. c. Increase our user base, focusing on key constituencies. |
| Goal 5 | <p>People of all ages and backgrounds will have a public library that effectively uses public and private resources and is supported by stable funding adequate to meet these strategic goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a plan to have a more effective working relationship with county legislators. b. Enhance the working relationships among the Friends, the Foundation and the Library. c. Develop other revenue streams of public support. d. Further develop and formalize a strategic long range financial plan. |
| Goal 6 | <p>To meet these strategic planning goals, we will foster excellence among library staff, volunteers and trustees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cultivate a positive relationship between labor and management b. Implement the library's staff development policy, focusing on staff development, performance measures, and positive recognition c. Ensure that the library is competitive within the marketplace for skilled personnel d. Ensure a positive understanding of the roles of volunteers e. Maintain an active and involved Board of Trustees |

APPENDIX 1

Strategic Technology Plan
Summary

Executive Summary

Technology plays an essential role in enabling the library to meet its mission of connecting people with information.

A technology plan for our library must address library specific technology such as cataloging, acquisitions and circulation systems. It must also deal with the generic office environment and contain plans for organizational operations such as word processing, payroll and data base development. Most importantly our technology plan must meet our users' needs.

This plan encompasses computing hardware and software for users and staff, and associated peripheral or specialized equipment such as self-check workstations and digital microfilm scanners. The plan also addresses policy questions involving access to information, privacy, security, staffing, training and marketing needs.

Through technology planning, our library's technology will remain up-to-date, reliable, resilient and flexible. Because changes in software and hardware can be expensive and often bring with it steep learning curves, a technology plan helps ensure that changes are planned and managed carefully, with the least amount of disruption necessary. Through solid technology planning, our library can achieve greater productivity, increased staff efficiency and improved service to both our staff and users.

As a beneficiary of the federal government's Universal Service Fund Program (e-rate), our library must have an up-to-date technology plan which guides our planning and investment. It must contain clear goals and a realistic strategy to achieve those goals. It must

include an assessment of where we are today, where we plan to go, a budget to support those goals and an evaluation process which monitors progress.

More importantly, an up-to-date technology plan is critical for support-

ing technology funding requests. It is a practical tool for focusing limited resources on those objectives which are of the highest priority. A technology plan demonstrates that the library is both visionary and realistic.

The Technology Vision

Technology plays an essential role in enabling the library to meet its mission of connecting people with information. The library will maintain and upgrade existing technology following industry standards. The library will continuously survey the evolving technology landscape for appropriate applications; and will prudently pilot promising new technology. Overall, the library aspires to be near the forefront of library technology practices

Goal 1	Maintain existing technology so that it is sufficient, up-to-date and meets patron and staff technology needs.
Goal 2	Train staff and users in effective and productive uses of technology.
Goal 3	Promote the library's technological capabilities.
Goal 4	Investigate and pilot new library technology.
Goal 5	Use technology to foster communication between the library and the community.
Goal 6	Monitor legal and ethical issues involving technology.
Goal 7	Secure funding for technology.
Goal 8	Regularly assess progress, evaluate outcomes, and update the technology plan.

