

# Regina Public Library

# *Service Plan*

APPROVED BY THE REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD  
SEPTEMBER 2008



# Regina Public Library Service Plan

## *Mapping the New Direction - 2009 to 2011*

### Introduction

The Service Plan you are reading stems from the Programs & Services Review begun in 2007, and is an operational reflection of the stated needs of the community. Both the Programs & Services Review and the Service Plan support the most recent Strategic Plan *A New Direction: Setting the Course* adopted by the Board of Regina Public Library (RPL) in 2006.

The Board requested the Library undertake the Programs & Services Review in response to the dramatic changes that RPL has experienced in the past decade. Regina Public Library is not alone in experiencing change; all over North America library users and non-users have indicated that the services they expect from their library, and their expectations of how libraries serve their community, are changing.

Some of this change is driven by the impact of the Internet and our increasing use of digital information and entertainment. In some cases the ways patrons use the Library, or would like to use the Library, have changed. It is a good time for Regina Public Library to hear from the people of Regina about what they need from their library. The Service Plan reflects what the community told us, and identifies the actions that will build a sustainable library system.

#### ***The Review Process***

The Programs & Services Review entailed an extensive consultation process using surveys, meetings of community stakeholders and focus groups to gain a broad, accurate and evidence-based understanding of the needs of the community we serve. The review used the Public Library Association model, *Strategic Planning for Results*, which identifies “service responses” or typical library services that might be provided in response to a community’s stated needs and preferences.

RPL engaged internationally known library consultant Jeanne Goodrich to assist with the review. Ms Goodrich assisted with the consultation process and worked with RPL to conduct a comprehensive internal review of its operations, including collections, programming, technology, reference services, circulation and facilities.

RPL also initiated other activities as part of the review process, and to help prepare the foundation for the Service Plan. These activities included:

- six focus groups to gather more information about community needs and expectations. The group sessions represented adult users, youth users, families, business community, non-users, and users at the Glen Elm Branch;
- two day-long sessions with the Community Library Planning Committee;
- a workshop hosted by Regina Public Library and conducted by representatives of Project for Public Spaces to explore opportunities to enhance RPL's role as a community and civic anchor;
- a communications audit of the Library's internal and external communications processes and products;
- a city-wide survey of users and non-users; and,
- a community marketing profile research project conducted by the Dunlop Art Gallery.

## **Key Service Responses**

Through the review process, RPL identified the service responses that the community considers most important. All of the information - including the chosen service responses - was then presented to RPL staff in a series of small group meetings, enabling all staff opportunities to discuss the chosen responses and make recommendations.

Information and recommendations from the staff meetings were then presented to a second meeting of community stakeholders, who chose their top four service responses. Throughout this process there was strong agreement in the choices made by the community representatives and RPL staff.

(It is important to note that the service response "Technology" consistently ranked close to the top five in the discussions of the Community Library Planning Committee. RPL still considers Technology to be one of the basic elements needed to operate effectively in an era of digital information, and this is reflected in several of the steps that will be implemented within the top four service responses. The Library's technology issues are being addressed.)

The top service response choices are:

**Stimulate the Imagination: Reading, Viewing and Listening for Pleasure**

*Residents seeking materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them, and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.*

**Create Young Readers: Early Literacy**

*Children from birth to age five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to read, write and listen.*

**Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces**

*Residents will have safe and welcoming physical spaces to meet and interact with others, or to sit quietly and read, and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.*

**Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning**

*Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.*

In summary, the community-led, evidence-based Programs & Services Review has identified what the people of Regina want from their library, and their service expectations. The review also included extensive input from RPL staff. The Service Plan builds on the findings of the Programs & Services Review by implementing the actions required to meet the needs expressed by the community.

## **Transformation**

The review process findings emphasize that a “cookie-cutter” approach to service delivery is no longer correct or reasonable. This is borne out by the results of the American Library Association (ALA) study *Public Library Service Responses 2007*. The service responses identified through RPL’s review process align closely with those in the ALA study.

Excellence, then, is not one single rigid standard. The Library will focus more on meeting patrons’ expectations. Rather than being a set of statistical targets determined somewhere else, excellence must be defined locally. Excellence results when the library services provided match community needs, interests and priorities. Excellence does not require unlimited resources; rather it is achieved by directing available resources to the needs and priorities that the community has identified as most important.

This approach to delivering excellent library service will require a greater emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of services and programs. The Library will focus more on the gaps between patrons’ expectations and what the Library delivers. As the review process

revealed, some of those expectations are linked to levels of awareness of what the Library offers, so doing a better job of telling the Library's story will be an important element in implementing the Service Plan.

Excellence will also mean doing things better and more efficiently – re-designing workflows for the benefit of patrons and staff. These activities will be managed using existing resources.

The Library is using the information gathered during the review process to take action on issues the community identified as important. These actions include:

- launching the Popular Picks service;
- conducting a study of the Library's non-fiction collection;
- beginning an investigation of Radio Frequency Identification technology to simplify the check-in and check-out of Library materials;
- expanding the number of public computer workstations;
- adding more functionality to public workstations; and,
- increasing network capacity.

The findings from the Programs & Services Review process indicate that the Library must transform itself to meet the needs of the community. This transformation will require changes in what the Library does, and how it is done. In some cases it will require doing a better job of telling the Library's story.

For example, today the Library is one of many sources of information available, but it is one of only a few public spaces offering an integrated cultural experience.

## **Making It Happen**

Each of the service responses listed above will require an action, or a series of actions, to turn it into an operational reality. Goals, objectives and strategic steps are identified for each service response. By their very nature, some of the steps will apply to more than one service response, indicating how different elements of the Service Plan are interconnected. The successful completion of each strategic step will ensure that measurable objectives are achieved.

### **Service Response: Stimulate the Imagination: Reading, Viewing and Listening for Pleasure**

**Stimulate the Imagination** was consistently the first choice among community stakeholders and Library staff throughout the consultation process. This response focuses on reading, viewing and listening for pleasure, with the greatest emphasis on fiction and audio-visual collections.

Statistical evidence and usage patterns indicate that this response reflects the needs of Library users. The introduction of new services such as “Book Club in a Bag” and “Popular Picks” indicates that there are opportunities to develop this service response further. More emphasis will be placed on supporting the timely delivery of current collections. Additional online services will also enhance this service response.

**GOAL:** *Adults, young adults and children will have resources, programs and services that stimulate their imagination and provide reading, viewing and listening experiences to enhance their leisure time.*

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 85% of Library users will report that available leisure materials meet their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Users will be able to download and preview material at the Library.
- Wait times for materials will be reduced.
- Interactive media resources and content will be available to Library users.
- Collections will be presented so that materials are easy to find.
- Collections will be current, offering a variety of titles from the classics to new releases.
- All locations will offer assistance by phone or in-person to users selecting reading, viewing and listening materials.
- Services and materials will be provided that meet the needs of homebound and visually impaired borrowers.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 95% of Library users will report that the programs and services offered by the Library meet their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- The Library will facilitate and support more book clubs.
- The Library will enhance its role as an integrated cultural institution by hosting more programs and events featuring authors, storytellers, artists and filmmakers.
- The Library will offer leisure reading programs to children, teens and adults.

- The Library will offer mentoring opportunities through writer/artist/critic-in-residence programs.
- The Dunlop Art Gallery's collection and services will be integrated at all locations.
- The Library will host community-based art projects.
- The interests and needs of the whole community will determine Film Theatre programming and use.

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, 95% of online users will have a range of online services available that meets their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Library users will have the option of learning about what is new at the Library by subscribing to electronic newsletters and RSS feeds.
- The Library's website will offer a variety of online advisory services, including interactive services and information about collections.
- The Library catalogue will offer graphical presentation, interactive participation and enriched content.

### **Service Response: Create Young Readers: Early Literacy**

Children come to the Library to explore, to imagine and to have fun. If they are introduced to the Library at an early age, they will become comfortable with it and more willing to explore. It is also important that the Library offer a range of services and programs to parents, caregivers and organizations serving the needs of children.

*Every Child Ready to Read* provides the basic elements of this service response and employs the principles required to develop the collections, programs and services to fulfill this service response.

The Library recognizes that this service response is seen as key to the economic development of the community. The success of the Library-sponsored Mayor's Mega-Minute Reading Challenge is an example of RPL's commitment to early literacy in our community.

**GOAL:** *Children from birth to age five and their parents/caregivers will have resources, programs and services to ensure that every child is ready to read.*

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 85% of parents and caregivers will find that the availability of early literacy resources meets their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Early literacy resources, including instructions on their use, will be available in the Library, at daycares and online.
- Computer workstations offering early literacy resources will be available in the Library for family use.
- The Library will offer themed kits of books, toys and other items for borrowing.

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, 95% of parents/caregivers will find programs offered at convenient times and places.

### **Strategic Steps**

- The Library will expand partnerships with daycares and other organizations to offer early literacy programs in the community.
- The Library will expand its offerings of early literacy programs, including through its website.
- The Library will offer learning opportunities to parents and caregivers about early literacy in the Library, in the community and online.
- The Library will offer program options to families with children of different ages.

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, the use of picture books and other early literacy materials will increase by 20%.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Picture books and early literacy materials will be featured in all relevant programs.
- Picture book and early literacy collections will be current, attractive and in good condition.
- Parents/caregivers and children will have access to collections that are easy to locate and reach.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 90% of parents and caregivers will report that children attending early literacy programs have enhanced ability to listen to stories.

### **Strategic Step**

- All early literacy programs will incorporate the principles of “Every Child Ready to Read.”

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 90% of parents and caregivers with children attending early literacy programs will have gained confidence and competence in using story time materials and activities, and will employ early literacy techniques at home.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Library programs will model reading/literacy behaviours for parents and caregivers.
- The Library will offer programming emphasizing the importance of early literacy for parents and caregivers.
- The Library will distribute book lists and tips on reading to children at home, in print and online.
- The Library website will offer early literacy programs by podcast or other digital formats.

### **Service Response: Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces**

Among urban and community planners the public library is now regarded as one of the cornerstones of community development, one of the few remaining public spaces where people can come together for work and leisure.

Members of the public in many communities view libraries as gathering places where they can meet and interact, or work quietly. This general view is borne out in Regina by the community research conducted by RPL in support of the Programs & Services Review. More than two-thirds of those surveyed see the Library as a place where they can relax and feel at ease.

For the purpose of this response, a comfortable space encompasses many elements, including windows, light, colour, the ability to find one’s way around, visible staff, and both quiet spaces and places where people can visit or work together.

This service response is linked to the key strategies; Creating a Welcoming Environment, Restoring Our Branches, and Considering the Future of Central Library in the RPL Strategic Plan for the period 2006 to 2010. Both the public and staff will benefit from this welcoming environment.

**GOAL:** *Adults, young adults and children will find a welcoming physical and virtual environment that meets their needs.*

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, everyone who comes to the Library will report that their interaction with staff met their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- The Library will continuously assess service quality to ensure staff is providing prompt, friendly and accurate service.
- The community will have more convenient options to communicate with the Library, including improved phone service.
- The Library will establish relevant customer service standards and continuously assess service quality.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 90% of community members surveyed will report that the Library's open hours meet their needs.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Open hours of RPL locations will be consistent and predictable. The following actions will be taken:
  - Library locations will be open Friday mornings.
  - Open hours at George Bothwell Branch will be more closely aligned with the Southland Mall.

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, all community members surveyed will report that all RPL locations are clearly identifiable, visible and easy to locate. All visitors to Library locations and the website will report they can easily find their way to their destination.

## Strategic Steps

- External RPL signage and internal wayfaring will be improved at all locations.
- The Library website will be easy to search and navigate, so that users can find the information they need.

**GOAL:** *Adults, young adults and children will have engaging and inviting physical and virtual spaces in which to use resources or interact with each other.*

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, 80% of Library users surveyed will report that they experienced an engaging and inviting environment where they can access resources and interact with others.

## Strategic Steps

- The Library will develop guidelines for functional plans for the design of new facilities and the re-design of existing buildings. Community-led consultations will contribute to the functional planning process.
- Areas for young adults will be enhanced at Central Library, George Bothwell and Albert Branches.
- Outdoor spaces will be provided at Connaught, Regent Place, Glen Elm, Sherwood Village and Prince of Wales Branches, and at Central Library.
- Comfortable, moveable furnishings will be provided, and food and drink will be permitted at all RPL locations.
- The Library will offer a safe, easy-to-navigate environment with a variety of interactive opportunities.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 85% of children and their parents/caregivers surveyed will report that the layout and design of children's areas meets their expectations.

## Strategic Step

- Children will have dedicated areas able to accommodate family activities, with age-appropriate design and furnishings.

**GOAL:** *Adults, young adults and children will have comfortable spaces where they can pursue quiet activities.*

**Objective:** By the end of 2011, 85% of Library users surveyed will report they were able to find quiet comfortable spaces in the Library.

### **Strategic Step**

- Quiet, comfortable seating areas will be provided.

### **Service Response: Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning**

With regard to this service response, a significant shift in opinion occurred between the first and second meetings of the Community Library Planning Committee. With time for reflection and with input from Library staff, the members of the Committee moved this service response up in priority, recognizing the many benefits it provides to the community. To support lifelong learning for Library users, print, media and electronic resources will need further development. The Dunlop Art Gallery will play a role in fulfilling this service response.

**GOAL:** *Adults, young adults and children will have programs, resources and services available so they can explore topics of personal interest and pursue lifelong learning.*

To achieve this goal, two inter-related objectives have been developed that will be addressed by one set of strategic steps. The objectives are:

**Objective:** The use of non-fiction resources will increase by 5% over the next two years.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 85% of Library users seeking non-fiction materials will report that the availability of resources and services in their areas of interest meets their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Collections will be current, and presented and arranged so that materials are easy to find.
- Collections will offer a variety of titles, including the classics, but with an emphasis on new materials.
- Wait times for materials will be reduced.
- Collections will be featured in programming.

**Objective:** Use of information in electronic formats offered by the Library will increase by 20% over the next two years.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Online resources will be integrated into the Library catalogue.
- Staff at all locations will be able to assist users in using RPL's online resources.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 95% of Library users looking for information on a topic of personal interest will report that the service they received from Library staff meets their expectations.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Staff at all locations will be available to assist users.
- Library users will receive the assistance they need over the phone or online.

**Objective:** By the end of 2010, 85% of people surveyed will report that Library programs and services are important in helping them learn about a topic of personal interest.

### **Strategic Steps**

- Programming content and delivery will reflect the personal interests that people in the community have indicated are important to them.
- The Library will deliver Aboriginal programming throughout the Library system.
- The Library will deliver cross-cultural programming.
- The Library will deliver programs and services that meet the needs of the small business community.
- The Library will provide programming for genealogists.

## **Building Organizational Capacity**

The Service Plan has two main effects: it will change the service experience of Library users, and it will require the organization to build capacity to be more responsive to user needs.

The Service Plan will have resource implications for the Library, including technology, collections, staffing, and facilities. These will be outlined in the Management Plan. The Library will also continue to consult with the community about its Service Plan initiatives to ensure that they are producing the desired outcomes.

The following actions will prepare staff to help implement the Service Plan.

**Strategic Action:** The Library will be adequately and appropriately staffed.

- The Library will conduct a review of resource allocation and utilization and compare those findings to the resources required to implement the Service Plan.
- Staff will receive training and support to meet the objectives stated in the Service Plan. The Library has hired an Organizational Development Specialist to provide expertise, advice and leadership in facilitating staff development needs associated with implementing the Service Plan.
- The Library will develop and implement recruitment and selection strategies that attract staff who have the knowledge, skills and abilities required to provide the services and programming identified in the Service Plan.

**Strategic Action:** Library services will be designed to deliver excellent service to patrons.

- The Library will conduct workflow and process analysis to ensure efficient and effective circulation of materials.
- Work will be re-designed to align with identified service needs. Staff will be involved with the re-design, and training and support will be provided to ensure the re-design is effective and sustainable.
- The Library will implement internal mechanisms to encourage suggestions for service improvements.
- The Library will consult on an ongoing basis with members of the community, and other organizations to identify community needs.

**Strategic Action:** The Library will develop a culture of assessment that supports evidence-based decision-making.

A culture of assessment is an integral part of the change process and the creation of a customer-centred culture. It involves listening to the community, examining the information provided by the community, questioning assumptions and making decisions based on the evidence.

- The Library will continue to employ a range of methodologies to gather information from the community, plus input from employee reporting and surveys. Decisions will be based on facts, research and analysis.
- To assist in developing a culture of assessment, staff will receive training in evidence-based practice. Through service assessment practices, community perceptions and expectations will be shared with staff to ensure service quality.

**Strategic Action:** The Library will provide resources that are accessible to the community.

Information gleaned from consultations with the community indicated that consistent hours of opening are preferred to the current approach, which distributes hours so that some Branches are open while others are closed.

- The Library will examine its scheduling practices and technological solutions to free staff to provide more consistent and longer hours of opening.

## **Strategic Marketing and Communications**

The results from the consultation process, community research conducted by RPL, and the communications audit confirm that the Library must develop new, more effective ways of telling the Library's story.

- The Library will develop a comprehensive Marketing and Communications Plan based on the findings from focus groups, the Community Library Planning Committee, surveys, market research and the communications audit.
- The Marketing and Communications Plan will be continually updated with new information using a range of research and assessment tools.
- The Library will develop and implement a strategy that takes the Library into the community. Best practices from other libraries will be incorporated into the program that will be developed by Regina Public Library.
- The Library will provide updates to the community as the Service Plan is implemented.
- The Library will develop effective and mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations in the community to help deliver programs and services, and to tell the Library's story.

## **Summing Up**

Over the past 100 years of its existence, Regina Public Library has established itself as a well-loved and valued institution in the community. Through the Programs & Services Review process the Library has engaged with the community to gather information about the needs and expectations of the public, as the Library moves into its second century of service.

This Service Plan has been shaped and informed by community involvement to create a service improvement framework that will help guide Regina Public Library into the future. Regina Public Library thanks all members of the public who took the time to offer their views and ideas through the consultation process.

## Appendix A

### **Documents Consulted During the Programs & Services Review**

#### ***Regina Public Library***

*Needs Assessment Survey*. Regina Public Library, 1995

*Reading Within Our Means, Building for the Future*. Regina Public Library Task Force, 2004

*Report of the Friends' Task Force – Executive Summary*. Friends of the Regina Public Library, 2004

*Needs Assessment Survey – Final Report*. Regina Public Library, 2004

*Prince of Wales Research Project – Survey Report*. Regina Public Library, 2006

*Prince of Wales Research Project – Focus Groups Report*. Regina Public Library, 2006

*Community Profile Research – Survey Report and Recommendations*. Dunlop Art Gallery, 2008

#### ***City of Regina***

*Choices for Redefining Excellence; Core Services Review*. City of Regina, 2004

*Recreation Facility Strategy 2020*. City of Regina, 2008

#### ***Other***

*Opening Doors to Children* (Adele Fasick, Andre Gagnon, Lynne Howarth, Ken Settrington). Regina Public Library, 2005

*Strategic Planning for Results*. Sandra Nelson. Public Library Association, 2008