

Librarian's Shelf by Jill Owens

A look back at first year progress on library plan

Year one of our five-year strategic plan has gone by astonishingly fast. The last visit from the planning consultant occurred in January, and we had already tried to start addressing some wishes of the public before then. Kudos to the library staff, Library Board, and volunteers who had a large job thrust upon them, and with the support of the City, have worked steadily with the plan's implementation.

The broad headings for all the goals we were given to address over the next several years were technology, staffing, building/physical plant including use of space, programming, and a strong web presence. Everything we tackled can't be listed in this space, so here are just a few highlights.

One of the biggest changes recommended by the consultant was to have weekly meetings among staff who had responsibilities for leading in different areas of the library. These leadership meetings have been valuable for keeping focus on the goals of the strategic plan, and keeping all departments coordinated, communicating, and working together.

The beginning of the year saw the creation of Tech Tuesdays, and some staff stepped forward to take individual tech help appointments. Before then, we had varying degrees of success with fitting in helping drop-in patrons with all sorts of devices. Both of these innovations took one load off of the already busy information desk staff, and provided access to better quality unrushed service for patrons.

Also at the beginning of the year, a strengthening of our WiFi was completed, as well as easier access for out-of-county patrons who worked in our service area, and a newsletter was started.

Talks began about expanding the size of the Library Board to accommodate the committee work necessary to work on the plan. There are now ten committees active among six board members, and a seventh member will be added next year. Meanwhile, many policies and plans for new things like e-reader lending were worked on by leadership. Several changes have involved the steps of by-law and fee changes, as well as city code changes.

There was a lengthy process which would end with a new logo and mission, "Columbus Public Library -- Connecting people and ideas."

Staff training and physical improvements both increased during 2013. Efforts have been made both to bring training to the staff, and to get staff to workshops and conferences.

Large endeavors like the furniture project involved representatives from the Library Board, staff, Foundation, Friends, and other volunteers. This was made possible by the new furniture purchased by the Columbus Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library.

The furniture project and accompanying first floor makeover included both staff and volunteers working together to make the library more inviting and comfortable for patrons. The makeover included new window shades and painting, in addition to the new furniture.

Because we now have wired tables, iPads were tethered in both wings of the ground floor for patrons to experiment with. They can try out our library's electronic offerings as well as getting familiar with the

devices themselves. Patrons can now have access to electricity in most places they choose to work in the library with their own laptops and other devices. Along the lines of getting technology throughout the building, eight computers were moved upstairs to the teen space. More technology will be introduced this year, and of course, our policy-writing work must keep up with the innovations.

In 2013 there were more programs, and the addition of children's programming on Saturdays, as well as more electronic offerings that patrons can keep once they are downloaded such as Zinio's electronic magazines and Freegal music (popular music downloads that are free and legal).

The board continues its work on memorandums of understanding with organizations that are housed in the library. When the Platte Valley Literacy Association moved to the Family Resource Center, some space was freed up for staff work areas. The rearranging resulted in staff office and work areas being a little less crowded into areas such as the mail room. In this day and age, every move is accompanied by wiring of various types, which adds an extra level of planning and execution.

Time was also taken up last year on several building maintenance issues, some of which have spilled over into this year, including finishing up the wiring on the new front doors, which can only be done after some other work is done.

Also during 2013 the Foundation board has been working on an overhaul of their by-laws and structure to position itself for the future.

The final tallying is underway for the annual statistical report due next month to the Nebraska Library Commission. When that is complete a report on our numbers for 2013 will be made available.

At the end of the year, Clark Enerson Partners was selected through a competitive process as the architects for promotional visual services, so watch for information about that in the next few months.

Even with all the changes, we are keeping many popular features such as the Summer Reading Program and the book sales. We still enjoy our excitement over working through the strategic plan, though we have to remind ourselves, it is a five-year plan, and everything can't be done at once. There are some interesting changes on deck for 2014, make sure you stop in and have a look.

Donations were recently given to the bookmobile in memory of Lynsey Marie Kapels from Cliff and Phyllis Kapels and the Brian Greisen family. Marilyn Murray made a donation to the library for the purchase of new fiction. Donations to the Columbus Library Foundation were given by Pat Anderson, and Dwain and Jill Owens.