

Renfrew Public Library's Strategic Plan 2010-2015

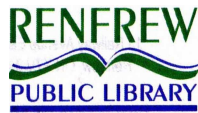
Introduction

In December 2005 the first Strategic Plan was adopted for the Renfrew Public Library. The Plan outlined where the organization should be going and what it should be doing to get there. Since that time, the Library Board has found the Strategic Plan to be instrumental in developing future plans and identifying funding requirements for infrastructure improvements.

The Library has accomplished much in the last five years. Since the establishment of the Library's first Strategic Plan, the Library, among many other improvements, has: changed weekly and weekend hours; added new databases and replaced computers; established partnerships with Day Care Centers; purchased early literacy material; continued to enhance and assess patron preferences for book and media collections; and, increased the CD, DVD, electronic and board game collections. Major infrastructure improvement goals have been accomplished. The Library now has a new air conditioning and ventilation system, reading room, automatic doors for ramp access, new front doors, a wheelchair accessible after hours book return, a bicycle rack, and a new 'historical' exterior sign. The only remaining 'infrastructure' improvements left are a new integrated library system, the installation of a carpet in the foyer and main floor, and an up-to-date circulation desk.

Planning is a critical component of good management and governance. Planning helps assure that the Library remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its community, and contributes to its organizational stability. It provides a basis for monitoring progress, and for assessing results and impact. It facilitates new program development. It enables the Library to look into the future in an orderly and systematic way. From a governance perspective, it enables the Library Board to set policies and goals to guide the organization, and provides a clear focus to the CEO/Chief Librarian and staff for program implementation.

Nothing is permanent, but change
Heraclitus 535–475 BCE



As change is constant, planning should not be a one-time effort: any plan needs to be reviewed, monitored, and updated. The benefits to the Library can be significant -- a clear focus, a sense of joint purpose and agreed-upon priorities, consensus on strategies, and a basis for measuring progress and impact.

In May 2009 the Renfrew Public Library Board determined that a survey was needed to assess the community's needs and the progress made so far. A Survey Sub-Committee of three board members conducted: surveys with staff and patrons; an environmental scan; a review of demographic data; and, a situational analysis. In addition, this Sub-Committee identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and, identified strategic imperatives. This helped assess both the challenges and opportunities the Renfrew Public Library is likely to face over the next five years and set the context for the choices reflected in this Strategic Plan. A Board member conducted a review of the Library's foundation policies, and as a result the Board of Directors reviewed the Library's mission, vision, core operating values and assumptions underlying the organization's approach to its work. All of this information helped the Library Board assess both the challenges and opportunities it is likely to face over the next five years. This set the stage for the Board to define the Library's strategic direction.

Vision

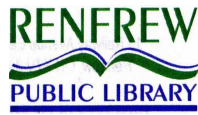
The Board's vision statement describes the future success of the Library. By creating a compelling vision, the Board encourages action that moves the Library towards a desirable future.

The *Renfrew Public Library* is a leader in celebrating reading and transforming lives through knowledge and information. The library provides accessible services through current technology and contemporary facilities. The library is a recognized contributor to the high quality of life in the community through exceptional services and valued partnerships.

Mission

The mission statement articulates the Board's understanding of the purpose of the Library and those it serves. It inspires those who work on behalf of the Library and provides a compass for action.

The *Renfrew Public Library* offers it's community equitable access to information and ideas through a variety of media.



Values

The statement of values articulates the Board's beliefs about important principles and norms by which the Library operates and delivers service.

Equity

Ensuring accessibility and fairness in serving the entire community in its diversity.

Intellectual Freedom

Guaranteeing and facilitating access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity.

Customer Service

Ensuring high quality and excellence with an emphasis on responding to the needs of our customers.

Community Connectedness

Enhancing library service through community partnerships and consultation.

Creativity, Imagination and Curiosity

Encouraging the joy of reading and life-long learning.

Teamwork

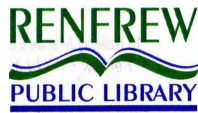
Fostering a work culture that advocates cooperation, communication, respect and training.

Opportunities

Providing opportunities for growth and learning through literature, creativity, arts and culture and technology.

Respect for our Heritage

Value the importance of heritage and history in partnership with local history groups.



Summary of the Environment Scan

An environmental scan was undertaken and the information placed in a framework of “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) analysis.

A review of our community found that Renfrew’s population is static; however, there are fewer children/youth under 20 and more adults over 60. The surrounding townships (Horton and McNab/Braeside in particular as the Library provides services to these townships) are probably increasing. Residential development is mainly for high income earners and seniors.

At the recent “Ontario Library Symposium 2020”, Librarians identified these top priorities for moving towards 2020:

- ❖ Create a library culture that supports continual innovation
- ❖ Expand the public library role as a community place and a public space
- ❖ Ensure all physical and virtual libraries are high quality, visible and well used
- ❖ Engage people and leverage community connections and resources
- ❖ Build greater capacity between partners, users, and libraries

The following is a brief summary of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses highlighted by the Library Board.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths are internal characteristics, qualities, and capacities that are doing well and are part of the reason for the Library’s accomplishments.

- The Library is centrally located in Renfrew in a vibrant downtown core where groups and services are geared to an aging population.
- The Library staff is dedicated and keeps abreast of library trends and the Board of Trustees are engaged.
- The Library’s patrons are generally very satisfied with the Library’s services and are quick to point out that good service is provided by a competent, friendly, helpful and committed staff.
- Patrons recognize and appreciate the improvements that have been made.
- The municipality is pleased with the Library and sees its value within the community.

- An Ontario Public Library Guidelines Pre-Audit Report reported that the Library is generally well organized and well managed, and is offering an array of services to the community, including a well-staffed and well-developed Children Services. Most of the services were found to be well developed and all operational systems administered with a view to achieving standardized levels of service. The majority of the Operating policies governing day to day work have been adopted and implemented.

Weaknesses are internal qualities that need to be improved.

- The Library uses an antiquated integrated library system that keeps an inventory of the Library's materials (books, magazines, etc.) including the tracking of the circulation of these materials (who it is on loan to, for how long etc.). This system, integral to the operation of the Library, could 'crash' at any time. Money has been budgeted in the capital budget to purchase a new system.
- Online databases are being underutilized.
- It is difficult to attract youth. 48% of students surveyed do not use the library.
- Students and patrons want more recent young adult and large print books, more DVDs and computers.
- There is a lack of interaction with the community.
- The Ontario Public Library Pre-Audit Report pointed out that a good deal of work by the Library Board is required in the areas of Policy making, Governance policies, Planning policies and processes.
- The Library needs to improve its alignment with Municipal Council, in particular, improvements should be undertaken to ameliorate communications.

Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities refer to external activities or trends that the Library may benefit from, connect with or take advantage of to grow or enhance its performance.

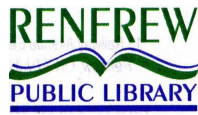
- It is noted that shortly after the Library's first Strategic Plan, the Friends of the Library, a fundraising entity, became inactive. The Library Board should review its short and long term fundraising as well as enhancing its visibility, marketing and partnering programs in light of the need for a new building in the future.

Threats are external activities or trends that threaten the current and future success of the Library.

- The Renfrew Library building itself and the lot size will not allow for expansion.

The Library's first Strategic Plan identified this threat of lack of space and we must emphasize that it remains as the greatest threat. There is no other solution than to build a new Library in a central location that will have the necessary lot and building space to remedy this on-going problem and threat to the Library's future.

- It is increasingly difficult to make major changes such as: implementing new/revised programs, having gathering spaces, increasing the number of computers, increasing its collections, or increasing its student programs.
 - There is no direct wheelchair access between floors.
 - The Library will not be able to meet the Province's Accessibility policies due to the building's size and limitations and will not be able to comply with Guidelines on physical access for persons with disabilities.
 - Students and patrons surveyed want a larger building with better washrooms and more public spaces.
 - Parking is poor at best. Not only are there few parking spaces around the Library, but the Farmers Market on Saturday mornings in the summer and fall means that most of those spaces are not available.
- Staff resources are stretched to the limit. The majority of their time is being spent on checking out books and answering the phone. The impact is a negative one in that staff does not have much time left to provide other services to patrons.
 - One of the top challenges for libraries is funding. The Library, as any organization, benefits from a stable and realistic budget. The lack of representative funding from townships utilizing the Renfrew Public Library's services places strains on the Town of Renfrew as the Town provides most of the funding and further strains the Library on being able to meet the expectations of its patrons and in remaining innovative in its programs and collections. At some point this issue needs to be addressed. Other municipalities in Ontario with a similar situation do obtain funds from neighbouring townships that are in addition to their Provincial grants. Townships should be requested to provide funding that represents their taxpayers' use of Renfrew's Public Library's programs and collections which may be more than the Provincial Grant that they receive and transfer.



Strategic Imperatives

In order to provide focus to the Library, "strategic imperatives" or "must-do's" were identified. These strategic imperatives are the Library's vital goals, priorities, and improvement targets that, when reached, will start the Library on its way toward its vision, mission and values.

The strategic imperatives that were identified naturally focused externally or internally, so, they are outlined as such.

External Strategic Imperatives

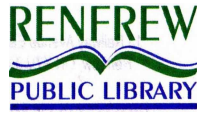
The new Library Board will dialogue with the Mayor and Town Council on the following issues/topics beginning in 2011.

1. ALIGNMENT

- The new Chair and Deputy Chair of the Renfrew Library Board meet with the Mayor to discuss/recommend:
 - a. How to improve an on-going dialogue with Mayor and Town Council
 - b. Need for the Chair or the Deputy Chair to represent the Library at Council meetings
 - c. Need to improve dialogue and representation between the CEO/Librarian and the Town's Department Heads especially on town-wide issues (eg. Accessibility, phones, finances, etc.)
 - d. How to improve communications of the Library Board of Trustee's meetings to Town Council.
 - e. Recommend possible solutions to the current parking situation.

2. A NEW LIBRARY BUILDING

- Examine the Library space requirements
- Write a position paper on need for land and a new Library building
- Continually inform Council on this issue
- Begin planning for new building
- Start enhancing the Library's visibility, and partnering and marketing programs.



3. TOWNSHIP FUNDING

- Write a position paper on this issue and make recommendations/discuss with Mayor and Town Council.

Internal Strategic Imperatives

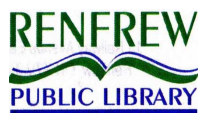
These Imperatives are 'internal' operational and Board issues.

The current Library Board will endeavor to undertake what it can complete before the end of its term. Any remaining issues will be undertaken by the new Library Board.

The RENFREW PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD should:

1. Prioritize and develop policies as outlined in the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Pre-Audit Report, especially in the areas of policy making, governance, and the planning process.
2. Begin to be more focused at its monthly meetings and concentrate on: future issues; performance leading to results, measuring success, recalibration, and drawing a roadmap to where the Library is going. The Board should review the format of its meetings' Agenda and Minutes to refocus on governance and foresight.
3. The Library's human resources are being strained. The Board should:
 - Review the viability of a new or improved phone system, and
 - Once a new library system is installed, review the viability of installing a new self check-out system.

Although these improvements will cost, it will result in a better utilization of staff and better service to the Library's patrons.



With a view to educating what services the Library provides, the CEO/CHIEF, LIBRARIAN should:

1. Develop a program/information sessions to raise awareness of the on-line database to increase its utilization.
2. Develop information sessions to attract youth to the Library.
3. Increase the Library's visibility by arranging for a regular column in the Renfrew Mercury.
4. Invest in young adult books and large print books.
5. Implement a new 'library system'.
6. Continue to implement the 2010 Business Plan.