THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

Staff Survey Summary

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INTRODUCTION

The Seattle Public Library is engaged in a year-long process to develop a strategic plan that will guide us through the next five years and provide direction for the coming decade. This report summarizes one of the key inputs to the planning process – results of an open-ended survey completed by staff. Your observations, together with input from the public and outside partners, will contribute to the framework for the strategic plan.

Staff participated in the survey over a 16-day period from May 24 to June 8, 2010. A total of 348 employees of The Seattle Public Library, or 52 percent of our workforce, took the time to answer a series of questions about vision, trends and suggestions for our organization. While staff members were given the opportunity to identify their role at the Library, they were not required to do so.

It has been a privilege and a challenge for the Strategic Plan Project Management Team to review and try to summarize the wealth of thoughtful and insightful comments that we received in this survey. The method we used was to carefully read all of the responses to a particular question, and then develop categories and subcategories as a way to group comments on similar or related themes. We then identified the ideas that we saw most frequently expressed, as well as some quotes from survey respondents to represent these ideas. The report presents these major points roughly in the order of the frequency with which they were mentioned by survey participants. We tried to balance the temptation to cover all of the many good points we heard with the goal of producing a report that anyone can read and absorb in a reasonable amount of time. We encourage any staff member who is interested to peruse the actual responses received for the questions that most interest you.

Since the start of the year, a Strategic Plan Project Management Team has solicited extensive input from the public through a series of open houses held in February-March, followed by a Community Survey that drew nearly 33,000 responses in May. Focus groups have engaged service providers for children, teens, older adults, the homeless, and immigrants and refugees in brainstorming about how we can better serve the populations they work with and mutually benefit from strong partnerships. Public forums have brought in experts to discuss the impact of technology on libraries, and the user experience in the 21st century library. An advisory committee meets periodically to serve as a sounding board, bringing perspectives from academia, the business world and non-profit leaders.

The staff survey provides insights that complement what we have learned from the public and outside experts. Often staff provide more specific operational recommendations to support themes that have been raised by our users. As this report documents, we do not speak with one voice. In many ways this diversity of opinion also mirrors the array of perspectives on future directions for the Library that exists in our community. At the same time, we believe that you will find many important areas where there is broad consensus. The report does not strive to draw conclusions, but rather to describe what you told us.

Please send us your thoughts and reactions to strategicplan@spl.org. A collection of all responses gathered through the staff survey is available for view on infoNET at the Strategic Planning page.
SURVEY FINDINGS

**Part 1: The Role of the Library**

As a part of the Seattle community, the library plays many roles, including being a provider of resources, services, and programs; a place for individuals and groups to gather; a partner for many community organizations; and others.

1. **Thinking 10 years in the future, what is your vision for the role the Library will play? What contributions to the Seattle community would you most like the Library to make?**

**Categorization of Responses Received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue current services, possibly enhanced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community collaborations and connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to segments of the community</td>
<td>Youth, Non-English speakers, Job seekers, Seniors/boomers, Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal assistance</td>
<td>Literacy print &amp; computer, Education support, Reader’s advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/content</td>
<td>Electronic, Local, Academic level, Focus on unique materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, Intellectual freedom, digital divide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center of life-long learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Operational, Financial, Environmental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Key Findings**

One of the most frequent responses to this challenging question was that the library will maintain a role similar to its current one in ten years, yet the importance of that role will become more significant given the changes in our community and way of life. Although technology and service provision may change, we will continue to be a critical place for our community to gather and to learn. There were many great comments on this topic but here is one that really says it all.

- “I would like to see SPL continue to have the strong relationship that I believe it currently enjoys with the residents of Seattle. We will need to continue and provide an even greater emphasis/presence in the electronic/online community (the recent mobile app is GREAT) but without sacrificing collections/programs/services in our buildings that patrons still clearly
need/want and appreciate: storytimes, Summer reading, computer access, tax assistance, great books to borrow, the latest DVDs to check out. One of the biggest questions for SPL in the next 10 years is how do we continue doing what is often seen as a public library’s traditional role of providing access (materials, computers, information) for the “have nots” while looking forward and anticipating/meeting the needs/expectations/desires of the “haves” who may be most likely to be in position to be supporting the library politically and financially.”

Another frequent response related to building on the library’s current important role by more intentional, focused engagement with the communities we serve and by establishing partnerships and collaboration with a wide variety of community groups.

- “The library needs to be more integrated into the community – more willing to go out to where people are (malls, retirement centers, community centers) to offer services, rather than expect people to come to us. The traditional reasons people came to us are no longer as important in the community (informational programs, entertainment, information). In ten years I hope we have reached a more important role in community education and leisure activities. In ten years I envision us working as partners with the schools, not just to booktalk and host summer reading activities, but to lead students toward better research methods and how to succeed as adults by making smart educational and career choices. We can also participate in adult education by developing relationships with community colleges and perhaps host special educational programs in our libraries. The library could be a place for important civic discussions among citizens, and a place where whatever important events are occurring in the world, we have a line on them, either on screen, on audio, links from web page, etc. We also will have better online visibility on social networks, our blog, and on whatever we have been able to create ten years hence.”

- “I would like to see the library continue to make strategic, smart partnerships with community organizations. While more service is delivered online we might be freed up to spend more time outside of our buildings reaching out to the community to delight and surprise the city with that much more that we can do.”

Focusing services on specific populations was also a frequent comment in the responses. Audiences that were specifically mentioned were youth, non-English speakers, job-seekers, seniors, boomers and homeless individuals. The overarching theme was that the library can enhance the quality of life of these target groups and our community by providing services for these groups.

- “Thinking ten years into the future, I would like the library to continue to be a positive environment for the community. I would like to see community outreach programs for youth, and young adults, in order to keep the connections with them, and establish for the next generation that the library is the base of knowledge, a safe haven, and the source for all learning material.”

- “I envision the future Library providing more services to new immigrants such as: classes on living in the US, getting a job, banking info, housing, and all the basic necessities to go through life here.”

Many participants commented on the value provided by library staff to our patrons. The nature of personal assistance may vary in the years to come but it remains an important constant in library service provision.
• “The library should continue to promote literacy and support literacy in the modes that Seattle citizens want to receive it in (i.e. print, digital, audio, large type, etc). I think we are already doing a good job of this, but we need to continue to do so.”

• “In 10 years, I see SPL’s services and locations being an even more vital part of our community. One goal and value that I would like to see championed in our service plan is a dedication to promoting and fostering a culture of Books and Reading. This is a bedrock service for libraries that encompasses our work with readers of all ages: children, teens, adults, seniors. The popularity in Seattle and in other cities of our Seattle Reads program only proves that people respond to the library when we come from a place of strength and connection through promoting books and reading. We can innovate in this area in a number of ways. We can reaffirm our belief that this is a core service by providing training for ALL staff. Patrons expect some amount of help in finding good books to read from all library staff, not just librarians....”

• “Recent research has shown that the prevalence of the internet and digital media, while fostering certain skills and catering to certain needs, has been accompanied by ‘new weaknesses in higher-order cognitive processes,’ including ‘abstract vocabulary, mindfulness, reflection, inductive problem solving, critical thinking, and imagination.’ (WSJ, “Does the Internet Make You Dumber?” 6/5/2010). In the rush to embrace the “brave new digital world,” these essential skills and qualities could easily be lost. I would like The Seattle Public Library to be a place where mindfulness, reflection, inductive problem solving, critical thinking, and imagination are still fostered, cherished, empowered, and celebrated.”

It is not surprising that many participants commented on the importance of maintaining and expanding our provision of materials and content. There were many points of view of the nature of our collections and how we should provide access.

• “The library would continue to provide free materials and experiences that are relevant to Seattle residents. In addition to the roles listed above, my vision includes a library that develops and maintains collections that have a lasting value (e.g. materials about the region’s history and its diverse populations; out-of-scope educational material that carries sustained interest for Seattleites, etc.). The library would continue to get popular items, but it would be a repository of materials that are not readily available from other sources...”

• “I would like the library to continue to be a source for information in book and electronic forms and to expand its holdings to include a broader range of information, including academic level material on subjects where the popular publishers are simply not publishing. I would like the library to develop more programs that bring individuals and groups together for serious discussions like the ones that Seattle Reads programming generates.”

• “10 years into the future, I would expect the library to have a bigger role in the circulation of digital materials. I can see a scenario where less and less physical books will need to be purchased and digital downloads to registered e-reader devices will be the norm. This would seem to be a logical next step in the evolution of the library, as customer demands grow and everyone wants things faster and more efficient. No more delivery trucks full of cumbersome bins, no more waiting for items in “transit” limbo. Materials would be available over the internet for patrons with computers at home, and for patrons without pc’s at home download stations at branches would provide easy and instant access to materials...”
The role of the library as the “third place” or community gathering place was an important theme that was represented in many responses. Although we currently play that role today, it is anticipated that it will be enhanced in the future.

- “Ten years into the future, the library will play about the same role it is playing now, but with more of a focus on being a “third place” – a place that is comfortable for people to read, surf the internet, relax and read magazines, and study in peace and quiet. The library will also place more of a focus on providing community continuing education, with classes and programs to entertain and educate. Most importantly, the library will PROMOTE itself”

- “I think that SPL over the next 10 years will become Seattle’s most valued “third place”, a point where all citizens can rely on finding community connections, whether a community of readers, a community of political beings, a community of workers, a community of activists. We will be recognized as the center of information, ideas, civic activity…not the static house-o-books. We will be noticeable and desirable. The place in the center of civic life.”

- “I would like to see the library as home for people to connect physically. So many connections we have now are changing via internet searching and social networking, and I think person to person communication will be something people will demand in the future. The collection is what makes the library a place easy to come to and find a piece of information, but it’s role as a place for community meetings etc., must be ramped up. A lot of people in my age group (20’s) don’t visit the library often, if ever.”

Technology will continue to be a dominant theme in the life of the library. What technology will look like is hard to predict but it is critical that we are able to respond to whatever that may be.

- “The library will continue to provide services that help people navigate the world of information, allowing them to access relevant information in formats that are most useful/comfortable for them. Beyond that, and because of the quickly changing technological environment, the library may play a bigger role in helping people move along with this fast-paced change by: providing access to new and cost-prohibitive technologies, providing classes and personalized instruction on how to use new technology, and helping people harness the power of these technologies and online resources to work for them….”

- “I imagine that public libraries will move into a role of connecting patrons with the technology and electronic information/books that they are interested in using. Perhaps we would have different types of computer stations-word processing, scanner/photo/media manipulation, internet all-purpose (like we currently have), and stations devoted to downloading our e-materials onto portable devices. Kinko’s has a variety of different types of technology stations like this. I think that the library will be more of a full-service stop, including faxing, scanning, color printing stations, etc. Perhaps we will have I-pad type items to check-out for patron use…”

There were many eloquent comments regarding the library’s important role as our society’s last bastion of intellectual freedom as well as our role in bridging the digital divide. These roles will remain constant and even more critical in the future.

- “I would like the Library to continue to be a beacon for intellectual freedom, allowing free access to as many materials as possible in all types of formats. I want the Library to be a community gathering place where people feel safe both physically in our buildings but also
safe when they want to ask questions they may not be comfortable asking others they know such as their families, friends or teachers."

- “The library plays an interesting role in the community: trying to stay on the cutting edge by providing resources and services for people who have the latest electronic gadgets and sophisticated interests while also meeting the needs of people who have no gadgets at all and the most basic of goals (food, shelter, etc.)—plus all of the people on the wide spectrum in between. As technology advances, the gap between the two extremes will get wider and wider and the range of needs for the library to meet will increase….The library may end up being one of the last places where people can still bridge the Digital Divide."

Life-long learning and sustainability were also mentioned in many responses.

- “The thing that distinguishes the public library from every other institution is that the public library exists to support individuals in achieving their own personal goals….Our contribution is just this, supporting and facilitating what our patrons want to do by providing resources and helping them identify and locate what they need to strive, learn, grow and contribute.”

- “I would like to see the library act as a role model for ecological sustainability—a start was made on this with Ballard’s green roof. There’s a tremendous amount we can do on a daily basis to run our operations more sustainably and to showcase this for the public.”

Part 2: Your Observations

Many changes are occurring in technology and how people interact with one another and access information. Changes are also happening in the economy and the makeup of Seattle residents. As you answer the following questions, think about the most significant changes or trends you see happening in who is using the Library or how patrons are using the Library.

1. What changes do you see happening related to use of Library collections or resources?

Categorization of Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing resources</td>
<td>Move to online/digital formats, remote use, databases, computer use/access, traditional resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing customer experience/expectations</td>
<td>Remote computer download, virtual/digital use, traditional resources, in-house computer/WiFi use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for staff roles</td>
<td>Reading/resources adviser and instructor, need for marketing, input on selection, technical assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs - Immigrants</td>
<td>World language resources/speakers, ESL/citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs - Economy</td>
<td>Overall free resources, resume/job search skills/resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing environment of Library work</td>
<td>Hybrid environment, pace, complexity/sophistication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niches for Library</td>
<td>Local authors/small press/history/print on demand, specialized, digitized collections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Key Findings

Staff recognize that Library resources and how customers use them are changing and will continue to evolve. Many staff described an increasingly online and digital collection and expanded use of virtual services remotely. While staff widely acknowledge that digital content is firmly in our future, several responses urge that we sustain the excellence of the traditional resources and services we provide so well.

- “I think that looking towards the future we will be seeing a gradual transition towards patrons using more electronic materials such as e-books and less emphasis on the actual physicality of our book collections.”

- “More and more of our resources are shifting to electronic formats making it easier for folks to access our resources where they are and not where we are. In addition, online applications are making our more traditional print and media collections more easily visible, accessible and interactive.”

- “Because the public library serves such a diverse population, its collections and resources must reflect this, both in formats available and content. I see the library having to make difficult decisions about the resources it provides because of the exponentially increasing rate of change in formats and technology. Users will become more and more diverse in their comfort with certain formats and the library will need to be aware of their needs, skills and access to technology.”

- “There will always be a place for real books.”

- “BOOKS – please let us not forget our primary niche, which is providing books for people to borrow, reading suggestions, research assistance, etc.”

- “Print material will continue to be popular. I have an IPod Touch, two laptops, and love everything tech, but like so many users of the library, I still want to hold a book in my hand.”

- “People are using databases and downloadable material more these days and there is still an enormous need for physical materials. There is something special about the look and feel of a book.”

New formats and customer expectations will have implications for Library staff. Library staff will need to work together in an integrated fashion to keep abreast of changes with rapidly evolving resources and customer needs.

- “I see less of a use for large reference collections in the branches, most of those items should be reference at Central and circulate in the branches. I see more teaching patrons how to use the resources the Library offers.”

- “I think that people are gradually learning how to use the catalog and look for things they need on their own BUT I still think that there are many, many people out there that would still rather ask a librarian or other employee for help.”

- “Everything (popular) will become downloadable. We’ll need to be able to assist customers with downloading content from various sites to various devices in various formats.”

- “How we manage collections must be responsive to the way people use them. Browsing is done online. Large branch collections are inefficient.”
A number of us commented on special niches geared toward specific populations, especially immigrants and those affected by the current economy. Responses included the need for ESL, world language resources, computer time for job seekers, resume and job skill resources. Language learning resources were mentioned by some as was the need for native speakers of community languages on staff.

- “I’d like to see us enhance our world languages collection.”
- “More immigrants come to the Library to ask for books in foreign languages.”
- “I see a much larger collection of ethnic materials which is a very good thing.”
- “Increased need for world language materials. We need collections and our services to be relevant to everyone. This includes the Internet as well as the physical materials in our buildings.”
- “We do need more staff to help with the language barrier of patrons coming from other countries to help them get the resources they need and to provide more help.”
- “More people than ever interested in vocational testing materials [COMPASS, GED, nursing assistant, etc.]”
- “More people coming in looking for job resources and training, looking for longer computer time so they can apply for jobs.”

2. What changes do you see happening related to use of the Library online?

**Categorization of Responses Received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online usage</td>
<td>Plan for increased online usage, increased use of internet-enabled work stations, avoid duplicating other online services, focus on emerging technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayfinding and ease-of-use</td>
<td>Need for user education, an easier, more intuitive website and catalog, multi-platform capability, expanded non-English presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloadable content</td>
<td>Increased selection, increased e-access to programs, more digitized collections, offer e-readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added functionality</td>
<td>Increase means for social interaction, facilitate online payments, online access to librarians, 24/7 remote access to all databases, holds messages via text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good the way it is now</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility issues</td>
<td>Leaving old, poor, non-technical users behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More site-use analysis, restructure online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Key Findings

Well over half of the responses in the online usage category tell us to plan for an ever-increasing online library environment. Increased use of technology emerged as a major theme with many staff noting improvements in technology, e-access and a user base more comfortable capturing content via electronic devices at the same time these devices are becoming more affordable.

- “Increases so great that I cannot imagine 5 years ahead.”
- “It’s only going to grow. More resources, better and more sophisticated online reference works, better connections made across institutions.”
- “Library online usage will continue to rise as technology improves and becomes widespread. Demand and expectations will also be higher as the younger generations are accustomed to having things immediately. Gradually, where a user gets information becomes less important so long as they get it. Lines between SPL, KCLS, Amazon, Google, etc. are blurred. SPL will need to be proactive in establishing its niche within the community.”
- “A dramatic shift from traditional printed sources to anything that’s e-something. I think we can expect in the next 5-10 years a new service model emerging and being imposed upon the Library. We should be ready for it.”

Many staff commented on the need for a technically trained workforce, agile and able to promote the Library’s electronic collection and help patrons access and use these services. Improvements to catalog searchability, less troublesome downloadable content and multi-platform capability were mentioned as important to user convenience. Many staff noted the need for training on collection awareness and technical advances. Responses demonstrated an impressive awareness of trends and issues in technology along with an appreciation for a positive and convenient customer experience.

- “As more Library resources are available online, more people will need help accessing and using them.”
- “As the popularity of e-books and e-media grows, patrons will increasingly use our website to access those items. With more emphasis on *instruction at every opportunity*, librarians will be a huge part of introducing patrons to databases, homework help, e-books, etc. Right now, I don’t think that SPL librarians teach patrons enough about our resources often enough.”
- “Taking the Library online promotes self-sufficiency on the part of the patron (placing their own holds, renewing their materials, etc.) but it also puts more onus on staff to explain the technology to those who are unfamiliar with it, either by providing reference or by teaching computer classes.”
- “The Library of the future will more and more become an online interaction, but I believe this will lead to more need for Library staff, especially librarians, who specialize in technology and education.”

The depth and breadth of the Library’s downloadable and other e-collections will continue to expand. There will more reliance on downloadable materials and more use of online services. Several responses noted that physical copies of media items will be less in demand while demand for expanded and improved streaming and downloadable media collections will grow. The frustrations associated with downloading content in a digital rights management environment emerged again in this category.
• “I do see an increase in the use of our online resources and I think it would be great to make those collections richer and deeper. I think a lot of patrons use our collections online and use our catalog online and only come to the Library to pick up holds. We can help those patrons by providing more material digitally.”

• “I hope to see more electronic books available. Maybe better access to ILL materials electronically.”

• “I foresee making available a great deal of our catalog online, including streaming movies, listening to CDs or reading books, magazines and newspapers through our catalog.”

• “If we had a better means for downloadable books [OverDrive can be better], I see patrons moving towards this in the future. If the library can figure out a way to loan e-readers with books pre-downloaded, this could be the future for reading.”

A consistent theme throughout the staff survey centered around improved functionality and a convenient experience for patrons who use the virtual Library. Many staff singled out online fines payment, social interaction options and online access to electronic services and Library staff as important. Others advocated for expanded access to Library computers, a more convenient means of reserving time and longer sessions. A number of innovative ideas were given in this category.

• “More online tools for patrons including fine payments.”

• “Increased use of participatory sites [Library blog, submitting reviews, etc.] and increased use of applications for smart phones, etc.”

• “I would love to see more platforms for interaction built into the catalog and website that link to other popular social networking sites like Goodreads and Facebook.”

• “More users want online access to all things that are offered today. In the future, even more computers need to be available to provide access for those who may not have computer access.”

• “Verbal communication technology replacing written communication.”
3. What changes do you see happening related to use of Library buildings?

*Categorization of Responses Received*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public space</td>
<td>Used as a place for shelter, community connection and development, meeting and study room use, event and programming space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and WiFi use</td>
<td>More computer and WiFi use, less computer and WiFi use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall use</td>
<td>More overall use, less overall use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change in use of buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use mostly as a pick-up point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open hours</td>
<td>More open hours, fewer open hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for staff</td>
<td>Need for more staff, need for fewer staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Summary of Key Findings*

Almost half of us remarked on the Library’s role as a public space. Over half of the responses focused on the Library as a community connection point with our buildings used for meetings, studying, and attending events. Due to the current economy, many staff commented on the use of the Library for those who are homeless or need no-cost alternatives for “hanging out.”

- “I would hope to see the buildings become more of a hub for people to come and learn and research.”
- “There are many that use the Library as a place to study for their GED, TOEFL, SAT, Citizenship so the study rooms are very convenient and helpful.”
- “Seattle residents really use their libraries as a community space. I hear that our door count numbers are ever increasing and I’m guessing patrons would utilize us even more if we had expanded hours.”
- “Library buildings now are offering a better environment for patrons to use its resources. It is spacious enough for patrons to sit and read and also for adequate placing of Library materials. However, I do feel that a constant shifting must take place due to expanding Library collections.”
- “The use of Library buildings will be more of a gathering place for patrons, especially those who do not have a home to go to or public places to congregate. There are more people entering the Central Library buildings during cold and rainy days.”

The Library offers a vital connection through WiFi and computer access. Many staff predict that the wireless and computer access the Library provides will become more popular as more Seattle residents acquire devices like laptops and mobile devices, creating more demand for seating. At the same time,
tables and reading spaces need to accommodate this trend with more opportunities to “plug in.” A number of staff remarked on implications of this trend for Library furnishings and electrical connections.

- “The use of public internet stations remains as high as ever even as more and more people use our WiFi service.”
- “The Library is used very much for its free wireless. This means branches need to be properly furnished and equipped for that use. All tables need outlets for every seat. Also Library computer usage is very high so convenient reservations systems are very important.”
- “We will see more computers than shelves.”
- “People are coming in for space to use the computer and to work on their stuff. We also see an increase in people using the Library for WiFi, their laptops plugged in at a variety of locations. On some days, we have more people at tables with laptops than we do with books.”

Library buildings will continue to be a forum for information and ideas, active and busy, free to everyone and where everyone is welcome. A number of staff commented that in spite of the increasing use of online materials and services, our buildings will continue to be a vital place in the community, noting that even with more remote access to the virtual library, our buildings are still busy, free to everyone and all are welcome.

- “Despite the increase in use of online materials and services, Library buildings continue to be a vital place in the community where many people come for information to improve their lives, knowledge and self education, recommendations for reading for pleasure, cultural programs, a social gathering place and access to computers.”
- “I know that people use online resources more but I don’t see them using physical buildings less. And people do more in physical buildings than pick up holds. People browse the shelves, use the Internet, access the catalog and databases, get help from staff, hang out, read, and do research – all in the building. People are using libraries in more ways, both in person and online, but I don’t see any particular use decreasing.”
- “Our buildings still need to be warm and welcoming to our patrons and provide community space for different groups as well as quiet spaces for people who want them.”
- “I think the Library will continue to remain the “last free university” for a truly diverse field of users. It can, and should, be a place that welcomes all users, and provides materials and access to all forms of information and for pleasure reading.”

Some staff envision an evolving model for branch services. The evolution of broadband access across the city will change the growing trend of WiFi access in our buildings. Staff predict that the ways we house, display and market our collections will change while branches become increasingly a pick-up location with collections limited to topical displays, focused less on book collections and more on media and technology.

- “If online use picks up greatly, I think we’re likely to see fewer patrons spending time in the Library – just coming in to pick up their holds.”

August 4, 2010
• “The ‘virtual branch’ is more popular and important than ever. A lot of people search and place holds online then use the self-check to borrow items without ever speaking to an SPL staff person.”

• “I see the use of the buildings changing depending on community need: gathering places with smaller collections, etc.”

4. What changes do you see happening related to participation in Library programming?

Categorization of Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Greater attendance, children’s program attendance, no change, decline, low teen attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of delivery</td>
<td>Multi-media, interactivity, flexibility, more programs, coordination, consistency, fewer programs, fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific program content</td>
<td>Instructional, computer classes, do-it-yourself, story times, genre authors, local focus, civic engagement, “green,” decrease cultural programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>More for children, more focused adult programs, community interest, programs for all ages, for job seekers, for information and referral, for seniors, target those most in need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library budget and hours</td>
<td>Budget uncertainties may affect level of programming, changes in open hours affect distribution of programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion and marketing</td>
<td>Need to improve marketing of programs, targeted promotions, digital marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing and partnership</td>
<td>Expand partnerships, coordinate with other agencies, use volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal of programming</td>
<td>Need to define purpose of programming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Key Findings

While a few respondents felt that the Library dedicates too much of our resources to programming, many more believe that we should direct more resources for programs, that our programs are well-attended, particularly for youth, and that programs will remain popular. There is a strong perception that free programs will continue to draw larger and larger audiences. Several staff cited the current economy as a driver of program attendance, noting that patrons appreciate free opportunities for cultural and educational experiences. There was concern expressed about budget cuts and their potential effect on future programs.

• “People always value the social interaction that programs offer. The success of our programming is driven by the number and types of programs we offer and how well they are promoted (Summer Reading is an excellent example). If we continue to offer, improve or expand our current programming and market it well, people will continue to participate.”
“Need for FREE programming will remain a constant. If the economic situation is not stable, that need will soar.”

“This is one of the strengths of the Library and has been gaining momentum for some time now. People are excited about the offerings of the Library and people outside of the Library often tell me so.”

There seems to be a greater interest in programming, no matter what it is. Children’s programming is especially popular.”

Some responses focused on audience-level programming with strong suggestions for increased children’s programming and improvements to teen programs. Others focused on program content singling out author readings, instructional classes, computer classes, and outreach as areas for expansion. Responses included ESL and Talk Time, homework help, and support for job seekers as important Library services that should be emphasized. A number of responses suggested language learning programs. Partnering with local agencies and clubs was also suggested.

“Book lovers still love to attend book club discussions and author readings. The children’s story times never fail to attract children and families. Classes that help enhance people’s basic living skills such as computer classes and ESL classes are essential to seniors and immigrants.”

“We do a good job of providing programs for children and families but not enough for teens and younger adults (20-35). I’d love to see more programming that serves the needs of the growing do-it-yourself movement here, a natural tie-in with our collections and an easy way to partner with great organizations like Seattle Tilth, the Center for Wooden Boats, Cascade Bicycle Club and so on.”

“I think Library programming will continue to be geared to helping the local community improve their job seeking and computer skills. Also the Library should expand its role in providing free arts programming to the community and being a haven for art lovers of all kinds.”

How we market, promote and deliver our programs in a technologically changing environment are themes that emerged frequently. While some staff observed that we do a good job promoting our programs, a substantial number of responses indicate that staff feel we could do a better job with promotion, particularly targeted promotions toward specific audiences, notably teens. Innovative ideas for delivery emerged including multi-media, interactive, less presentation style programs, live streaming and increased pod-casting.

“I’d like to see programming become more interactive and less presentation style. Keep the author appearances but have an atmosphere where patrons can interact and discuss the materials they are enjoying. This goes back to letting people make connections with other people in person as we move to a more digital library experience.”

“More online programming.”

“I hope there will be a greater emphasis on outreach. In times like this the Library should be doing everything it can to increase its profile.”

“People are busy. You have to target programming to get them to come.”
5. Are there specific populations you feel need more attention or aren’t being adequately served?

**Categorization of Responses Received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants, refugees, world languages</td>
<td>Awareness of Library services, expanded ESL programming, world language collections, translation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children, youth, teens</td>
<td>More for teens, children and tweens, partnerships with schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving the whole community</td>
<td>We’re doing a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older adults and retirees</td>
<td>More in general for older adults, build technology skills, increase programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults 20s to 30s</td>
<td>More focus on this group, improve awareness of Library services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-tech savvy groups</td>
<td>Build technology skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Connect low-income and homeless to services, improve services for homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td>Focus on African Americans, Native Americans, Gays and Lesbians, minorities in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>Do more for disabled people and those with mental illnesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Key Findings**

About a fourth of all responses to this question centered on services for immigrants and refugees. Making these communities more aware of what we offer, adding to ESL programs and world language collections, stepped-up translation services and more staff who speak languages other than English were all suggested. Responses make it clear that as a staff, we care deeply for this constituency.

- “Although SPL makes many efforts to provide materials in foreign languages, and the City’s Language Line is a great help, I think there are many immigrants who could benefit from our resources but we aren’t reaching them.”
- “People whose first language is not English and those who have literacy issues are most likely to be intimidated by the Library. Therefore, the Library will need to reach out to them.”
- “I think ESL learners also need more programs such as Talk Time at more locations.”
- “If we could buy more foreign-language materials for our various ethnic populations, that would be great. Also, to expand our magnet collections to more branches would be a benefit to all.”
- “I noticed many people from different backgrounds use the Library, many of them ESL or who speak little English. Some of them really need staff who speak the same language as they do to help them.”
• “I think the Library can do a better job of serving immigrant and refugee populations. The resources for this population – programming, collections – tend to be clustered at certain magnet branches. The issue is that the population does not just live near those magnet libraries and many of these individuals and families rely completely on public transportation.”

MORE. That’s what we said about services for children, teens and tweens. Staff commented on the importance of establishing positive, long-lasting relationships with young patrons at an early age, building good collections for them, increasing programs, carving out attractive spaces for them and support the staff that works with them.

• “We need to continue to provide storytimes and activities for younger humans, as they will become future Library supporters. And maybe better human beings.”

• “While overall the Library is doing a great job, there is always room for improvement. I feel that more needs to be done to encourage teens to become avid readers as adults as well as providing them with a safe place to go.”

• “Tweens: Kids ages 7-11 are increasingly more sophisticated in their tastes, perspectives and abilities. Puppet shows aren’t going to hold them. How do we serve this group in a developmentally appropriate way that also acknowledges this new maturity?”

• “In our neighborhood we could address more early childhood programming (we are a 5 day branch with lots of kids).”

• “Teens still don’t have the space they really need in many branches….I think we should have a clearly delineated TEEN SPACE in every branch.”

There were many responses that talked about our role in serving the whole community with most expressing that while there’s always room for improvement we’re doing a good job. But many specific groups were mentioned as more vulnerable, more in need, or not served as well as they should be, including older adults and retirees, those in the 20s-30s age range, the homeless, patrons with disabilities and patrons with low technical skills. Again, responses demonstrate a great deal of sensitivity to providing for those who need our services the most.

• “I’ve worked at the majority of the branches and am very proud of the wide array of people that feel comfortable coming in the Library.”

• “I think the Library strives to serve the whole population of Seattle residents which is a difficult task and we do serve overall the population well.”

• “I do think that seniors are not getting the appropriate level of assistance in navigating the world of technology, particularly when many of the resources they have relied on in print form are sometimes now only available online.”

• “I feel like the homeless are grossly underserved. They make up a huge percentage of our patronage (not to mention that they stay in the building all day long) and I don’t feel like we offer easy access to enough resources.”

• “People with disabilities also need more attention, since there are only a handful of places in the system equipped for people with disabilities to get access to resources.”

• “18-35 year olds is a demographic that could really be paid more attention to through programming, collections that reflect their interests, and promotion/marketing.”
Part 3: Your Suggestions

What adaptations should the Library make in response to shifts in patron interests and the evolving role of libraries in the next 5-10 years? Please consider Library resources, services, and programs when you answer. Questions 1-2 ask about existing resources, services, and programs. Question 3 asks for your ideas about new offerings.

1. How could the Library change or improve current offerings to better serve patrons?

Categorization of Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming and Services</td>
<td>Classes and instruction, programming management, speakers of languages other than English, children and families, reading programs and services for readers, teens, other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>Digital, print, non-English, collection management (weeding, condition maintenance), media, locally tailored, selection, more in general, number of copies, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Payments, more approachable service, loan periods and checkout limits, improved in-person services, fines and fees, organization of physical spaces, self-check, improve policies, improved self-service, increased digital, holds and delivery, magazines in the catalog, purchase suggestions, improved phone service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Technology</td>
<td>More or better hardware, online catalog or ILS enhancements, software for public use computers, improve pay for print, improve downloadable services, more tech support for public computers, other technology improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Outreach to immigrants/refugees, specific marketing suggestions, outreach in general, outreach to children/schools, other community outreach, increased advertising, marketing online resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Staff training, more staffing on front line, staffing, workplace environment and morale, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Facilities</td>
<td>Remodeling, security, materials security, cleanliness, parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Hours</td>
<td>Expansion, consistency, later hours, Friday/weekend, other hours, earlier hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Enhancements</td>
<td>General need for improvement, other specific suggestions, more interactive and social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Key Findings

Suggestions for improvements to programming drew the most attention, with particular interest in computer classes and instruction in using the Library’s electronic resources. Some staff addressed program management issues, with suggestions for tailoring programming to particular neighborhoods/target audiences. Suggestions for improving programming for immigrants ranged from providing more ESL classes to doing a better job of training staff to work with diverse communities. Ideas about programming for readers included comments on widening the genres for Seattle Reads and providing more support for book discussion groups.

- “Classes to serve those needing basic computer skills should be increased in number, so that populations who really need them will know they are available and will seem user-friendly, rather than intimidating.”
- “Instead of (or in addition to) targeting our audiences based on age, have target audiences based on local interests. This will allow for greater multi-generational interactions and more extensive community partnerships.”
- “More computer classes…Let’s engage Seattleites with more specific classes – how to start a blog, how to create a podcast, and incorporate why to value your privacy online.”
- “Make story times even more convenient for parents, caretakers, and preschools. Dialogue more with the community about them. There could be healthy turnouts at every branch if the community better knew when to come and where.”

Survey participants had many collection recommendations, but almost a third of the responses were about digital collections. In addition to wanting more digital titles, there was also a desire for these to be easier to use. Print, non-English collections and collection management activities also each drew several suggestions.

- “Increase digital resources to offer a broader/deeper choice and improve access to them.”
- “We should have lots more un-catalogued paperbacks (fiction and nonfiction) like KCLS does…ideally in an attractive shelf area.”

Another area that drew many suggestions was customer service, with many calls for implementing online credit/debit card payments. Besides improvements to self-service options, many staff comments related to improving in-person service, with the need for friendly, more approachable service mentioned frequently, along with suggestions for arranging collections and space to improve the user experience. There were also many (and diverse) comments about loan periods, holds limits, and fines and fees.

- “A self-checkout system that is a lot more user-friendly – more graphical…”
- “Customer service needs huge improvements – put staff on the floor where we can help customers.”
- “List branch periodical holdings in the catalog; also, allow catalog search to access whether a magazine is “active” or not.”
- “Limit number of new items that patrons can put on hold so the new materials can be distributed more evenly.”
"We could raise the holds limit back up to 100 at a time…With many popular titles having 1000+ holds, a single hold can occupy space on one’s holds list for a very long time.

Almost half of the suggested improvements to public technology pertained to software, particularly the Library’s catalog/ILS. Pay for print software and software on the public use computers were also mentioned as needing improvement. Many staff see a need for more public computers. There were also suggestions for improvements to the website.

- “Our online catalog/discovery layers, etc. need to be better. They are improving, but a lot of the modern catalog tools aren’t exploiting the power that is in catalog records. We need to make sophisticated retrieval easy and seamless for the user.”
- “Printing material from a computer is very difficult and clumsy for our patrons. We need to install a system that enables people to print fast/easy without using a million steps.”
- “The website is confusing and not easy to find what you’re looking for…A redesign is essential to create improved and easier access.”
- “The design of a website sends a message to visitors. Our current design is totally inward-looking. This wastes an opportunity for outreach and link exchanges with local organizations.”

Outreach, marketing and partnering suggestions indicated a desire for a focused plan involving staff throughout the system.

- “I would like to see a system-wide description of what current outreach we are doing, and whom these efforts attempt to service, and then be able to target and improve these services.”
- “Provide the opportunity for librarians to do more out-of-building outreach activities.”
- “Honestly, I feel we most need to improve our marketing. I’ve had people tell me they wish the library would [do something we’re already doing] and they’re delighted when they find out they can already get the thing they were wishing we’d provide.”

Restoration of branch hours, increased staffing, and better staff training were all mentioned by a sizable group of respondents. Workplace morale was also discussed by some staff.

- “The Library can best serve patrons by making sure that library staff is valued, that our opinions have weight, lower levels of stress from chronic understaffing, emphasize the humanness of the library family rather than working on a corporate model in which individuals and stability in service are not appreciated.”

There were comments across categories about improvements to service for non-English speaking patrons – more classes, more collections and more outreach activities.

There were several comments about offering different things at different places. Opinions vary about how to approach this.

- “Central should evolve to being the hub of reference work. Branch locations should evolve to being community spaces, computer centers, holds pickup, and their collection should focus on popular items…”
- “Stop trying to be all things to all people at all locations. Acknowledge the need for specialist service and collections. Beef up Special Collections, locate some of these collections in neighborhoods where they would make a connection with the local community.”
The Seattle Public Library Strategic Plan
Staff Survey Summary

• “…Does it make sense to try to have a little bit of everything in small branches like MGM, SPA or WAL? …Maybe doing a few things really well (e.g. lots of space for holds pickup, lots of space for DVDs, lots of space for displays, etc.) would make more sense…”

Several survey participants called for enhanced security, particularly in the branches.

• “Well staffed libraries with plenty of security, IT support and janitorial services to keep the building safe. With staff stretched so thin, it is hard to offer exemplary customer service to patrons and staff.”

2. What new offering(s) should the Library explore?

Categorization of Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More programming</td>
<td>Focus on instructional, literary/cultural/programs that target specific groups, collaboration/partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of virtual and streaming services</td>
<td>Introduce new formats or services, add more online resources/databases, use for Library events and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on convenience/user experience</td>
<td>Convenient services, user experience, ease of access to technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand range of collection</td>
<td>Add new formats or service models, deeper collections, focus on local materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on specific population</td>
<td>Various, seniors, immigrants and refugees, partnerships with local providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset management</td>
<td>Align staff and facilities strategically, spend strategically/generate revenue, conserve resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and marketing</td>
<td>Promotional partnerships with individuals and other agencies, increased communication of Library services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading stations and rentable devices</td>
<td>Loan or rent devices, download stations at more locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on what we already do</td>
<td>Best to do fewer things well, existing mix is good, restore to previous level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Key Findings

Many staff would like the Library to expand programming, particularly instructional offerings that engage users with Library materials. A number of respondents suggested providing classes that go beyond entry-level computer skills, to teach patrons how to research special subject areas or produce original materials. Foreign language classes and career guidance workshops were also suggested. Another theme was providing lively and creative cultural programming with ties to Library materials.
• “More classes for the public that demonstrate how to use our collections and databases in ways that fill patron needs. For example, how could local artists use the collection to create art? How could filmmakers use what we have to make films? How could business people use our collection to improve their marketing?”

• “I would love to see more programming with a specific scope towards helping patrons be creators of digital and online content.”

• “Chef-pairing, author-pairing, artist-pairing, etc. Have a themed book/media display of items chosen from the collection by local artists and business people, and have an event attached to it. Draw the community in by giving it a chance to show off.”

• “More Guerilla art, music, performances and even things like scavenger hunts.”

Survey participants have suggestions for making electronic materials more accessible. Many staff suggested providing places and equipment for people to listen to CDs, DVDs and audio books, as well as download electronic media and digitally check-out DVDs and CDs.

• “It’s always bothered me that the library doesn’t provide space or equipment to listen to CDs, watch movies, etc… I have worked with numerous older, low-income patrons who were simply unable to access many audio books because they can’t afford to buy a CD player.”

• “Downloading stations in each library so that patrons do not need a computer at home to download materials.”

Many staff hope to see expansion of the digital collection and enhancements to the virtual library. There is enthusiasm for downloadable and streaming music and video, and additional reference databases.

• “Better options for downloadable music and video. It would be fantastic if our Library could be one of the leaders in the arena and could work with vendors to make a product that was easy to use and had great content for our patrons.”


• “Other libraries across the country have videogame collections.”

Staff suggest new ways for patrons to interact with content and each other and more interactive opportunities on the website.

• “When budget improves, we should explore offering technology stations that let users do creative things – create multimedia content.”

• “Develop online book discussion groups. Several different types of formats could be explored, including video/chat format, a blog/discussion format, or maybe something using Twitter…”

• “Offering a greater range of online “branch” offerings. Meeting space, collaboration space.”

Suggestions also emphasized patron convenience and user experience. Many survey participants mentioned credit/debit card fine payment in branches and online. Improvements to print, copy and scan options were encouraged. There were proposals to allow patrons to make appointments for various kinds of staff assistance. Some staff want to see cafés in the branches.

• “Payment of library fines by credit card at desk and online (!!!!)”
• “I think the Library should really explore “book a librarian” to provide computer instruction for 30 to 60 minutes.”
• “It would be great if the branches could have cafes inside (as Central does) where patrons could purchase drinks to enjoy while they read or use their laptops.”

Staff had ideas for providing programming or partnering to provide services to target groups. Teens, young adults, aging adults, and the homeless were among the most frequently mentioned users with special needs and interests.

• “Book talks to senior centers or programs at senior centers.”
• “…A resource center or even just a table with resources for the homeless would be great.”

3. What current offering(s) could the Library potentially reduce?

Categorization of Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Topics</th>
<th>Sub-Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media reduction</td>
<td>DVDs, CDs, DVDs and CDs, video cassettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of service</td>
<td>Paper products, user services, public computers, facility care, virtual services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program reduction</td>
<td>All, Adult, Seattle Reads, Storytime, Teen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book reduction</td>
<td>All, popular, reference, paperback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine/database reduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of staff position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep current offerings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Service point reduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours reduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee generation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Key Findings

The most popular suggestion for offerings to reduce is purchase of media. Many staff argue that DVDs and CDs can be obtained cheaply from private sources, that the policy of purchasing copies of DVDs based on number of holds leads to excessive investment in items that are only popular for a short while, and that frequent theft is a problem.

• “Reduction in feature films on DVD. Seems to be a large expense, short life-span, and there are reasonably priced alternative such as renting from the local video store. This is obviously a popular service based on the number of holds on new titles, but may be a small percentage of overall library card holders using the service.”
• “Because so many DVDs get stolen or otherwise disappear, it seems that if we can find a better way to manage our DVD collection, we will need to order fewer copies while still having a great DVD collection to be enjoyed by many patrons.”

• “CDs are a few years from being as relevant as vinyl. We are spending quite a bit on CDs when we should be focusing much more on MP3s.”

Staff have a variety of suggestions for reducing services that have operational costs, from printing fewer copies of promotional materials to reducing checkout times/limits. A case in point was printing of paper copies of the Community Survey, rather than having staff print them as needed from infoNET. A few respondents also mentioned eliminating proctored exams or tax help.

• “SPL generates a ton of promotional print material, the majority of which our location often ends up recycling. Make a more concerted effort to print efficient quantities for each location by seeking staff input.”

• “…Perhaps another cut of materials out at one time or cut back on holds/DVD time out should be explored. Forget the power users for the time being. We need to serve more with less…”

A number of respondents favor reductions to programming, eliminating less popular programming or focusing on programming related to Library content or services.

• “We can reduce some programs that just don’t attract that many participants.”

• “Summer Reading Program for adults and teens. No prizes means no fun.”

• “Book groups.” “Seattle Reads.”

• “Teen gaming programs. I know the idea is to bring teens into the library, but I don’t see the connection to the Library’s materials, services or mission.”

• “Although storytimes are always well-attended, I think maybe the requirement that 7-day branches offer 4 a week could be re-evaluated as this impacts staffing for outreach and programs to other populations.”

• “…Please let service points, work groups, and units decide much of what to cut and what to keep themselves in terms of programming as they are often the most nimble, responsive, and engaged with the patrons.”

Suggestions for reducing spending on books/periodicals focus on the number of duplicate copies we purchase, as well as branch reference material, and paperbacks. Some staff propose reducing paper subscriptions to magazines/newspapers, while others suggest reducing database subscriptions.

• “The amount of copies of titles one buys for each library. At certain libraries there are more than enough copies that are needed after a title has run its course of popularity.”

• “Gradually offer a more selective range of reference materials at the branches – specific to the branches – as more things are going online, these are gradually getting less and less use.”

• “Uncataloged paperbacks – we could potentially rely more on donations (and spread the wealth from one branch to another that doesn’t receive as many high quality donations).”

• “Magazine subscriptions. I know these are popular, but perhaps we could reduce the number if we did a better job at distribution of titles across the system.”
Some staff have ideas for reductions to staffing/service points. While the suggestions vary, a number of staff would like to reduce administrative positions or salaries, and there is also a group of respondents who propose reducing librarian desk reference services.

- “Really take a look at usage patterns for paid databases and reduce or change the offerings.”
- “The Library could reduce the number of people in management.”
- “The pay of HR and everyone that is higher up than the librarian.”
- “I think the Library could explore the idea of not having librarians staff public service desks and instead have reference questions above a certain level routed to a central answering center. Reference staff would be freed up to promote the library through outreach and programming.”
- “Mobile services could be reduced or offered in a different way out of other locations, other than having a large staff and facility devoted to its operation.”

A few respondents suggest further reductions to open hours. Reducing weekend hours received particular mention.

There are suggestions to raise revenue by charging for expired holds, eliminate free use of meeting rooms, or limit use of computers for people who have fines above a certain level.

Some people see a need for further evaluation to determine where cuts can be made.

- “Hard to do without having a clear definition of core services and audiences, which is what the strategic plan is supposed to develop. Determining where in the “wane” to terminate a legacy service or format is difficult, because the impact on more vulnerable audiences could be greater as they cling longer to legacy services/materials for financial or ease-of-use factors….Developing clear guidelines to help make these decisions may aid in redirecting budget resources from waning services to rising services…”
- “I think Selection Services and Public Services Librarians need to be in better communication so that the materials provided meet the needs of the public in quality and quantity – less waste in weeding out books that see little use.”
- “I think the most important thing that the Library can do at this time is to make sure what we are currently offering is what the public really wants.”

A number of respondents either skipped this question or indicate that they believe there is nothing that can be reduced.

**CONCLUSION**

Thank you to everyone who responded to these challenging questions. We are fortunate to work with so many thoughtful people who care so deeply about The Seattle Public Library. The insights and ideas that staff provided in this survey provide a crucial complement to the public input that we are receiving through the Community Survey, conversations, Advisory Committee, focus groups and public forums. The input provided in this Staff Survey will help make it possible to craft a strong strategic plan to guide our work in this second decade of the 21st century.