

# Boston Public Library

## Draft Outcomes for BPL Compass Strategic Plan



**I. User-Centered Institution.** The BPL is a user-centered institution with services that anticipate and respond to neighborhood interests and the changing demographics of the City and Commonwealth.

### Outcomes

- A. Eliminate barriers to use with a customer service focused philosophy that enables easy access to library services.
  1. Evaluate and improve programs and services offered to the public
    - a. *Migrate to new Integrated Library System*
      - *Direct migration of catalog service to new Integrated Library System*
    - b. *Develop a more efficient method of delivering materials between locations*
    - c. *Plan for the circulation of selected reference and research materials, evaluate use of these materials, expand program*
    - d. *Develop programs and services for nontraditional communities (e.g. elderly, displaced, New Bostonians, children at risk)*
    - e. *Review hours and structure of special collections and develop a model of service that best addresses the needs of the researcher and the casual visitor.*
    - f. *Enable reference and research appointments with subject specialists in person, online, and by phone*
    - g. *Institute laptop lending and training program through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration grant to provide users with appropriate technology tools and competencies and develop plan to sustain program*
    - h. *Evaluate use of public computers to determine appropriate length of use model*
  2. Improve navigation and use of physical locations for able-bodied users and those with physical, vision, or auditory challenges
    - a. *Develop and implement wayfinding system in Central Library*
    - b. *Begin incorporating universal design principles to provide accessible locations, technology, and service delivery*
  3. Evaluate hours, staffing levels, and capabilities across the system in order to provide optimal, sustainable public service
    - a. *Review hours and determine optimal hours of operation*
    - b. *Determine adequate staffing levels in departments and move toward developing a structure that meets these levels*
    - c. *Institute customer service training campaign for staff, including training on working with diverse communities*
- B. Collect and value input from library users; strive for continuous improvement.
  1. Develop plan to obtain input from public and staff



- a. Provide suggestion boxes and institute mechanism for responding*
    - b. Explore public comment and response system*
    - c. Administer regular public surveys online and on paper*
    - d. Develop evaluative tools for programming*
    - e. Create template for periodic public roundtables/community coffee hours*
    - f. Continue web usability testing*
  - 2. Create meaningful and dynamic advisory groups
  - 3. Use data about library use to analyze use patterns and develop better service
    - a. Develop goal-based web analytics statistical campaigns*
  - 4. Explore a user-focused acquisition system for some library collections
- C. Enhance commitment to serving diverse users.
- 1. Conduct a demographic study to determine scope of potential audiences
    - a. Develop tools to regularly evaluate who are New Bostonian customers are and what services they want/need*
  - 2. Plan and initiate services in other languages – online and in print
    - a. Targeted, in-house language classes for staff*
    - b. Provide public training in different languages*
    - c. Investigate non-English interfaces for web services*
  - 3. Develop staff that are reflective of communities of users
  - 4. Create partnerships to complement the library's programs, services, and skills



**II. Community Gathering.** The BPL exists to serve and sustain communities that foster discovery, reading, thinking, conversing, teaching, and learning, in accessible, sustainable, and welcoming facilities throughout the City, as well as with an engaging online presence.

### Outcomes

- A. Provide library spaces that are comfortable, clean, inviting, and safe.
  - 1. Develop a long-term Capital plan for existing and potential locations, including physical barriers to accessibility
    - a. Participate in city-side Maximo (project management software) upgrade to increase response times to reported problems*
  - 2. Develop a plan to update or renovate furnishings, as needed
  - 3. Review security plan and budget to foster a safe workplace
  - 4. Evaluate existing locations, including outdoor spaces, in order to maximize usage
  - 5. Look for opportunities to create “innovation lab” space in existing buildings for group work, conversation, and conference
  - 6. Establish and enforce community behavior guidelines for online and offline spaces
    - a. Encourage staff to model clean, inviting locations with their own work space*
    - b. Ensure reading rooms are clean and uncluttered*
    - c. Educate staff in methods of engaging with users in non-library online conversation spaces*
  
- B. Reimagine and redesign the BPL website to create a single location for connecting users with resources and with each other.
  - 1. Develop a plan to create and foster online communities through its catalog and social media
    - a. Conduct usability studies in preparation for website redesign*
    - b. Review and implement recognized accessibility guidelines for the web*
    - c. Design (or redesign) web services to incorporate more technology that permits content delivery without page refreshing*
    - d. Improve wayfinding and directional aids via web services*
    - e. Create online book clubs*
    - f. Use digital assets and metadata from holdings throughout web services*
  - 2. Work with community to develop avenues for user-created content in catalog, collections, and other online services
  - 3. Develop and implement a training program that is deliverable online, i.e., e-training
    - a. Use the latest tools and internet resources such as webcasts and videos as well as skills guides for learning online*
  - 5. Create plan for development of mobile applications
  
- C. Link community members to library programs and services within the BPL system and beyond.
  - 1. Create outreach plans for neighborhoods



2. Deliver outreach programs to communities and different community organizations; e.g. churches, neighborhood groups — out in the community
3. Position library as a community information node linking library users to other resources in their communities.
  - a. Staff actively participate in community meetings in their neighborhoods*
  - b. Commit to providing a library presence at civic events such as street festivals, neighborhood gatherings, parades*
  - c. Promote library space as location for community organizations to gather, share, and provide services*



**III. ~~BPL~~ Special (or Unique) Collections.** The BPL is committed to the ongoing development and preservation of its distinctive special collections, which provide citizens from all walks of life with access to their common cultural heritage.

### Outcomes

- A. Develop collections of distinction that focus on collection strengths and geographic specialties.
  1. Prioritize the preservation of the City's local history; identify, exhibit, and promote appropriate collections
    - a. Organize a regular public program highlighting different collections of distinction*
    - b. Create a "featured treasure" section on webpage and eNews*
    - c. Create digital displays featuring special collections at the branches*
    - d. Collaborate with local history organizations*
    - e. Leverage specialized staff knowledge and insight*
  2. Develop local collections with more focus on cultural heritage, keeping the researcher and non-researcher in mind.
  3. Create clear, structured evaluation process for acquisitions and gifts to special collections with input from multiple departments
  4. Complete work on Collections of Distinction and focus financial and staff resources on collection strengths and gaps in existing collections
    - a. Disseminate information on Collections of Distinction*
    - b. Review certain collections beyond scope of Collections of Distinction for potential change in disposition*
  5. Prioritize archiving, storing, and describing current collections over acquiring new ones
  
- B. Special collections will be discoverable by users in buildings and online.
  1. Create 3-year plan to make items and collections discoverable in online catalog including retrospective conversion and in-house cataloging
    - a. Focus cataloging efforts on Collections of Distinction*
    - b. Short term prioritization of staff time to collection discovery work, including limiting reading room hours and requiring set pull-times for special collections material*
    - c. Build a web portal for deeper discovery of individual items in special collections beyond collection-level access*
    - d. Examine current staffing in Special Collections and develop a plan to increase cataloging and preservation capacity*
    - e. Begin to create collection-level records in online catalog to ease discovery by users*
      - *Eliminate paper finding aids by scanning into digital format and linking to collection level records in catalog*
  2. Create and maintain an online space for users to contribute their specialized knowledge to enhance services
  3. Develop and maintain statewide digital repository and web portal in conjunction with Digital Commonwealth



4. Create and support public map center space that provides service point for BPL's map collections.
  5. Consolidate off-site storage space to City of Boston Archives Center with public access
- C. Explore the development of an electronic preservation plan.
1. Base preservation plan on Collections of Distinction
  2. Continue collaboration with the Associates of the Boston Public Library to conserve and restore books, manuscripts, works of art, and historic documents



**IV. Center of Knowledge.** The BPL is a center of knowledge that serves researchers, lifelong learners, and the intellectually curious through its incomparable collections, digital resources, and access to other scholarly networks.

### **Outcomes**

- A. Develop community-responsive and neighborhood-reflective circulating collections.
  - 1. Assess current circulating collections and develop plan for maximizing the use of existing collections through weeding and collection development.
    - a. Begin to inventory circulating materials*
    - b. Provide holdings information for serials at the Central Library*
    - c. Purchase based on demand; eliminate out-of-date formats*
  - 2. Leverage information from demographic study on diverse users, ongoing surveys, and industry best practices
  - 3. Continue development of plan to float collections and centralize the selection process
  - 4. Purchase and use collection assessment tool to discover areas of neighborhood interest
  - 5. Increase access to eBooks and other digital content
  
- B. Develop and support a public training program that meets the needs of a wide range of communities.
  - 1. Develop tools to determine community training needs
  - 2. Provide and enhance public training program to include technical, linguistic, numeracy, health, civic, and financial literacy
  - 3. Develop creative ways to engage and support community skills sharing with public trainers, i.e. genealogy experts.
  
- C. Support the research, scholastic, and literacy needs of the City and Commonwealth.
  - 1. Expand adult literacy volunteer and mentor program
  - 2. Highlight and leverage the knowledge and expertise of staff.
  - 3. Establish the library as the go-to place for basic computer skills learning
  - 4. Work with map center and explore expansion of K-12 educational programming
  - 5. Increase collaboration with Boston Public Schools, independent schools, higher learning institutions, corporations, and private organizations
    - a. Encourage relationships among individual departments and branches with other institutions*
    - b. Share information about programs and services at the systemwide and neighborhood level*



**V. Children and Teens.** The BPL fosters the love of reading and skills in critical and creative thinking among children and teens – from early literacy through mature readership – by offering a slate of services that provide academic support and intellectual growth.

### **Outcomes**

- A. Focus on providing early learning experiences.
  - 1. Enhance early literacy programs, i.e. reading readiness, including age-appropriate, multilingual collections
    - a. Evaluate current literacy initiatives to correspond with current research and community needs*
  - 2. Collaborate with area organizations on early learning experiences, i.e. Boston Redevelopment Authority and its READ BOSTON storymobile, Countdown to Kindergarten, Boston Public Schools, and more
    - a. Set goal that all Boston Public School students have library cards by the time they start kindergarten*
  - 3. Explore expanded outreach to special institutions that serve children, such as children’s hospitals, family centers, and more
  
- B. Provide scholastic support during out-of-school time.
  - 1. Enhance and re-imagine HAP, the library’s Homework Assistance Program, to provide learning and critical thinking support to young people
    - a. Better utilize presence of Boston Teachers Union tutors in BPL locations*
    - b. Increase promotion of Tutor.com or other online homework assistance*
  - 2. Develop collections in support of academic excellence
  
- C. Invest in and support systemwide youth services.
  - 1. Hire and support Youth Services Coordinator
    - a. Streamline process for school visits to library locations and librarian visits to schools*
  - 2. Examine use of teen and children’s services across the system and determine appropriate staffing
  - 3. Provide positive and energetic programs for young people.
  - 4. Explore the possibility of volunteer opportunities or internship programs to get youth interested in and involved with the library earlier
  - 5. Provide training to public service staff on current understanding of youth development to facilitate age-appropriate services
  - 6. Adopt Massachusetts Library Association’s standards for services to youth and teens
  - 7. Update and enhance technology provided for use by youth and teens



**VI. Access and Innovation.** The BPL provides access to and training in innovative technology, electronic resources, and digital information through its own holdings and its strategic position within the wider world of knowledge.

### Outcomes

- A. Lead in digitization practices.
  - 1. Provide leadership in the statewide digital library program in collaboration with Digital Commonwealth
    - a. Develop portal for digitized assets*
    - b. Develop statewide digital repository*
  - 2. Increase participation in the Open Library and digital lending with the Internet Archive
  - 3. Increase participation in national digital initiatives
  - 4. Explore methods of enhancing access to digital collections through statewide repository
  
- B. Provide state-of the art public computing spaces.
  - 1. Deliver a reliable and dynamic IT infrastructure supporting staff and user services
    - a. Create public technology replacement plan and integrate into operating budget*
    - b. Upgrade online public access catalogs*
    - c. Develop staff competencies with new and emerging technologies, e.g., in-house geek squad that helps staff and public*
  - 2. Implement new technologies and train both staff and public in their use
    - a. Begin development of library apps*
    - b. Utilize current software to support needs of customers with learning challenges*
  - 3. Explore innovative ways to expand access to digitized material
    - a. Begin development of improved discovery tools through BPL catalog, such as cartographic search, multi-language platforms*
    - b. Apply for National Digital Newspaper Project grant*
  
- C. Keep pace with evolving standards on accessibility for buildings, in-person access to public computing resources, and to online resources.
  - 1. Improve ease-of-use of downloading electronic materials, audiobooks, and eBooks
  - 2. Seamlessly integrate electronic resources into the rest of the library collection regardless of format
    - a. Encourage vendors to work with existing catalog to create one platform of discovery for collections*
  - 3. Utilize current software to support needs of customers with learning challenges
  - 4. Upgrade to statewide automated sorting for delivery
  - 5. Enable easy online ILL request placement and management
  - 6. Modernize method of recommending online resources outside the library



**VII. Sustainable Organization.** The BPL depends on sustainability of resources through a judicious stewardship of finances; active employee participation and professional development in an environment of dignity and respect; and partnerships that enrich services, expand outreach, and leverage public investment through private support.

### **Outcomes**

- A. Support a staff that is diverse and enriched through professional development and training.
  - 1. Create a culture of inclusion and accountability for staff
    - a. Elevate the importance of internal communications*
    - b. Redesign staff intranet*
    - c. Conduct town-hall style meetings with staff groups*
  - 2. Commit to the development of a diverse, technologically-capable staff
  - 3. Provide customer service training
  - 4. Commit to technical literacy for staff; create program to constantly upgrade technology skills; develop librarians as teacher/librarians to help users with resources
    - a. Develop trainings for staff to ensure up-to-date online competency*
    - b. Make it easy for staff to use library technology*
    - c. Require computer/tech training for staff including minimum required technology competencies*
  
- B. Be financially stable and fiscally transparent.
  - 1. Explore new revenue streams to supplement services
    - a. Reinvent the BPL store, both online and onsite, and assess return on investment accordingly*
    - b. Underwrite programs and services through private and public grant writing*
    - c. Maximize marketable space for events, including branch locations*
    - d. Evaluate pricing structure for goods and services, including events*
  - 2. Limit use of one-time funding sources to support operating budget or close budget gaps
  - 3. Post financial documents online, including annual audit, form 990, and budget development info
  - 4. Engagement of stakeholders in the budget development process (staff, affiliates, public, political)
  - 5. Evaluation and coordination of affiliate funding streams to support unified service model
  - 6. Board participation in both promulgating and promoting policies, including investment policy
  
- C. Evaluate business practices and workflow to optimize efficiency.
  - 1. Streamline procurement and business practices with financial system software upgrades
  - 2. Increase access to financial reporting for managers and supervisory personnel
  - 3. Introduce additional means of payment for fines and services, including electronic check payment and credit cards
  - 4. Ensure adherence to internal controls, including the security of existing assets



5. Improve fine receipt procedures and explore alternatives to current pay-for-print system
  6. Define and implement a records management policy for the library
  7. Commit and plan to migrate data (data, metadata, software) from obsolescent technologies in order to preserve access to information
  8. Organize and maximize use of stacks at Central Library in Copley Square.
- D. Seek out and establish partnerships that enhance services.
1. Explore a new programming model where partner organizations will complement rather than duplicate library services and expertise.
    - a. *Create 3-year partnerships plan*
    - b. *Announce desired programming and seek partnerships to support planned slate*
  2. Develop partnerships with organizations to provide some services that the library does not have the capacity to support (technology trainings, reading programs for youth, tax help, ESL services)
  3. Develop volunteer program in diverse areas such as parent-to-parent discussion leaders, readers for spontaneous read-alouds for children, leaders for teen library clubs, senior citizen connections to navigating online information, and more.
  4. Provide collaborative opportunities to foster connections/relationships with local schools, businesses and improve coordination with city agencies such as Boston Housing Authority, Boston Public Schools, Boston Centers for Youth and Family, the Mayor’s Office for Jobs & Community Service as well as the Mayor’s Office of Arts, Tourism & Special Events and the Parks Department.
    - a. *Branch librarians to reach out to organizations in their service areas that align with BPL strategic plan and explore partnerships that could enhance branch services*
  5. Work with other libraries and related organizations to contribute to the future of librarianship and prepare for changes to the profession in the future
    - a. *Examples include Digital Public Library of America, Simmons, LAPL Digitization Survey*
- E. Coordinate with affiliate partners to develop and expand fundraising efforts, both large and small scale.
1. Work with Boston Public Library Foundation, Associates of the Boston Public Library, Map Center, and friends on prioritizing initiatives for fundraising purposes
- F. Create ongoing marketing campaigns and initiatives that inform residents of programs and services.
1. Implement updated visual identity and brand standards across system
    - a. *Provide tools and templates to for promotion of events*
  2. Fund a marketing and advertising budget
  3. Increase marketing and communications capacity
  4. Leverage information from demographic study on diverse users, ongoing surveys, and industry best practices



G. Minimize the library's environmental impact.

1. Become a green institution

- a. Strategically limit printing and making parallel information available in electronic form*
- b. Replace the energy management system that covers the Central Library and four branches*
- c. Work with Boston Water & Sewer to reduce water costs by adding meters to cooling towers and irrigation systems*
- d. Overhaul the mechanical system at the Central Library, including a new cooling tower and air handling units*
- e. Evaluate and promote recycling program*



**VIII. Fun.** The BPL leads the way for people of all ages with recreational reading and media, invigorating programs, user-created content, and opportunities for discovery in settings that are stimulating and engaging.

### Outcomes

- A. Connect people to popular books, music, films, and artwork – whether the materials are brand new or simply new to select audiences.
  1. Use catalog to highlight acquisitions
    - a. Provide RSS feeds to users' saved searches in catalog by genre, author, and more*
  2. Develop book discussion groups, online and in-person, coordinated with author visits
  3. Rededicate efforts to support video gaming through collections and programming
  
- B. Embrace role as a cultural and entertainment hub in the City of Boston.
  1. Embrace Central Library as a tourist destination, museum, architectural attraction, and performance venue
    - a. Upgrade lighting, sound, stage of Rabb Lecture Hall to become showcase for noted speakers, authors, meetings*
    - b. Revamp art & architecture tours; consider youth versions, seasonal versions, scavenger hunts*
    - c. Videotape and make available lectures and special programs online for long-term access and outreach for people who cannot attend.*
    - d. Increase collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism and Special Events*
  2. Link programs such as Concerts in the Courtyard more broadly to culture in the city
    - a. Create more film festivals, especially foreign language films*
    - b. Develop relationships with Boston-area entertainment promoters*
  3. Add new programs; attract new users and audiences in different ways
    - a. Friday evening get-togethers for young professionals, singles*
  
- C. Create an engaging and positive atmosphere for library users and staff.
  1. Hire and develop a staff that is fun, energetic and joyous
  2. Embrace social media fully; accept user-created content and highlight users' contributions
    - a. Increase online opportunities for conversations about books, movies, and more*
    - b. Deliver online services in online communities beyond bpl.org*
  3. Encourage collective staff activities, such as rewards for best Halloween costume, recognition of holidays, family-focused gatherings, and other events
  
- D. Showcase the library's collections through vibrant, interactive exhibitions and programs
  1. Develop a multi-year plan for exhibitions that involve the Central Library and branches
    - a. Host receptions for large exhibitions*
    - b. Begin planning for permanent exhibition space for collections' treasures*
    - c. Incorporate online, interactive components to exhibitions and programs whether they are online or physical.*

