

# Boston Public Library

## BPL Compass Strategic Plan

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**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. Enable easy and effective access to library services.
  - 1. Evaluate and improve programs and services offered to the public
  - 2. Improve navigation and use of physical locations for able-bodied users and those with physical, vision, or auditory challenges
  - 3. Evaluate hours, staffing levels, and capabilities across the system in order to provide optimal, sustainable public service
  
- B. Continue to collect and value input from library users
  - 1. Develop ongoing plan to obtain input from public and staff
  - 2. Track suggestions, evaluate, and implement accordingly
  - 3. Create meaningful and dynamic advisory groups
  - 4. Use data about library use to analyze patterns and develop better service
  
- C. Enhance commitment to serving diverse users.
  - 1. Conduct a demographic study to determine scope of potential audiences
  - 2. Plan and initiate services in other languages – online and in print
  - 3. Value and develop the skills and capacity of staff to respond to diverse communities of users



**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 inviting, stimulating, comfortable, clean, and safe.
  - 1. Develop a long-term Capital plan for existing and potential locations, including the reduction of physical barriers to accessibility
  - 2. Develop a plan to update or renovate furnishings, as needed
  - 3. Review security plan 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
  
- 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
  - 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
  - 4. Create plan for development of mobile applications
  
- C. Link community members to library programs and services within the BPL system and beyond.
  - 1. Position library as a community information node linking library users to other resources in their communities
  - 2. Create outreach plans for neighborhoods
  - 3. Deliver outreach programs to communities and different community organizations out in the community
  
- D. Minimize the library’s environmental impact.
  - 1. Improve existing environmental and recycling efforts
  - 2. Develop a plan to become a greener institution
  - 3. Track suggestions, evaluate, and implement accordingly



**III. Special 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. Strengthen and grow collections that focus on existing strengths and geographic specialties.
  - 1. Prioritize the preservation of the City’s local history; identify, exhibit, and promote appropriate collections
  - 2. Create clear, structured evaluation process for acquisitions and gifts to special collections
  - 3. Develop local collections with focus on cultural heritage
  - 4. Complete work on Collections of Distinction and focus financial and staff resources on collection strengths and gaps in existing collections
  - 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
  - 2. Create and maintain an online space for users to contribute their specialized knowledge
  - 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. Develop a digitization plan.
  - 1. Focus plan on Collections of Distinction
  - 2. Begin development of a preservation plan for digitized material
  - 3. Continue collaboration with the Associates of the Boston Public Library to conserve and restore books, manuscripts, works of art, and historic documents
  - 4. Continue to work with Map Center on conservation efforts of Library’s cartographic collection



**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
  - 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, health, civic, and financial literacy
  - 3. Develop creative ways to engage and support community skills sharing with public trainers such as genealogy experts and more
  
- 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 to explore expansion of K-12 educational programming
  - 5. Increase collaboration with local schools, higher learning institutions, corporations, and private organizations



**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, such as reading readiness, including age-appropriate, multilingual collections
  - 2. Collaborate with area organizations on early learning experiences
  - 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 the library’s Homework Assistance Program to provide learning and critical thinking support to young people
  - 2. Develop collections in support of academic excellence
  
- C. Invest in and support systemwide youth services.
  - 1. Hire and support Youth Services Coordinator
  - 2. Examine use of teen and children’s services across the system and determine appropriate staffing
  - 3. Provide positive and energetic programs for children and teens
  - 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 appropriate standards for services to youth and teens
  - 7. Update and enhance technology provided for 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
  - 2. Increase participation in national digital initiatives
  
- B. Provide state-of the art public computing spaces.
  - 1. Deliver a reliable and dynamic IT infrastructure
  - 2. Implement new technologies and train both staff and public in their use
  
- C. Keep pace with evolving standards on in-person access to public computing resources, and to online resources.
  - 1. Improve ease-of-use of downloading electronic materials, audiobooks, and eBooks
  - 2. Integrate electronic resources into the rest of the library's collections regardless of format
  - 3. Utilize current software to support needs of users with learning challenges
  - 4. Explore innovative ways to expand access to digitized material
  - 5. Modernize method of recommending external online resources for BPL website



**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
  - 2. Develop and implement customer service campaign
  - 3. Commit to technical literacy for staff; create program to constantly upgrade technology skills; develop librarians as teacher/librarians to help users with resources
  
- B. Be financially stable and fiscally transparent.
  - 1. Explore new revenue streams to supplement services
  - 2. Limit use of one-time funding sources to support operating budget or to close budget gaps
  - 3. Continue to post financial documents online
  - 4. Continue to engage stakeholders in the budget development process
  
- C. Evaluate business practices and workflow to optimize efficiency.
  - 1. Introduce additional means of payment for fines and services, including electronic check payment, debit cards, and credit cards
  - 2. Improve fine receipt procedures and explore alternatives to current pay-for-print system
  - 3. Increase access to financial reporting for managers and supervisory personnel
  - 4. Ensure adherence to internal controls, including the security of existing assets
  - 5. Streamline workflow in collections, technology and resource sharing areas
  
- D. Seek out and establish partnerships that enhance services.
  - 1. Explore a new programming model where partner organizations complement and enhance library services and expertise
  - 2. Enhance volunteer and docent programs
  - 3. Provide collaborative opportunities to foster connections/relationships with local schools, businesses and improve coordination with city agencies
  - 4. Work with other libraries and related organizations to contribute to the future of librarianship
  
- E. Coordinate with affiliate partners and Friends in order to develop and expand fundraising efforts, both large and small scale.
  - 1. Continue to work with Boston Public Library Foundation, Associates of the Boston Public Library, Map Center, and Friends on prioritizing initiatives for fundraising purposes
  - 2. Develop fund-raising strategy that yields a unified and systemwide approach
  - 3. Be responsive to Friends groups and foster coordination of support



- F. Create ongoing marketing campaigns and initiatives that inform residents of programs and services.
  - 1. Implement updated visual identity and brand standards across system
  - 2. Create a marketing and advertising budget, and increase marketing and communications capacity
  - 3. Leverage information from demographic study on diverse users, ongoing surveys, and industry best practices



**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
  - 2. Develop book discussion groups, online and in-person, coordinated with author visits
  - 3. Rededicate efforts to support interactive formats through collections and programming
  
- B. Embrace role as a cultural and entertainment hubs in the City of Boston.
  - 1. Embrace Central Library as a tourist destination, exhibition space, architectural attraction, and performance venue
  - 2. Embrace neighborhood branches as tourist destinations, exhibition spaces, architectural attractions, and performance venues
  - 3. Add new programs; attract new users and audiences
  
- 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
  - 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 involves the Central Library and branches

