
LIBRARY PLANNING

Planning is the deliberate, preferred manner of preparing for library service in the future. It is the responsible means of fulfilling future community library needs.

A long-range plan, based on knowledge of the community, community expectations, resources of the community, and realistic projections of the future needs of the community will enable the library trustees and administration to perform their responsibilities better by providing efficient and progressive library service.

WHAT IS A PLAN?

- A summary of the current status of the library. Look critically at what the library does now. A plan is reality pushed into the future. By assessing the current situation, obvious needs and directions can be identified. Don't be afraid to brag about a good library.
- An assessment of community needs. A library's first responsibility is to address the needs of its community. It is basic planning to know what the community needs are. The American Library Association has developed a number of tools that can help identify useful statistics and statistical sources for understanding a library's community.
- A statement of the library's mission, goals, and objectives. Once the library's overall role and mission are defined, specific goals with measurable objectives can be set. All decisions should be made in view of the plan.
- An ongoing process. Planning is an ongoing process. No plan is perfect. Unexpected events necessitate changes in any plan, and changing times present new problems and suggest new approaches to meeting library goals. Unless some crisis requires immediate updating of the plan, the plan should be updated on an annual basis.

Planning Tools

The American Library Association has several useful planning publications. Among the most important of these are: *Planning and Role Setting in Public Libraries* and *Output Measures for Public Libraries*, published in 1987. They have been widely used by Virginia public libraries for strategic planning. An important new publication of the American Library Association was recently (1998) issued in two parts: *Planning for Results: A Public Library Transformation Process*, which was designed to be a revised and updated edition of *Planning and Role Setting*.

HOW IS A PLAN DEVELOPED?

There is no one best way to plan. Planning requires commitment, time, and organization.

Preparation for planning requires:

- clarifying planning purposes and methods
- defining responsibilities
- allocating resources to planning
- establishing a planning schedule

Gathering the information for planning requires:

- reviewing community needs for library services including cultural, educational, and informational resources of the community
- looking at the demographic and economic data of the community
- identifying factors in the library's environment that may affect the provision of services

Analyzing the information allows:

- understanding of the community needs for library service
- realizing objectively what the community has and what the community lacks
- defining the library's role in the community

Development of a library's mission, goals, and objectives allows:

- responsiveness to the community's needs, interests, and priorities
- prioritizing programs and directing efforts toward tasks leading to the attainment of the stated objectives
- evaluation of where your library is in relation to the total plan

Remember that excellence in public library service is not an idle dream.

It is achieved daily by libraries matching library services with community needs, interests, and priorities as identified through effective, thoughtful planning.

BENEFITS OF A PLAN

- allows rational justification of your budget with governing authorities
- helps you prioritize programs and direct efforts to attaining objectives
- motivates the staff and board
- encourages coordination and accountability
- gives a clear measure for success
- assures enough lead time to undertake projects effectively
- leads to steady growth by encouraging yearly evaluation

RECIPE FOR A PLAN

A plan is a flexible document seasoned by specific local needs. Most plans include the following:

- description of the library's service area and communities
- summary of data supporting library's needs
- statement of general goals and specific objectives
- details of services, programs, personnel, collection, and facilities desired
- identification of priorities
- timetable for achieving goals and objectives, both short- and long-range
- cost projections for implementing the **Plan**
- projections of resources
- assignments and responsibilities for implementing the **Plan**
- publicity campaign to accompany changes
- provision for evaluation and reassessment at specific intervals

We planned. How are we doing?

The manual *Planning for Library Excellence* (2000) is an excellent resource for reviewing services and resources.

Does the library have a long-range plan on file at the Library of Virginia?

Is the plan updated annually?

Have procedures been drawn up for evaluating the plan?

Is the responsibility for planning clearly defined?

Are you familiar with and committed to your library's long-range plan?

PLANNING LIBRARY BUILDINGS

As trustees face the challenges of planning library services for the future, increased space and additional locations may become a major consideration. Governing boards must decide whether to build a new library, renovate or expand current facilities, or find an existing space to be converted into a library. Construction plans should be considered in the context of the total library plan. Trustees need to study service needs, explore alternatives, project funding, and establish priorities.

Most planning processes will lead to the identification of a probable date when new library space should be in operation.

While having a new building may be the best answer, it is not always the most practical and should be measured against other options: purchase of an existing building, lease of an existing building, remodeling of the library, addition to the library, or in some cases, addition of branches. Depending on the library and its services, the addition of a bookmobile or other outreach techniques may be considered in expansion plans.

Building Program

After the library has completed its community analysis, defined its long-term goals and objectives, and determined the need for additional space, a library building program is developed. The building program defines the specific needs of the library in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The building program should bring together the thinking of the library board, the library director, the library staff, and the community on the purpose, scope, and function of the library building program.

The building program should also stress that the building must be flexible and able to respond to future developments. Library functions and spaces should be able to expand and contract as needs develop or diminish. Existing and future technologies should be anticipated. Computerization, miniaturization, electronics, and other factors are already in play and will continue to develop. This has implications for the building's structure; its heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems (HVAC); its power, lighting, electronic, and communications systems (PLEC), as well as the ergonomic needs in planning spaces and equipment.

Architect

The architect should be hired only after a library has completed these beginning steps of construction planning. The architect can then use the library building program in designing the building.

Architectural services are covered under professional services in the Virginia Public Procurement Act. Therefore, a Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued for services.

In hiring an architect, the library should solicit applications, rank them by preference, and then enter into negotiations with the top choice, conducting personal interviews with the person or firm that interests the library board. The past experience of the architect should be considered, as well as the architect's personal philosophy. Final fees should be discussed and agreement reached. If agreement cannot be reached with the first choice, the board then declares that is the case and enters negotiations with the next candidate.

Design of the Building

Once an architect is hired, the actual design of the building can proceed, along with final decisions on location, size, addition, or all new construction, etc. The general steps that will be followed are:

- preparation of schematic design
- preparation of preliminary plans and design development
- preparation of specifications and working drawings
- advertising and receipt of bids for construction
- bonding process
- award of contracts
- actual construction
- acceptance of performance
- move to new building

Planning Responsibilities

Planning for Library Excellence (2000), should be consulted for building-related state standards and guidelines.

Trustees, staff members, consultants, architects, interior designers, city councils, county boards, jurisdictional staffs, regional planning departments, and community members all fit into the picture.

Trustees

- determine that a new building is needed
- provide leadership in the campaign to inform the community and secure necessary support for the project
- appoint a building committee and assign tasks
- select and hire library building consultant if necessary
- select and hire an architect
- obtain financing for the project
- select and purchase the site

- approve the written building program
- approve preliminary and final architectural plans
- solicit and approve bid documents
- approve all contracts and any change orders to the contract

Library Staff

The library director and staff actively participate in planning for construction projects by compiling information, surveys, and statistics; by helping to prepare a written building program; by preparing building applications and reports; and by maintaining project records. The library director must be a member of the building team for accomplishment of a functional plan to support the library program.

Library Building Consultant

The consultant is usually an experienced librarian who has participated in several building projects. The cost of a building consultant can usually be saved many times over in reductions in construction and operating costs. Working with board and staff the building consultant can provide any or all of the following services:

- survey the library's space needs
- write the library building program
- project a preliminary project budget
- provide site analysis and recommendations
- provide advice on funding options
- provide assistance in selection of the architect
- review all plans prepared by the architect and provide a written evaluation
- review needs, specifications, and layout for shelving, furniture, and equipment
- provide a final inspection of the facility

We're Set to Go. What's Next?

The board, with its planning completed, money in hand, and architecture in the final stages of plans, should follow this sequence:

- Review every nuance of the building plan. Decide what features can be optional (bid alternates) so that separate bids can be taken on these items.
- Review estimated costs so that the construction bids do not surprise.
- Follow all local ordinances and structures. Zoning and building codes should be checked as plans are made, but enlist the help of appropriate officials in the plan review and in recommending contractors to be asked to bid.

- Follow correct bidding procedures, legal and ethical. Allow time for bidders to estimate closely. Invite enough bidders so that there is a range.
- Analyze bids ruthlessly. Be sure you are getting what was specified with no unsuitable substitutes. Accept the bid that most closely meets specifications as well as offering good value.
- All bids too costly? You can call for new bids to an amended set of specifications. You can also rule out the optional features (bid alternatives) that did prove to be too much.
- Create a team of board, director, architect, and contractor to follow progress and to make regular reports.
- Expect some changes. Discoveries will be made about unexpected problems and opportunities. The contractor may suggest, for example, that a new tile may be less expensive and serve just as well as that specified. If so, that's a credit you can apply to something that will cost more (such as discovering poor soil on the site).
- Expect performance. This building is going to be a fixture in the community for a long time and should be properly and expertly built. Some boards find that the contractor has taken the job as a fill-in. Don't accept excuses!
- Watch the expenditure of funds in a professional manager. Payments should be made upon proper evidence, but promptly. If you need financial advice, seek it from a good mortgage banker or experienced purchaser of construction.
- Meet frequently during the building process. Meetings keep you in touch with progress, permit decisions on changes, and provide the material for ongoing public relations in the community.
- Plan for orderly occupation of the building, when it's ready, with festivities and community involvement. Allow plenty of time for moving in, completing the landscaping and other amenities, and then showing off the newest and best community asset.

Keep in the back of your mind how long it took to achieve this objective. Keep "need for expansion" in your planning process so that the next building will arrive when it is needed. There is nothing more satisfying than a new facility that enlarges the ability of the board to bring exciting services to an appreciative community.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT BUILDINGS

Confirm the needs the building will serve and decide how to translate these into an actual plan:

1. Should the board use a building consultant?

In recent years, many librarians have specialized as building consultants, most often in determining space needs and layout for the purpose the board has envisioned. A consultant will look at the community data, consult with the librarian, staff, and board, and apply data to recommendations right down to location and size of a department in the building. Most consultants are **not** designers, but they provide guidance to the architect who must visualize the structure.

The Library of Virginia can provide a number of names of consultants for the board's consideration.

2. How does a board find an architect?

Boards can visit or review plans and pictures of other libraries for clues to architects who may be asked to be interviewed. There are some architects who specialize in libraries.

The board will need to be satisfied that the architect has a good understanding of the functions of libraries, will work closely with the board on designs reflecting what the board feels the community will enjoy, and will give good supervision with the contractor. Legal counsel should be sought on an appropriate contract.

Even architects experienced in library design need the guidance of specifications for use by the library: space for special purposes, the need for floor loads, extra power, access by the handicapped. Directors (and the consultant if used) will have noted the special needs of libraries for public and private areas, for loading, for staff use, and for expansion at a later date.

3. How does the board find a contractor?

Specifications by an architect will be submitted to contractors for bids. It is wise for the board to have the specifications include a number of options so that it can add or subtract as cost is known. Libraries that think ahead have often been able to get inexpensive future expansion space, for example, with the building. And the board should be prepared to settle for less luxurious features should costs mount.

The board should interview contractors if it wishes to pre-qualify them for the bidding. Often the municipality or county will have a list of those to whom it offers the bidding opportunity. Multiple bids are needed, but an overly long list may not add to the board's ability to make the decision. Low bid is one factor, probably the most important, but value and evidence of good work elsewhere are additional considerations.

4. Who supervises the building?

Usually the library director is the link from the board to the architect and builder and to the person who checks to be sure the library is meeting local ordinances and codes. The director and architect, and sometimes the builder, bring to the board decisions on changes as well as regular reports on progress. The board watches and asks questions. The project is a team effort, which may also involve local officials. The better the original plans and the more precise the specifications, the more likely that construction will run smoothly.

Most library boards, having weathered a building project, report that vigilance on the part of the board, watch-dogging by the architect, timely performance by the builder, and surveillance by the director kept the project on time and in good order. Most boards also report relief when the project was completed; building can be a trying time for all the people involved.

5. How does the library keep the public informed?

Especially on a visible building going up, there will be public interest in what's happening. Regular updating of press releases is indicated, and there are times during the process when special events can be held, such as groundbreaking, cornerstone laying (perhaps with a time capsule), setting the first brick, and topping off.

6. How should the board plan well in advance for use of the new facility?

Plan and announce, when it's safe to do so, an occupancy date when the public can see the building. If the community is to be involved in helping to move, set dates and procedures.

Withhold an open house until the library is really ready, complete with parking and landscaping. Make the ceremonies memorable; the date will be the library's birthday for many years.

7. When does the board begin thinking about future needs?

Ideally, the new space will meet needs for a long time—but not forever! Keep on the planning agenda some space for thinking about what comes next.

Most of these elements apply to planning of new space whether in a new building, an existing building, or a conversion.

CONSTRUCTION TIMETABLE

Trustees should understand that the planning process for library construction will require a substantial amount of effort by the board, the library director, and the staff. Planning normally takes approximately twenty-four months and delays must be anticipated.

Sample Timetable for a Building Project

February	Preliminary determination of a space need
March	Selection of a building program consultant if one is to be hired
May	Building program written
June	Site application completed
August	General and financial application (local funding commitment) completed
March	Architect's contract signed Title to site transferred
April	Architect's schematic plans reviewed by trustees and director
May	Architect's design development plans reviewed by trustees and director
July	Architect's working drawings reviewed by trustees and director
August	Advertise for bids after approval of architect's final plans
October	Bids are publicly opened and contract awarded to lowest bidder meeting all requirements
November	Construction of library begins

FUNDING FOR BUILDINGS

The need for a new library building or renovation of an existing one is usually evident long before funds become available to begin the project. Good planning, along with the commitment of the board, can help shorten the time between these two points.

There are a variety of sources for financing library buildings. In many cases, more than one source is used. The board and the library director should be aware of the different funding possibilities and be thoroughly familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Local Government Appropriation

The local government is a viable source of funding for buildings. It is not uncommon for a project to be financed over a period of three to five years, scheduled to accommodate the use of current revenues.

Bond Issues

Another method is to have a library bond referendum on the ballot to finance the project. This method requires the development of a comprehensive-needs statement, convincing the local government of the needs, understanding the electorate, and conducting an effective campaign.

Gifts and Bequests

Gifts and bequests from citizens and corporations have traditionally provided funds to supplement other sources of funding. Occasionally, a single benefactor will contribute the full amount or make a substantial contribution to the building fund. As a rule, however, securing funds by this means is a slow process and should not be relied on as the sole funding source.

Public Subscription and Donations

Fund-raising requires a great deal of time and careful planning. Unless professional assistance is available, it is difficult to depend on this means except for small projects.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PLANNING

Board of Trustees⁷

Analyzes the community and considers the strengths and the weaknesses of library service.

Sets goals, adopts both short- and long-range plans for library growth.

Sets priorities and decides on course of action to implement plans.

Library Director

Participates fully in the community-analysis process and in the continuing survey of library service.

Recommends plans for library's growth and objective to achieve goals. Selects strategies for achieving objectives.

Administers library in terms of its plans as adopted by the board; suggests revisions as needed.

Evaluation of Planning

Evaluate the library annually when planning for future development. Review the budget versus service, personnel, public relations, policies, regulations, building maintenance, etc.

⁷ These roles and responsibilities are primarily for governing boards. Advisory boards' roles and responsibilities may be different.

