

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2028
PREPARED FOR THE WATSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY



Watsonville
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ALICIA MARTINEZ

PROJECT TEAM – MARTIIN J. GOMEZ, JENNIFER SWEENEY, AND GRACE STETSON
mjpgomezassociates@gmail.com

Executive Summary

A new five-year strategic plan has been proposed for the Watsonville Public Library. The plan was created using the “turning outward” methodology developed by the Harwood Institute. This methodology puts community aspirations first by collecting information about and engaging in conversations that are more community-focused and proactive to community issues.

Using this approach, MJ Gómez Associates conducted research regarding issues impacting the lives of Watsonville residents, conducted a community and staff survey, interviewed key stakeholders, and conducted three focus groups.

Working closely with library leadership, we have developed the following goals:

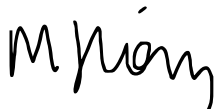
Goal 1 - Increase access to library resources by implementing bookmobile service and adding weekend hours.

Goal 2 – Increase public awareness about library services by working with a communications consultant/firm to identify target audiences, key messages, create a communications strategy, and measure its effectiveness by conducting an annual community survey.

Goal 3 - Streamline in-house processes re: technical services, circulation services, IT, by exploring contracts with 3rd party vendors, or the City of Watsonville.

Goal 4 – Work with local nonprofit arts organizations and city departments to promote the arts and function as one anchor for downtown development.

Details regarding the process that was used to identify the goals and recommended strategies are provided below.



Martín J Gómez, Principal Project Consultant

WPL Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028

Background – Project Scope

In March 2023, MJ Gómez Associates LLC was awarded a contract to create a new strategic plan for the Watsonville Public Library to replace the library's prior strategic plan that covered the period from 2020 to 2023.

The scope of work for the new strategic planning project requested by the Watsonville Public Library listed the following activities:

1. Facilitate the strategic planning process using a methodology effective for public libraries.
2. Gather data through community research that focuses on library users, non-users, and stakeholders, including Board and staff, to identify Library needs/wants.
3. Facilitate planning meetings and input sessions (public, Board, and staff sessions).
4. Review the current mission and vision statements and facilitate revisions if needed.
5. Identify service priorities, goals, objectives, and activities.
6. Write and present the strategic plan that will be communicated to the library's stakeholders.

Background & Context

In 1895, Watsonville Public Library (WPL) was integrated into the government of the City of Watsonville. Like many communities around the country at the time, the city received a grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a new library that opened in 1905 with the condition that the local municipalities agreed to fund library operations. The Carnegie-funded library was later replaced with a new building that was dedicated in 1976; in 2008, a new main library was built as part of a new civic center complex at 275 Main Street. WPL operates a branch library, located at 275 Main St and the Freedom Branch, located at 2021 Freedom Blvd.

The current mission of WPL states:

The Watsonville Public Library provides a variety of information, materials, and services in a welcoming place where people come to gather, learn, and celebrate our multi-cultural community.

The mission statement is strong, yet general enough for the library to meet many current and future community library service needs. We note the WPL would benefit from a vision statement as well as adoption of a core set of values.

Methodology

The research methodology was based on the “turning outward” approach created by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.¹ This is a methodology for assessing community needs that “entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.”

The project was divided into three phases:

1. Research, Discovery and Analysis
2. Community Engagement
3. Report and Presentation of Findings

Phase 1: Research, Discovery, and Analysis

Research began with a review of recent topics important to Watsonville residents and city government portrayed in local publications such as *The Pajaronian*, minutes from previous city council and library board meetings, a review of the 2005 City of Watsonville General Plan, and the 2021 Community-wide Survey conducted by GreatBlue (selected pages – Attachment 1).

During the research phase, we learned that the City of Watsonville has been undergoing a series of leadership transitions. In addition to the 2021 appointment of Alicia Martinez as library director, in July 2022, René Mendez — former city manager in Gonzalez, California — was appointed Watsonville’s new city manager by the city council. In November 2022, voters elected three new council members, and re-elected another council member for a second term.

During the same 2022 election, voters approved an increase in sales tax that is estimated to bring an additional \$5.1 million to the general fund. The additional revenue will be used to upgrade and upkeep Watsonville’s parks and roads, as well as its library and older adult services.

Prior to the November 2022 election, *Santa Cruz Local*, an online publication,² asked Watsonville residents to identify issues they were concerned about prior to the election. They cited:

- A need for more youth activities.
- A need for more businesses that cater to young people and families.
- Help with rent.
- Safer streets for walkers and cyclists.
- Better quality jobs and higher wages.

¹ <https://theharwoodinstitute.org/tools-blog/category/Turning+Outward>

² <https://santacruzlocal.org/election/2022-nov-08/election-guide-nov-8-2022-watsonville-city-council-candidates/>

According to the U.S. Census, in 2022 Watsonville was estimated to have a population of approximately 51,500 closely divided equally between male and female. Close to forty percent (39.8%) of the population identify as “white alone” and eighty-four percent (84.3%) identify as Hispanic or Latino. Nearly sixty-four percent (63.9%) of the population 25 years or older are high school graduates or higher and nearly eleven percent (10.7%) of individuals 25 years or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Nearly thirteen percent (13%) of the population live in poverty. In 2021, the per capita income was \$29,183 and the median household income for the period from 2017 – 2021 was \$67,007.

Watsonville's main industries are construction, agriculture and manufacturing. Its primary economy is based on agri-business and crop distribution.

According to the City of Watsonville's 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the city's top employers are:

#	Employer	# of Employees
1	Pajaro Valley Unified School District	4,108
2	Monterey Mushrooms Inc.	870
3	Watsonville Community Hospital	591
4	Granite Construction	557
5	Lakeside Organic Gardens LLC	450
6	City of Watsonville	427
7	Salud Para La Gente	422
8	S Martinelli & Co.	290
9	Fox Factory	265
10	West Marine Products	247

A major role for many public libraries is to meet the academic needs of students (K-12), especially those who attend schools without libraries run by certified school media specialists. Watsonville's public schools are under the jurisdiction of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) and have an enrollment of about 20,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grades.

Charter schools in Watsonville are under the jurisdiction of the PVUSD and include Diamond Technology Institute, Alianza Charter School, Linscott Charter School, Pacific Coast Charter School, Watsonville Charter School of the Arts, and Ceiba College Preparatory Academy.

Private schools in the city include Green Valley Christian School, Moreland Notre Dame, Monte Vista Christian, Mount Madonna School, Potter's House Community Christian School, St. Francis Central Coast Catholic High School, and Salesian Elementary and Junior High Schools.

Student performance, as measured by the California State Department of Education -CAASPP – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, indicates the following 2021 results for PVUSD:

- 27.20% Met or Exceeded *Standard for English Language Arts and Literacy*
- 17.26% Met or Exceeded *Standard for Mathematics*

Phase 2: Community Engagement

The community engagement process included two surveys - a staff survey and a community survey, (Appendices 1 and 2), three facilitated focus groups,³ and seven stakeholder interviews. Progress reports were provided at two meetings of the library Board of Trustees, two meetings of the project advisory committee (appointed by the library director),⁴ and a goal-setting workshop with senior library staff.

When we asked library staff to identify the most critical issues that should be addressed as part of the WPL strategic plan they mentioned the following items:

- Meeting needs of community members without adequate means.
- Improving library outreach.
- Working with the city to meet community needs.
- Improving programming.
- Enhancing safety in the library.
- Improving access to technology (public computers).

Service Priorities

Historically, public libraries have played a variety of service roles such as providing access to books and other materials, after-school homework help, and adult literacy tutoring to name a few.

We asked those who attended one of three focus groups to rank service priorities and roles that they thought that the WPL should offer. The list included several current and emerging services and roles provided by many public libraries.⁵ The majority of the respondents indicated that they would like to see the WPL be a library that:

- Create(s) young readers by offering programs and resources aimed at early childhood literacy and,

³ Focus groups included a staff focus group, educator focus, and a focus group that included representatives from the Watsonville nonprofit community.

⁴ Carol Heitzig, Watonka Addison, Alicia Martinez, Ruth Landmann, Shirley Flores-Munoz

⁵ A copy of the Service Priority survey is attached as Appendix 3.

- Serve(s) as a lifelong learning center, addressing the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities.

Other priorities included a desire for WPL to offer services that support and improve adult and teen literacy and helps residents express their personal creativity by providing tools such as 3D printers, musical instruments, recording equipment, and sewing machines to generate and share creative content.

SWOT Analysis

The data that we collected through this process provided insight into the community's perceptions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing WPL. Not surprisingly, they also mirrored many of the same issues cited prior to the 2022 election. Chart 1 represents a summary of the comments from the data we collected in the format of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Complete results from the staff and community surveys are included as Appendix 1 (Staff Survey) and Appendix 2 (Community Survey).

Chart 1	
SWOT – Watsonville Public Library	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place for families to congregate • Children's programs • Friends book sales • Culture programs • Classes & workshops • Feeling welcome • Programs for babies and toddlers • Online eBooks (Libby) • Technology lending (hot spots) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No weekend hours • Parking • Spanish classes for kids • Wait time for online books • No curbside book drop • Programming for people with different abilities • Group meeting space • Difficulty navigating ILL and reserves
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural arts programming and performances • Clubs for kids (chess, book clubs) • Craft programs • Roof top garden • Seating (lounge and comfortable chairs) • Connections with the business community • "How to" programming (emergency prep. financial literacy, health, and nutrition) • Afternoon programs • Community classes • Promotion and marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors feel unsafe/security • Inconvenient hours • Transportation to the library • Inconvenient hours • Exterior lighting after sundown • Access to digital content for those without equipment • Closure during Christmas break • City funding • Dedicated IT staff

Phase 3: Report & Findings

WPL is a highly valued community resource. The community wide survey conducted by GreatBlue noted that nearly all respondents either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that the City of Watsonville library "contributes to a positive quality of life in Watsonville" (98.2%) and that "the library contributes to lifelong learning" (98 %).

Respondents to the community survey that we conducted stated they are highly supportive and strong users of the Watsonville Public Libraries, indicating that they would like more information resources in all formats, more programming across interest areas such as book clubs, author talks, activities and programs for children, educational programming of all kinds especially for job seekers, social and cultural/arts events, emergency preparedness, community events, local history, community organizing, adult education for literacy and GED.

The community survey offered the open-ended question: "What else, if anything, would inspire you to use the WPL more?" The responses with the greatest frequency as illustrated on Chart 2 below, was a desire for more hours, followed closely by more programs and more books.

Both Charts 2 and 3 are presented here to highlight two recurring themes from the community surveys and focus group meetings: hours of service and accessibility. Regarding access, parking was a theme repeated often. Respondents noted that there was no simple pathway from the municipal parking garage directly into the library and that the lack of adequate building lighting made them feel unsafe at night.

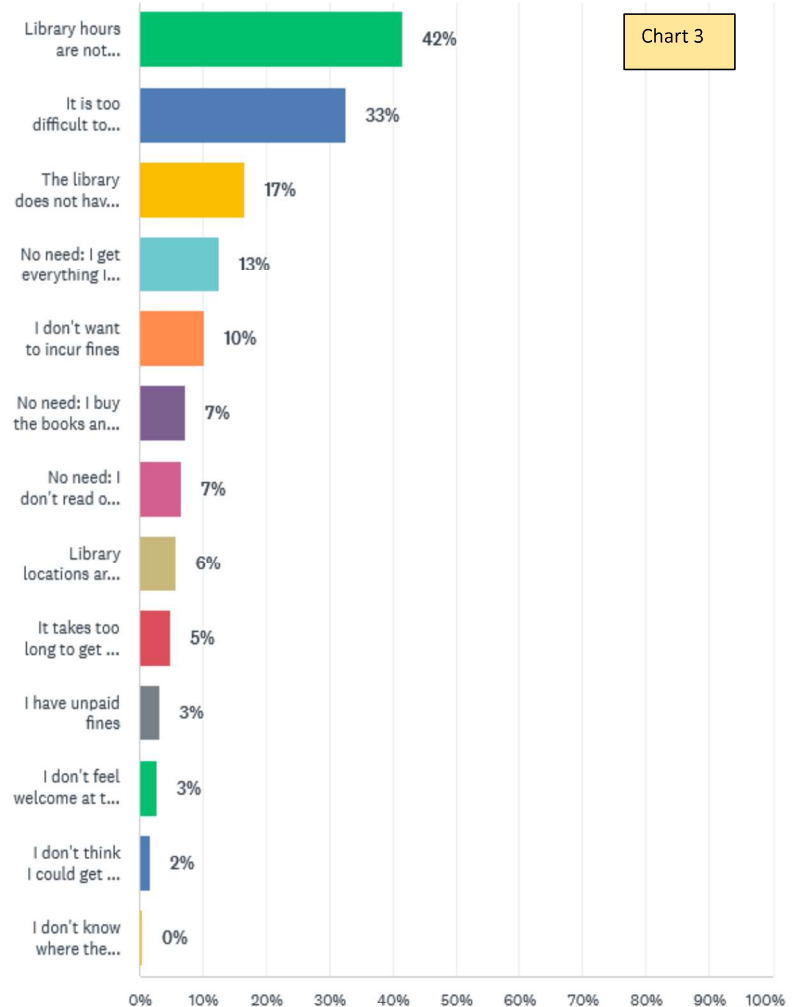
Code	Frequency
Hours	37
Programs	30
Books	27
Programs - Children	19
Parking, transportation, location	18
Positive (general comment)	17
Personal	14
Facilities & spaces	12
Policies	9
Technology	9
Communication	8
Spanish, other languages	7
eResources	5
Staff	5
Volunteers	2

Chart 2

When people were asked why they don't use the library, they stated that the lack of weekend hours and location were inconvenient (Chart 3).

Currently, only the Freedom branch library provides weekend hours on Saturdays from 12 to 4 pm. During discussions with staff about providing additional hours at the Main library, two issues emerged. Due to the size of the Main library (46,000 square feet in two stories), staffing the operation was a challenge. Secondly, because of the lack of retail services, restaurants, and recreational activities downtown, very few people frequent the downtown area on the weekends where the library is located.

Previous attempts to open the Main library often resulted in extremely low numbers of library visitors on weekends.



Again, more parking and more free parking are desired. Safety is a concern, especially regarding individuals with mental health challenges and unhoused individuals in the library and nearby.

City officials in Watsonville cited plans are underway to revitalize the downtown area including working with Caltrans to make Main Street (which fronts the entrance to the Main Library) more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The city recently launched a new mixed-use housing and retail development project in the immediate area that they expect will increase the vibrancy of and encourage more weekend activities in the downtown area.

Library Metrics

Compared to libraries serving populations of similar size and square miles, WPL performance metrics appear to be within the range of the selected group of peer libraries. However, it is

important to note that the size of the WPL service footprint is nearly twice the size of any library in the peer group, meaning that the staff must provide service within a larger envelope.

LIBRARY NAME	Population	Card Holders	Total FTE	Revenue	Square Miles	Square Foot
WATSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY	51,366	40,771	25	\$3,253,320	6.00	46,000
COVINA	48,333	33,071	11.27	\$1,022,425	7.00	20,144
PLACENTIA	51,173	55,960	25.75	\$3,091,564	7.00	22,800
WOODLAND	60,978	36,777	13.19	\$2,025,472	8.00	23,000
EL CENTRO	44,997	6,303	11.00	\$729,663	8.00	14,163

Recommended Goals with Justification

On May 18th, a facilitated goal-setting workshop was conducted with members of the WPL leadership team. At the workshop we presented eight potential goals based on areas of focus that we derived from the community analysis. The purpose of the workshop was for those in attendance to prioritize the goals that they thought to be achievable over the next 5 years.

The following eight goals were presented for review:

1. **ACCESS** - Increase access to library resources by implementing book mobile service and adding weekend hours.
2. **AWARENESS** - Improve community awareness about library services by working with a communications consultant to identify target audiences, key messages, create a communications strategy and target audiences, and measure its effectiveness by conducting an annual community survey.
3. **EFFICIENT OPERATIONS** - Streamline in-house processes re: technical services, circulation services, IT, by exploring contracting options with third party vendors.
4. **ARTS** - Position the library to be a key player in the development of Watsonville as a cultural arts community and destination.
5. **INCLUSION** - Foster greater inclusion in the community by serving as the City's information center for the Spanish-speaking and indigenous communities.
6. **ASSESSMENT** - Institute a culture of assessment for library programs to ensure their effectiveness.
7. **FAMILIES** - Re-align library programs, events, and collections to emphasize family-oriented activities and,

8. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS - Work with the city to identify space improvements at the Main Library to create an outdoor patio, and a small performance theater.

As a result of the goal-setting workshop, four areas of focus and related goals were identified for the WPL strategic plan. The justification statements were prepared by the consultants. The activities and proposed timeline for each of the goals were developed by attendees of the goal-setting workshop.

Over the next five years, WPL will focus on:

- Increasing access to library resources.
- Improving community awareness about library services.
- Streamlining processes related to collections and managing technology.
- Supporting the arts community in Watsonville.

Goal 1 - Increase access to library resources by implementing bookmobile service and adding weekend hours.

Area of Focus: ACCESS

Justification:

- Responds to overwhelming request from community survey respondents.
- Using the current “BiblioVan” and ultimately a future bookmobile provides a low cost, efficient strategy for marketing the library and building an audience for underserved segments of the community.
- Bookmobile service will expand visibility of WPL at community events, schools, and senior centers.
- Recent advances in bookmobile vehicles are more fuel efficient (available in hybrid models) and can provide WiFi connectivity – operating as mobile branch libraries.
- A gradual approach to rolling out weekend hours on a limited test basis can help build momentum and awareness about the library especially when paired with other library-sponsored programs and/or downtown events.

Strategy for Weekend hours: (evaluate effectiveness and staffing needs as we go; work with Human Resources)

When	Frequency	Notes
Year One	Open Main Library on Saturdays for 4 hours, once a month	Offer a program
Year Two	Open Main Library on Saturdays for 4 hours 2X per month	Offer a program

Year Three	Open Main Library on Saturdays for 4 hours every week	Increase programming and recruit additional staff
Year Four	Open Main Library on Saturdays for 6 hours per week	Increase programming/events/staff
Year Five	Open Main on Saturday for 8 hours each week	Increase programming/events/staff

Goal 1 (continued) – Bookmobile Outreach Strategy

Year 1

- Take the (current) BiblioVan sponsored city events such as National Night Out and tie into events that are already happening. Create an Outreach Master Plan. Use Geographic Information Services (GIS) computer-based mapping technology to determine geographic areas in need.
- Begin exploration regarding the current state of library bookmobile service, the specifications and costs that relate to an acquisition of a mid-size bookmobile/biblioteca ambulante. The cost and funding to purchase, staff, shelve, and maintain the vehicle including the feasibility, staffing, insurance needs, partnerships, alliances.

Year 2

- At least 4 visits per year to events and locations such as the senior center, Second Harvest Food Bank, farmer's market, park cleanups, Earth Day events, free lunch programs. Connect with community partners (Science Workshop, Parks and Recreation events, etc.) who already have a presence. Where are they and can we come, too? Have a plan to get the bookmobile greenlit.

Year 3

- At least 8 visits per year to community locations. Continue finding more locations for visits, pulling from those above and new connections. Hopefully funds have been identified to purchase a mid-size bookmobile. Staff picks out the interior of the bookmobile. Community votes on exterior wrap.

Year 4

- Establish monthly visits utilizing the new mid-size bookmobile to local community areas with limited access to the library or limited access to information about the library or

libraries in general. Continue to utilize the BiblioVan to provide services to homebound individuals.

Year 5

- Increase visits to 24 per year, at least twice per month. Resist the urge to paint racing stripes on the new bookmobile.

Measure success on a yearly basis through surveys/assessments and adjust tactics as needed.

Goal 2 – Increase public awareness about library services by working with a communications consultant/firm to identify target audiences, key messages, create a communications strategy, and measure its effectiveness by conducting an annual community survey.

Area of Focus - AWARENESS

Justification:

- WPL has a well-developed portfolio of library programs and services that a large segment of the community is unaware of.
- WPL lacks internal expertise to craft a professional communication strategy.
- Library and community data exists that can be “mined” to identify market gaps.
- A regular understanding of community needs can be used for continuous service improvements.

Year 1 through Year 5

- Develop a request for proposals for a communications consultant.
- Assign a staff person to be the point person who work with the consultant to develop performance metrics such as:
 - Increased program attendance.
 - Increased traffic on digital platforms.
 - Evaluate what to focus/improve upon the following year.
- Measure success on a yearly basis through surveys/assessments and adjust tactics as needed.

Goal 3 - Streamline in-houses processes re: technical services, circulation services, IT, by exploring contracts with 3rd party vendors, or the City of Watsonville.

Area of Focus – OPERATIONS

Justification:

- Community survey respondents stated that they want quicker access to more books, eBooks, and other library materials.
- Collaborations between, among, and with libraries can result in cost savings that could result in greater efficiencies.

Year 1

- Establish a maintenance/repair/replacement schedule for computer equipment and software updates.
- Work with city administration to create a more responsive IT ticketing system that focuses on “on-call” services, unprocessed orders, and basic IT training for internal staff.

Year 2

- Establish an agreement with the City IT department to have a dedicated IT staff position in the library (20 hours minimum).
- Convert existing Technical Services and Circulation staff that are 20-hour employees to 40-hour employees to expedite copy-cataloging and other library processes.
- Year 2 and ongoing – work with contract vendors to:
 - improve electronic resource wait times.
 - explore lending agreements with nearby systems.
 - identify best practices for the physical processing of materials and provide training for internal staff.

Year 3

- Automate the physical handling of materials by purchasing an Automated Material Handling System (AMH). Immediate check-in of materials returned by patrons and high-speed library book sorting makes the materials in demand reach the next patron as fast as possible.

Year 4

- Budget and recruit additional staff to support the increase of operational hours and book budget allocations.

Goal 4 – Work with local nonprofit arts organizations and city departments to promote the arts and function as one anchor for downtown development.

Area of Focus – ARTS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Justification:

- Focus group participants from the nonprofit sector shared a vision for Watsonville as a community that values and supports the arts and the local artists.
- WPL's location and space are ideal for hosting events, exhibits, and supporting workshops for the art community.
- WPL can be an active participant in support of the literary arts community – as seen in its sponsorship of the poet laureate and youth poet laureate program.

Year 1

- Assign a staff person to be the point person who will be responsible for exploring partnerships (or co-sponsor) with existing organizations to develop a shared agenda and possible roles for WPL.
- Work with existing art studios/galleries to continue to expose artwork in the library to students and the wider community during open studios.
- Explore options for creating new exhibition space for art shows in the main library and the foyer of the building.
- Revisit the WPL policy on meeting rooms to make the spaces more accessible to the wider community.

Year 2

- Create an online (or “lendable”) audio tour guide to Watsonville arts and murals.
- Work with city hall to “warm-up” the building lobby including the possibility of constructing an outdoor roof-top patio on the Main Street side of the building.

Conclusion

Watsonville is a community in transition seeking to redefine its image, economy, and position as the second largest city in Santa Cruz county. The Library is in a good position to contribute and participate in shaping Watsonville's future.

Well-managed public libraries stay in touch with their communities and base the services, programs, and policies on local community needs. It is our conclusion that the Watsonville Public Library has been well-managed and has done a very good job of offering programs for young children, students, and provided opportunities for lifelong learners – especially for adults seeking assistance to improve their reading and English-language skills.

The challenge for WPL is that not enough residents are aware of the many programs and services that it has to offer. This strategic plan has been developed to improve the library's visibility in the community and to strengthen partnerships with organizations that can amplify its visibility.

Next Steps

- ⇒ Present the strategic plan to the Board of Trustees for review and approval.
- ⇒ Use the proposed goals as a framework for the budget proposal to the City.
- ⇒ Develop and finalize an organizational workplan based on the goals.
- ⇒ Assign library managers to develop workplans designed to advance the goals.
- ⇒ Set up performance measures and metrics for library managers.
- ⇒ Submit bi-monthly progress reports and updates to the Board.