



dc public library

# Know Your Neighborhood

DC Public Library  
Strategic Plan 2017-2021

Credit: Evy Mages





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# Executive Summary



The District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL, or the Library) is a cherished institution whose users reflect the diversity of the District—new arrivals as well as longtime residents, and residents from an array of ethnicities, backgrounds and orientations. Yet despite D.C.’s great progress and rich diversity, many residents continue to face challenges to find secure jobs, learn a marketable skill, succeed in school or acquire basic information and computer literacy skills.

To strengthen its legacy as a vital community institution serving all residents, the Library is committed to introducing new programs and services and customizing its offerings to better serve each neighborhood—particularly in ways that help those who need it most. This strategic plan, which will serve as the essential roadmap to guide the Library’s work for the next five years, represents its answer to these challenges. To inform the creation of the plan and ensure that every voice was heard in the process, the Library conducted an intensive citywide community needs assessment in late 2015 that reached thousands of residents. Valuable input was provided by more than 2,000 residents and 200 library staff members through various means that included a phone survey, community meetings, focus groups and web surveys, through which the Library:

- Collected input from residents across D.C. via a phone or online survey;
- Engaged the public in community conversations held at branches throughout the District;
- Hosted a series of focus groups for community partners and service providers representing D.C.’s citizens; and
- Conducted a survey and focus groups for library staff.

**More than 2,000 residents and 200 library staff provided valuable input into the strategic plan.**

Input Method	Participants
Phone Survey	600
Web Survey	1,526
Community Meetings: Tenley-Friendship, Shaw and Anacostia Libraries	50
Staff Focus Groups	74
Staff Survey	150
Partner and Service Provider Focus Groups	72

**Understanding that participation with the Library may be the best indicator of its value to the community, the Library will know that it has been successful if by 2022:**

**75%** District residents have active DC Public Library accounts.

**5**  
Million Library items are borrowed annually.

**5**  
Million Visits to library locations and outreach events are made annually.

That vision is captured in one simple principle: Know Your Neighborhood.

Across the District, residents said they envision the Library of the future as a community learning hub, with neighborhood branches serving their communities in unique ways. The Library also found that quality books and other traditional offerings remain of top importance to residents, and many residents are still unaware of the Library's existing programs and newer services.

Thanks in part to this extensive community outreach, a vision for the Library's next five years emerged. That vision is captured in one simple principle: Know Your Neighborhood, which means that individual libraries should tailor their services to reflect the unique communities they serve. This includes an emphasis on advancing equity among all residents, especially among those who have no or limited access to resources and services.

Through its strategic plan, DCPL commits to advancing four priority areas to improve the lives and well-being of District residents: 1) Reading, 2) Digital Citizenship, 3) Strong Communities and 4) Local History and Culture. In order to successfully implement the plan, the Library will focus on Stewardship to ensure alignment of resources and responsiveness to community needs.

The Library has established three important indicators of its success to achieve the overarching goals of the five-year strategic plan, outlined below. Understanding that participation with the Library may be the best indicator of its value to the community, the Library will know that it has been successful if by 2022:

- Seventy-five percent of District residents have active DC Public Library accounts;
- Five million library items are borrowed annually; and
- Five million visits to library locations and outreach events are made annually.

Each priority area and its corresponding objectives reflect a vital element of library programming and services.

**READING: Support new readers and cultivate a love of reading.**

**The Library will provide services and programs that build and cultivate literacy and a love of reading.**

The District is widely considered one of the most literate cities in the country, and this passion for reading is reflected in users' active use of library resources, from traditional books and magazines to e-books and audiobooks.



Yet for all its passionate readers, the District is not unlike other cities across the country that are confronting distressing literacy and achievement gaps among adults and children alike. For this reason, a major focus of this priority area will be to connect the residents who can most benefit from literacy assistance with new and expanded library programs and services to help them succeed. The entire city prospers when more residents are literate and reading.

To support new readers and cultivate a love of reading, the Library will:

- Promote a culture of literacy and the great benefits of reading.
- Connect public library services to students and educators.
- Expand services for adults who are developing readers.
- Ensure reliable and convenient access to a responsive library collection of books and other materials.

### **DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: Prepare residents for life online.**

#### **Support digital citizenship by providing technology, internet access and training.**

District residents turn to libraries for both technology and internet access and opportunities to develop their digital skills. The Library's digital services are particularly important to seniors, African-American and Latino residents.

Furthermore, while regular and constant access to the internet is becoming increasingly possible for a greater number of people, the complexities associated with that access demand a greater effort from libraries to ensure that residents are prepared for life online. Understanding the importance of online security, digital etiquette and related digital literacies is crucial as residents spend more of their time online.

To better serve the District's traditionally vulnerable populations and prepare them for success in career and life, the Library will:

- Ensure residents have the skills to navigate an increasingly digital world.
- Expand access to technology and the internet in the communities that need it most.



**STRONG COMMUNITIES:** Ensure neighborhood libraries are vital centers of community learning and civic engagement.

**Strengthen communities through services, programs, outreach and increased use of the Library's physical campus.**

Library branches have always been central public spaces in the communities they serve. They are an extension of their neighborhoods; a gathering place for long-time residents and newcomers alike to come together and learn from one another. Throughout the community engagement process, residents expressed great interest in the Library expanding its role in the community. They also indicated that more outreach would allow DCPL to better serve the residents who depend on it the most and would most benefit from its services.

To build on this opportunity, the Library will:

- Reach low-users and non-users with new services.
- Increase use of the Library's physical campus.

**LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE:** Foster understanding and appreciation of what makes D.C. unique.

**Connect residents to the District's past, present and future by providing access to, experiences in, and support for local history and culture.**

A source of great pride for District residents is the city's dynamic culture—a combination of rich community history complemented with new neighbors and immigrants from all over the world. According to the needs assessment, residents want library branches to embrace their potential as cultural hubs in the diverse neighborhoods they serve.

To celebrate D.C.'s history and its constantly evolving culture, the Library will:

- Strengthen local history collections in collaboration with community partners.
- Offer residents a variety of local history and culture programs.
- Ensure D.C.'s creative community can rely on the Library for the resources it needs to flourish.

**Achieving the Plan — STEWARDSHIP:** Ensure the Library is positioned to respond to the changing needs of the community.

In order to accomplish the four preceding goals, the Library must focus on its own internal operations so that it can be responsive to emerging trends, changing city demographics and new technologies. By being a good steward of its resources — securing new resources for the Library and better aligning, allocating and strengthening existing resources — the Library will better serve District residents.

To successfully implement the strategic plan, the Library will:

- Align library resources with community needs.
- Plan and design library spaces to better serve the community.
- Use data to improve all aspects of library services.
- Pursue external funding and resources to deepen the library's impact.
- Increase awareness and understanding of evolving library services.

These priority areas are described in detail in the strategic plan. Together, they form a cohesive, actionable plan that positions the Library on a path toward growth and success.

Fulfilling the plan's vision in five years will require the engagement of everyone who will support or benefit from these efforts, and the Library welcomes ongoing input from all residents every step of the way. With help from community partners, library leaders and staff, and, most importantly, the community members whom the Library serves, this shared vision will become a reality, contributing to more prepared and prosperous residents.

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# Introduction

## A Look Back

In 2006, the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of the District of Columbia Public Library System released a report that led a DC Public Library transformation and a significant public investment to improve an underfunded library system. The following achievements exemplify this transformation:

- **Launched the Sing, Talk and Read program to engage parents in their young child's literacy development. The program includes workshops, tips and instructional videos for parents and a free book every month for parents who register.**
- **Increased public access computers almost 150 percent since 2008, from 409 to 1,000 computers, and began to offer free Wi-Fi in every library location.**

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**Gregory M. McCarthy**

Board President,  
DC Public Library



**Richard Reyes-Gavilan**

Executive Director,  
DC Public Library

The District of Columbia is a growing city that proudly embraces its unique history, identity and culture. It is home to families whose roots here are centuries old, a thriving community of professionals committed to public service, a vibrant and expanding arts scene, and a large and growing immigrant population. The District is a vast and diverse mosaic of residents of all ages, backgrounds, careers and lifestyles. With the great growth, prosperity and diversity of D.C., there still are residents whose economic and educational aspirations remain unfulfilled. Many residents find it difficult to secure and sustain jobs or grow in their careers. Stubborn achievement gaps remain between students in underserved communities and those in more affluent communities.

In light of these disparities, the District of Columbia Public Library's goal is for all District residents, regardless of income, educational attainment or geographic area, to have the opportunity to grow, excel and become successful contributors to their communities and society.

The vision of the Library's five-year strategic plan is centered on a core principle: Know Your Neighborhood. Each neighborhood library's programs and resources must be responsive to and reflective of their own distinctive communities. Everything from the collections of books and materials to services to the layout of



the branches should be tailored to each neighborhood's needs and aspirations. Crucial to this service customization is a new focus on inclusion and equity, in the hope that DCPL may help address persistent challenges faced by many in the District.

Over the past 10 years, District taxpayers have made tremendous investments in new library buildings, new technologies, more books and longer hours that have resulted in significantly increased use of library services. Neighborhood libraries are community unifiers that attract residents from all corners of the District. Whether they check out library books and digital resources, attend cultural events, participate in literacy and job seeker workshops, acquire new computer skills, or discover how to start a business or use a 3-D printer, District residents know that they can rely on DCPL to meet their diverse information and learning needs. During a time of great changes across the city, rapidly changing neighborhoods may prioritize branch library services differently, but they share the common experience of the library as a haven for education and civic expression. While the Library is very proud of all it has accomplished in the past decade, as one of the few institutions that serves residents through all stages of life, DCPL is compelled to do more.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of any public library's success is the degree to which residents voluntarily choose to avail themselves of its programs and services. This will be the key measure of success for DCPL's new strategic plan. As the Library endeavors to reach new and existing users in innovative ways—and encourage their continued engagement—it is the Library's hope that D.C. residents will grow ever more satisfied with the library, continuing its legacy of relevance and impact as a cornerstone of District life.

If the Library is successful, more District residents will be job-ready, literacy rates will rise, and residents across D.C. will gain a greater appreciation for the rich history and culture of our communities.

We would like to thank everyone who has dedicated their time and talents to the creation of this strategic plan, including DCPL employees and volunteers, Friends of the Library and the DC Public Library Foundation. Most of all, we would like to thank the thousands of D.C. residents who took the time to share their ideas and perspectives.

It is our sincere hope that you appreciate the vision and direction we have laid out.

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- **From 2008 to 2016, increased the overall number of materials borrowed annually by 250 percent, from 1.8 million to 4.4 million.**
- **Increased use of the Library's digital collection, growing from 7,000 items downloaded in 2008 to 1.2 million in 2016.**
- **Increased active library accounts by more than 60 percent from 2008 to 2016.**
- **Opened the Digital Commons at the MLK Library with public computers, co-working and meeting spaces, and a self-publishing book printing machine. Later opened the Fabrication, Studio and Memory labs.**
- **Hired the Library's first ever social worker to serve its most vulnerable visitors, including customers experiencing homelessness. Opened a library in the D.C. Jail.**

**In 2017, DCPL is one of the largest library systems in the country that is open seven days per week in all locations. Sixteen of its 26 buildings are new or fully renovated. The system boasts four million annual visits from individuals who use the library's technology, meeting rooms, books and digital resources in record numbers. The Library looks to build on this progress in the years to come.**



Credit: Paul Rivera

# Methodology & Key Findings

## Methodology

From the launch of the Library's strategic planning process more than a year ago, it was understood that input from as many D.C. residents and stakeholders as possible would be needed to help the Library map out a compelling vision and direction for the Library over the next five years.

To this end, over a six-month period, DCPL staff reached out to residents, library users and partners, service providers and other stakeholders through a variety of channels to gather insights and perspectives on how they have used the library to date and what their priorities are for the future. The outreach effort included:

- A statistically valid phone survey of residents from every ward in the District, half of whom use the library with some frequency and the other half who use the library rarely or not at all;
- A shorter survey open to anyone available on the Library's website or in paper form at library branches, community events and other locations;
- Three community meetings held at library branches in different regions of the District;
- A series of focus groups with diverse constituencies, community partners and service providers representing a wide range of users of library programs and services; and
- A system-wide survey and series of focus groups with library staff.

*For more detail, see Appendix.*

All in all, the Library engaged nearly 2,500 individuals across D.C., asking them challenging questions such as:

- What are the most important programs and services the library currently provides?
- What should the Library's priorities be for the future?
- If you use the library rarely or not at all, why?
- Should the library continue to be all things to all people, or should it direct more resources to address the needs of specific communities?
- How can the Library improve operations so that residents' needs are met by their local branch while making sure that they can access other quality services at branches in other communities, online or at other places outside the library walls in their own community?

Through this process, a variety of valuable and thought-provoking insights, ideas, perspectives and questions emerged. Beyond offering many excellent ideas and suggestions for how the Library can enhance and improve its programs and services moving forward, a handful of key themes emerged.

## Key Findings

**Quality books and other traditional library offerings continue to rank the highest in terms of programs and services residents use or desire.**

Books and digital resources such as e-books and DVDs remain the most popular of the services offered by the library<sup>1</sup>. Last year, residents borrowed more than three million books and other physical materials from the library while accessing more than one million e-books and other digital downloads. Access to more of these quality resources is at the top of residents' list of priorities.

**Residents envision the library of the future as a community education hub.**

Residents across D.C. see convenient access to a branch location closest to their home as most critical. They want to see a library that offers not only books and other quality resources but also access to technology, more classes and cultural events for all ages; houses multilingual resources; and provides access to activities that offer learning and growth opportunities to build stronger local communities.



**Many users are satisfied with library offerings, but some wish for even more quality resources.**

Top Desired Resources	Users
Newer or More Books	23%
Events, Lectures or Classes	13%
Expanded Online Usage or More Computers	10%
None, Library Provides What Users Need	23%

<sup>1</sup> All survey citations are from the statistically valid phone survey of D.C. residents conducted in 2015, unless otherwise indicated.



**Community meeting participants were responsive to the idea of the Library tailoring its services to the needs of the community and forming strong partnerships with local school, universities and nonprofits.**

*Source: DC Public Library community meetings, 2015.*

In addition, a significant number of residents — particularly residents from underserved groups and communities — say they would be more likely to use the library than they currently do if it were to expand its practice of offering services in other community locations outside the four walls of library branches. Staff and community service providers agree that the library should be an extension of the community. They see an opportunity to build stronger partnerships with local organizations and envision the library as a community connector that directs people to the information and resources these organizations provide.

**Residents see the library serving their diverse communities in different ways.**

Despite the importance they place on convenience and accessibility, most residents appear to recognize that all library branches cannot offer the exact same programs and services to residents of each community. They say they are willing to travel to other branches beyond their local community for cultural programs, literary events and certain other programs and services. And, the fact that residents' expressed priorities vary significantly depending on where they live and other factors suggests they would value the Library being more thoughtful and targeted in what it offers and where.

**The Library needs to do more to promote existing programs and services.**

In the surveys and during all community meetings, a significant number of participants expressed their desire for the Library to do more to build awareness about existing programs, services and resources. Lack of awareness was an especially important issue for non-users and newer residents, and even frequent users stated they were not very familiar with the complete range of current offerings. They believed that their communities would be more inclined to use the Library's programs and services if they were promoted more widely and effectively and there was increased community engagement.

These key findings, which emerged from the Library's conversations with D.C. residents and library staff and partners ultimately helped guide the development of four major priority areas for the Library over the next five years. Along with the essential programs and services residents have come to count on and new initiatives already in the planning stages, the Library's hope is that the priorities and initiatives outlined in this plan will ensure that all residents find something valuable in their library.

# Vision For The Next Five Years



Over the next five years, the Library will build upon its successes and continue to evolve with the changing needs of its users.

Because the Library is a community institution that serves all residents at all stages of life, its strategic plan should be informed by the wants and needs of the community. Indeed, the Library's five-year strategic plan is informed by input from District residents, library staff, like-missioned community organizations, and deliberated, vetted and endorsed by the DC Public Library Board of Trustees.

From this input, the Library identified four priority areas and goals designed to collectively guide the vision and direction of the Library: 1) Reading, 2) Digital Citizenship, 3) Strong Communities and 4) Local History and Culture. In addition, to ensure the success of the plan, the Library recognizes the significance of internal stewardship — how it organizes, manages and improves its operations. Each priority includes specific initiatives that lay out a clear path for staff, partners and others to follow. Some of the initiatives outlined in the following pages are already in progress or in the planning stages; some build on previous successful efforts; and yet others represent completely new ideas. Many initiatives will evolve in the coming years and others may be added.

The Library's success in achieving the overarching goals of the five-year strategic plan will be measured, in large part, by residents' participation in and satisfaction with its programs and services.

**Understanding that participation with the library may be the best indicator of its value to the community, the Library will know that it has been successful if by 2022:**

**75%** District residents have active DC Public Library accounts.

**5 Million** Library items are borrowed annually.

**5 Million** Visits to library locations and outreach events are made annually.



**More than half of users name the book collection as the main library service they use.**

Main Service Used	Users
Books	62%
Research and Information	34%
Computer and Internet Use	13%
Attend Events	5%
Movies	4%

# Reading

**Support new readers and cultivate a love of reading.**

The Library will provide services and programs that build and cultivate literacy and a love of reading.

Widely considered one of the most literate cities in the country, D.C. boasts a well-educated population that enjoys reading books, newspapers, magazines and a wide variety of other materials and resources in print and, increasingly, online. The Library sees a reflection of this passion for reading among residents young and old in the increasing number of books and other materials borrowed every year, participation in reading programs and use of library buildings. The Library plays a leading role for families across the District in strengthening that critical foundation for success in life.

In the surveys conducted for this strategic plan, quality books and other traditional library offerings, unsurprisingly, ranked the highest when it comes to the programs and services residents use or desire. A majority of library users mentioned books as the one or two main services they typically use, followed by 34 percent of users who named research and information. Almost 25 percent of users surveyed said they wished the library had newer books or a larger selection. Library staff agreed; nearly half surveyed ranked “books and reading” as their top priority for the library of the future.<sup>2</sup>



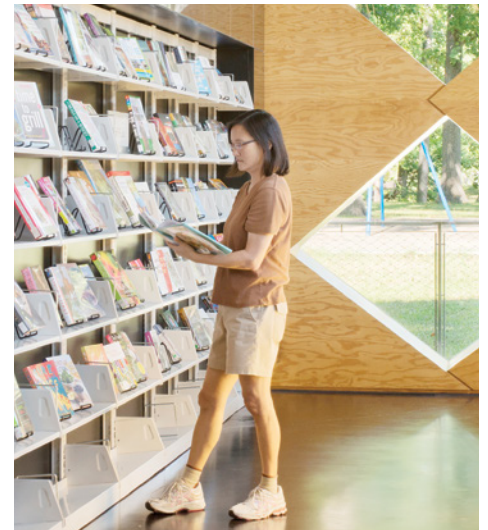
Nevertheless, like other urban areas across the country, D.C. remains a city with sobering literacy gaps within its population. A distressing number of adults lack basic reading skills, and achievement gaps in reading especially affect children in low-income communities, as well as children who have disabilities or for whom English is not their first language.<sup>3</sup> As a result, a major focus for this first and most important goal must be to connect those segments of our population who can most benefit from literacy-focused assistance and continuing education with new and expanded library programs and services that meet their needs.

### **Promote a culture of literacy and the great benefits of reading.**

#### **Develop a love of reading in young children by expanding Sing, Talk and Read to reach all eligible children in targeted neighborhoods.**

Over the past several years, the Library has supported parents as they help their young children gain early reading skills through its Sing, Talk & Read (STAR) program. STAR encourages singing, talking and reading by parents and caregivers to help prepare children for school. The Library has offered workshops throughout D.C. for parents and caregivers to learn early literacy principles and practices that they can incorporate into their daily interactions with young children, and hosted regular storytime reading groups in all neighborhood libraries and at community events. Most recently, in order to further encourage good reading habits, DCPL has implemented Books from Birth, a program that delivers one book per month to the homes of children from birth to age five.

Exposing very young children to books and reading helps to develop lifelong reading habits that are essential for success in school and life. As of March 2017, almost 23,000 children have participated in Books from Birth. Of those, 13,237, or about 60% of eligible children in targeted neighborhoods, are enrolled. The Library will expand the program with the goal to register all eligible children in targeted neighborhoods of Wards 1, 5, 7 and 8 by 2022, an increase of about 50 percent. Initial plans include



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<sup>2</sup> DC Public Library staff survey, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Goodman, M., Finnegan, R., Mohadjer, L., Krenzke, T., & Hogan, J. (2013). Literacy, Numeracy, and Problem Solving in Technology-Rich Environments Among U.S. Adults: Results from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2012: First Look (NCES 2014-008). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. et al.



**Community meeting participants emphasized that there needs to be greater availability of literacy-based programming for both children and adults.**

*Source: DC Public Library community meeting, Anacostia Library, 2015.*

partnering with the D.C. Housing Authority to pilot a monthly book club for Books from Birth families in which they discuss the books they're receiving and share real-life experiences and tips, conducting more workshops in Spanish, and developing tools to measure the impact of the program.

**Double summer reading completion in targeted communities and provide more opportunities for youth to have a safe, enriching summer experience.**

DCPL offers a popular summer learning program to keep young people reading and visiting the library throughout the summer. While the program has grown rapidly, the Library is committed to reaching greater numbers of the District's youth. DCPL will work to double the number of completions in targeted neighborhoods by continuing to raise awareness of the program and partnering with schools and government agencies. The Library will also expand programs in targeted communities by offering new extended learning experiences, such as a library summer camp, in addition to its existing drop-in program.

**Prepare more children for kindergarten.**

Each library location offers birth to age five storytime programs for young readers. These programs expose children to the words, sentences and sounds that are the building blocks of early literacy, helping prepare children to read when they enter school. While the quantity and participation levels of storytime programs varies across all locations, data shows participation is lower in communities that experience achievement gaps in reading. DCPL will implement branch-level targets for birth to age five programming to ensure robust offerings across all branch locations.

**Connect public library services to students and educators.**

**Improve student access to library materials.**

In 2015, the Library launched its All Access program designed to provide easier access to library books and other materials and ultimately increase use of the library by D.C.'s public school students. Through two innovations, the program made it easier for students to use the library: eliminating library fines and fees for youth ages 19 and younger and automatically creating a library account for every public school student with a DC One Card. The next phase of All Access will make the program more efficient, strengthen collaboration between the Library and public schools, and further expand student access to library materials.

The Library and D.C. Public Schools will partner to jointly select and acquire school-owned books for school libraries. This collaboration will leverage the Library's expertise and systems to help ensure that all D.C. Public Schools libraries have a quality

collection of books and other materials. A primary benefit of the collaboration is that school librarians will be able to spend more time helping students instead of performing back office operational activities. The Library will offer to enter into similar partnerships with public charter schools. In addition, the Library may further expand partnership services, distribute books and other library materials for use in classrooms, and share collection and distribution operations with public schools.

### **Expand services for adults who are developing readers.**

#### **Improve access to adult literacy services.**

Currently, the Library runs an Adult Literacy Resource Center at the MLK Library where it provides literacy skills assessments to adults who lack high school credentials and want to prepare for alternative routes to a diploma. Staff members guide users to the course of study that meets them at their current skill level and will best help them reach their goals. Students may be connected to tutoring in the Library's Adult Learning Lab or to digital literacy classes, and students at basic or beginning levels are referred to basic literacy providers in the District.

To increase access to these services for residents in other parts of D.C., the Library will establish satellite adult literacy centers at two neighborhood branches. The centers will incorporate best practices that enable adult learners to persist in their learning efforts over a sustained period of time.

### **Ensure reliable and convenient access to a responsive library collection.**

#### **Make it easier for readers to discover, request and access library collections.**

Increasingly, people are finding what they want and need at their library. This is reflected in the growing number of books and other materials borrowed annually. The Library celebrates this growth and will make it easier than ever for people to discover and access library materials.

To ensure that all District residents have easy access to a library collection that is responsive to their needs, DCPL will update the catalog to make it easier for users to search and find the items they seek. Library users will be able to place holds on items on order that have not yet arrived and it will be easier to request new titles for library acquisition. In addition, the Library will examine usage data to better select and acquire library materials that match user interests. These enhancements will help increase the number of books and other materials borrowed.





Credit: Kate Warren

**Residents in Ward 7 and Ward 8, seniors, older and African-American women, and residents with a disability are disproportionately likely to identify the library as their main source of information.**

## Digital Citizenship

**Prepare residents for life online.**

**Support digital citizenship by providing technology and internet access and training.**

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Life's activities are moving quickly and inexorably online. Seeking an answer to a simple question, evaluating the veracity of a news source, applying for a job or health benefits, and interacting with a child's teacher are all examples of activities that require proficiency with technology and a broader understanding of how technology is changing the world. Users of public libraries are increasingly turning to libraries not only for access to technology but also for opportunities to develop their online skills. This is especially true for vulnerable populations, like some job seekers, seniors and formerly incarcerated men and women (or returning citizens), who have limited access to or knowledge of technology.

With more than 1,000 connected computers, DCPL is the District's leading provider of free, high-speed internet access. In the Library's survey, disproportionate numbers of residents in Wards 7 and 8, seniors and residents with disabilities identify the library as their main source of information. Residents of Ward 8, African-American and Latino residents, as well as residents with young children, are more likely to cite access to computers and technology as a priority. And when asked what residents wished the library offered, African-American residents were much more likely than white residents to point to faster, more reliable internet access and more computers.

## **Ensure residents have the skills to navigate an increasingly digital world.**

### **Increase technology trainings to include digital literacy, emerging technologies and digital readiness.**

The Library provides a diverse array of technology services focused on workforce development, information literacy and science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). Hundreds of classes take place every year.

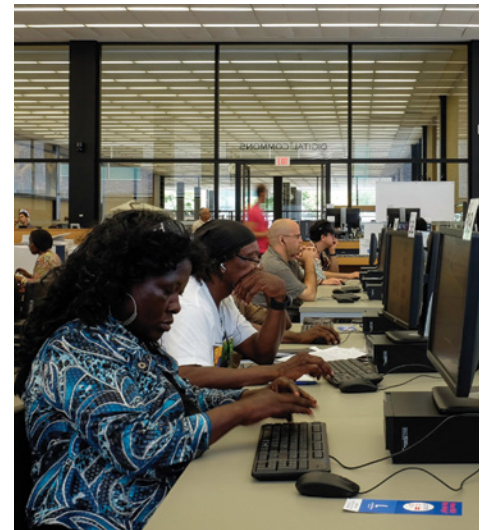
The Library will increase opportunities for technology training and assistance at neighborhood libraries and further customize trainings by branch. Courses will cover the broad spectrum of digital citizenship and include related topics such as privacy protection and digital etiquette. Digital literacy with a special emphasis on job readiness will be stressed in areas of the District with high unemployment. The Library will conduct an analysis of existing library programming and examine training opportunities offered by others in the community. This will help the Library design comprehensive technology training that responds to community needs.

To meet the challenge of providing customized and varied technology training and assistance, the Library will review and revamp service delivery and staff skills. As part of the Library's assessment of digital training across the library system, DCPL will examine its staff training needs. The Library will train staff to provide formal, scheduled digital literacy training for groups and on-demand one-on-one training for residents who need individualized help improving their digital literacy skills.

### **Expand workforce development opportunities through digital assessments and computer and skills certifications.**

The Library's computer trainings are a critical lifeline for users who need technology skills to apply or qualify for jobs that require technology proficiency. DCPL will expand its workforce development offerings to include online digital literacy assessments and corresponding training to help residents build their skills and broaden their career options. Assessments will analyze residents' readiness to complete the online GED exam and future coursework. The Library will help users navigate and complete coursework for their desired career objectives, and users will earn credentials that certify their mastery of in-demand skills to better qualify them for 21st-century jobs.

In addition, the Library will partner with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to offer Microsoft Office Specialist industry-standard certifications in software applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other advanced credentials.



Credit: Phil Freelon

**In Wards 5, 7 and 8, where, on average, close to three in 10 residents live in poverty, the average home broadband adoption rate is less than 65 percent.**

*Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013, as cited by Connect.DC, Building the Bridge, 2015.*

More than 160,000 D.C. residents lack internet service at home.

**Expand access to technology and the internet in the communities that need it most.**

**Better align the Library's technology offerings with community demand.**

Libraries across the country are witnessing dramatic changes in how users engage with their technology offerings. Currently, DCPL has 1,000 public access computers at library locations across D.C. Users are able to print, scan and copy documents at all locations. In addition, the Library's public, free Wi-Fi connects a rapidly growing number of devices to the Library's wireless network.

The Library will conduct an audit of its technology and how it's used so that the Library can better meet residents' needs. At every location, DCPL will assess the gaps between current offerings and neighborhood demand to improve technology and internet offerings and infrastructure.

**Pilot a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot lending pilot program.**

More than 160,000 D.C. residents lack internet service at home.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these residents are low-income or unemployed individuals who cannot afford broadband services, which prevents them from learning new skills, applying for jobs and taking advantage of other opportunities that come with access to high-speed internet.

In order to provide D.C. residents internet access in neighborhoods where internet adoption is the lowest, DCPL is implementing a mobile Wi-Fi initiative in the Deanwood and Congress Heights neighborhoods, two areas with the lowest broadband adoption rates in D.C. Participants can check out a mobile Wi-Fi device or hotspot and a laptop to use at home from the Deanwood and Parklands-Turner libraries, allowing them to develop job skills, apply for jobs and complete homework. The Library will encourage participants to use its online services such as downloadable books, online classes and streaming music or videos. DCPL will monitor and evaluate the success of the program to determine the potential for expansion.

DCPL recognizes that while a Wi-Fi lending program provides some relief to residents in need of internet service, it does not solve the larger access problem. The Library's goal is to be a leading advocate for increased access to technology and information wherever is most convenient for D.C. residents, whether in a library facility or elsewhere.

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<sup>4</sup> District of Columbia Government. (2015). *Building the Bridge: A Report on the State of the Digital Divide in the District of Columbia* [PDF]. Washington, D.C.: Connect.DC.





Credit: Valerie Brown

## Strong Communities

**Ensure neighborhood libraries are vital centers of community learning and civic engagement.**

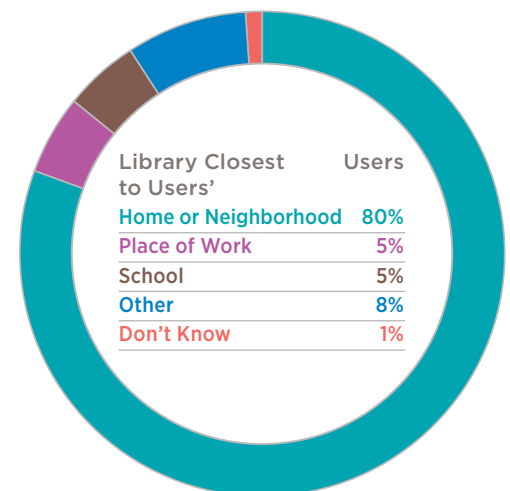
Strengthen communities through services, programs, outreach and increased use of the Library's physical campus.

The Library's branches have always served as an extension of their local communities—a safe space where people from across D.C. are welcomed and have the opportunity to meet, dialogue and learn from one other. In fact, concurrent with the rise in use of the Library's online services, access to a physical branch still remains vitally important to the vast majority of residents. Nine out of 10 library users surveyed stated that they either only use their physical branch or use both physical and online services, and almost eight in 10 visit the library branch closest to where they live.

Community meeting participants felt that the Library's investments would go further and its programs and services would be used more widely if each branch tailored its offerings even more to the needs of the immediate community. For example, some community members indicated the need for GED preparation programs at their branch, while at another location, participants noted the need for training on advanced software programs such as Adobe Photoshop.

Interestingly, residents also say they are very open to the Library increasing its presence and impact in their communities, outside the walls of the branches. Residents, focus group

Four in five library users attend the library branch closest to where they live.





Credit: Valerie Brown

**“I like the computers, but I think the libraries should be so much more, including where children come and enjoy the atmosphere with parents and caregivers, where adults and teens can share books and have conversations, and where authors and readers can share and learn.”**

**— Community Meeting Participant**

*Source: DC Public Library community meeting, Tenley-Friendship Library, 2015.*

participants and library staff who provided input all agreed that offering services outside library branches, at locations such as senior centers and recreation centers and through stronger partnerships with local organizations, would benefit all District residents, but especially the most vulnerable.

### **Reach low-users and non-users with new services.**

#### **Provide new and innovative services to the District’s most difficult-to-reach residents.**

For some residents, it is harder to be active library users because they face a variety of barriers to access. Some have multiple jobs and don’t have time to visit the library. Some lack affordable transportation options, which prevents them from using the library. These residents can benefit from having library services delivered to them, whether those services are storytime programs at child care centers or book delivery to senior centers.

DCPL will expand its commitment to serving hard-to-reach residents by launching a department of outreach and inclusion. This department will be dedicated to providing library services and programs beyond branch locations and will prioritize connecting with residents who face barriers to library participation. The department will partner with other D.C. government agencies and nonprofits to maximize effectiveness.

#### **Launch new programs for families to learn together.**

Family learning is a critical component of a child’s educational growth in the first five years. The public library is an ideal institution for family learning because it provides services for children and their caregivers. Parents, as the strongest influence on their children’s learning, can learn to take advantage of opportunities in everyday activities and use these opportunities to develop their own skills. Accordingly, the Library offers many family learning opportunities, such as STAR trainings and storytime programs, which model ways parents can interact with their child.

The Library will pilot family learning programs in targeted communities. The programs will be designed to improve and extend learning for children from birth to age 18 by incorporating intergenerational, interactive play and learning experiences and may include STAR programs, summer reading, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities. The Library will pilot programs with returning citizens and their families through community partnerships with D.C. government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

#### **Provide teenagers a new opportunity to inform library services.**

Following a successful pilot in 2016, DCPL will roll out a Teen Council to give teens a richer library experience and allow the Library to benefit from their perspective. When fully implemented,

youth representing every ward will advise the Library on services to teens, programming, new technologies and technology spaces, and social media outreach. Teen Council members will be branch-based and spend time working with neighborhood teens on a variety of projects, programs and outreach.

### **Increase use of the Library's physical campus.**

#### **Embed community partners within libraries to provide residents with essential services that complement the Library's offerings.**

The District is home to hundreds of nonprofits and D.C. agencies with missions that complement the Library's. In many cases, these agencies serve the same people as the Library. DCPL already leverages its spaces and hosts many of these organizations on a temporary or semi-permanent basis—for example, the DC Health Link's health insurance enrollment center at the MLK Library and the Department of Corrections' video visitation at Anacostia Library.

As a way to serve more residents, the Library will strengthen its position as a neighborhood anchor, embed even more community partners in library locations where appropriate, and offer new services to library users. When the modernized MLK Library opens in 2020, a large portion of the second floor will be dedicated to these community alliances.

#### **Increase use of library meeting, conference and study spaces.**

Most library branches have community, conference and study rooms available for the public to use free of charge. These spaces are used frequently and in demand by students, entrepreneurs and community groups. The Library's goal is to have every meeting and study space in each of its facilities in use every hour that the building is open. Therefore, the Library will work to increase community use of meeting rooms at branch libraries across the system. The Library will develop goals for usage rates, a communications plan for increasing public awareness and, possibly, policy changes that could facilitate increased use.

#### **Tailor hours of operation to meet community needs.**

In 2014, DCPL received additional dollars to fund seven-day-a-week service across the District. With the exception of library locations that are co-located with other D.C. agencies, operating hours are currently uniform across branches, including three nights per week when all branches are open until 9 p.m. In an effort to be more responsive to the needs of the community, the Library will study its operating hours to determine if there is a demand in some locations for either later closures or earlier openings. The study will examine library attendance figures, meeting room statistics and surveys to inform possible changes.

- **In partner and service provider focus groups, participants indicated that the library should serve as an extension of the community.**
- **They see an opportunity to build stronger partnerships with local organizations and envision the library as a community-connector that directs people to the information and resources these organizations provide.**

*Source: DC Public Library partner and service provider focus groups, 2015.*





Credit: Kate Warren

**Residents are willing to travel to other libraries, besides their main branch, for local history and cultural programs, among others.**

Travel For	Users and Non-Users
Cultural Programs and Literary Events	44%
Local D.C. History	38%
Access to Books, E-Books, and Downloadable Audio or Video	38%
Adult Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Programs	37%
Spaces for Studying, Meetings and Events	34%
Job Seeker and Career Services and Programs	30%
Spaces that Allow You to Create Hands-On Projects	29%

## Local History & Culture

**Foster understanding and appreciation of what makes D.C. unique.**

Connect residents to the District's past, present and future by providing access to, experiences in and support for local history and culture.

D.C. boasts a vibrant mix of residents with deep connections to historic communities, young people who are brand new to the city, and an ever-changing cultural tapestry of immigrants from across the world. The Library provides an array of resources and activities to reflect and enhance the rich history, diversity and dynamism of D.C. These include the archival collections that trace D.C. community history, cultural programs, and creative classes and workshops held at branch locations and other local sites throughout the year.

Residents are clearly open to the idea of the Library fully embracing its potential as a creative and cultural hub of local neighborhoods. According to the survey, cultural programming and learning about D.C. history remain important priorities for library users and non-users alike. While residents rely heavily on their neighborhood libraries, many also said that they are willing to travel to other library locations for literary events and cultural programs such as music, film and dance (44 percent), events about local D.C. history (38 percent), and spaces for creating hands-on projects (29 percent).



## **Strengthen local history collections in collaboration with community partners.**

### **Build new and expanded local history collections for students, researchers and enthusiasts.**

The Library's special collections house a rich variety of resources that residents can access at the MLK Library and the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Library. These resources range from historic maps and newspapers, photograph collections and oral histories to the D.C. Punk and Go-Go archives.

DCPL will restructure its special collections into a new center that will include a social justice-focused reference collection that supports primary research. Public programs and exhibitions highlighting these materials will be created and presented for scholars, donors, students and the general public. The Library will create a special collections advisory committee to inform planning, composed of researchers, scholars and local history enthusiasts. The Library will identify and acquire archival collections to deepen its local history holdings.

### **Create the D.C. Oral History Collaborative to document and preserve the District's past.**

The Library collects, preserves and provides access to oral histories related to the D.C. community, comprising donated collections and oral history projects managed by library staff. Oral history collections are available digitally or in-house by appointment, and transcripts and indexes are available for most of the interviews. While the collection continues to grow through donations, it is limited in scope and size and does not yet represent the full diversity of the District's communities and neighborhoods.

To address these challenges, DCPL will work with the Historical Society of Washington, Humanities D.C. and other partners to create the D.C. Oral History Collaborative. The project will involve surveying existing oral histories housed in libraries, museums and cultural heritage organizations throughout D.C. and sharing oral history collections citywide and remotely to users outside the District.

### **Improve access to local digital content through new online tools and collaboration with the Digital Public Library of America.**

The Library currently makes archival content accessible via DigDC, an online portal to select items that have been digitized or were born digital. DigDC is one of several access points managed by academic and cultural heritage institutions in D.C., including The George Washington University and Humanities D.C. Collectively, these institutions maintain audio, photos, maps and ephemeral collections that span the history of the District and

- **The Library began a local history project in spring 2013 called Know Your Neighborhood, a series of programs and workshops tailored to the history and development of a given community, such as the history of Good Hope Road in Anacostia or the historic bridges of Rock Creek Park.**
- **Since its inception, the popular series has traveled to several neighborhoods and been met with enthusiastic community responses.**

represent diverse communities, organizations and individuals. These digitized collections are currently spread across multiple institutions, making them inconvenient to locate and use.

To make it easier for scholars, genealogists, students and the general public to discover and access digital collections, DCPL will partner with The George Washington University and the Washington Research Library Consortium to apply as a Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) hub for Washington, D.C. DPLA hubs are state, regional or other collaborations that host and aggregate digital objects from libraries, archives, museums and other cultural heritage institutions. DCPL, in its role as the State Library for the District of Columbia, is an appropriate leader and owner of this work, with the help of other D.C.-based repositories. If approved, the Library will begin to work with partner institutions to aggregate and provide access to all digitized collections available across D.C. institutions.

Additionally, DCPL will improve access to its DigDC platform. The platform currently contains 19 searchable collections, including photographs, oral histories, maps, newspapers, manuscripts and sound recordings. While DigDC is searchable and includes applications that enable user engagement, it is not interactive. The Library will seek funding and collaborative partnerships to identify, acquire and implement new tools for students, scholars and others to better interact with these collections.

### **Offer residents a variety of local history and culture programs.**

#### **Expand Know Your Neighborhood citywide.**

The Know Your Neighborhood program series will become a system-wide initiative in which every branch offers a signature program, event or series specifically tailored to that branch's community. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen the connection between communities and the public libraries that serve them and ultimately to provide residents a resource that is responsive to their community's needs. It will emphasize the central role that the Library plays in the cultural life of the community.

**Provide residents opportunities to explore the District's evolving history and culture.**

District of Change is a DCPL cultural initiative that examines the impact of gentrification and other demographic and cultural shifts in the District. While the Know Your Neighborhood program focuses on the culture and history of individual neighborhoods, District of Change seeks to tell the stories of the city at large and connect residents to the broader history and culture of the District. Currently, the program takes the form of a series of panel discussions at the MLK Library. Past topics included the arts, transportation and LGBTQ life in D.C.

The Library will expand District of Change to a citywide series that seeks to tell the story of D.C.'s past, present and future through exhibitions, performances and other events.

**Ensure D.C.'s creative community can rely on the Library for the resources it needs to flourish.**

**Launch a mobile technology lab targeting low-income neighborhoods.**

The Library will pilot a mobile technology lab that offers STEAM programs. Equipped with 3-D printers and other tools, the lab will provide hands-on emerging technology workshops and will make appearances at schools, community events and festivals.

**Make the Library a hub for the creative community.**

The Library has the opportunity to become a premiere gathering place for the District's growing creative community. The Library is a burgeoning location for artists to create and exhibit their work. It currently offers classes in creative skills such as 3-D printing, photography, knitting and more. It also partners with organizations such as A Creative DC to offer opportunities for the creative community to network and learn from each other and from library staff.

DCPL will solicit feedback from the creative community about how it can better meet its needs and will devise a service model to enhance the Library's role as a hub for the creative community. Also, in anticipation of the reopening of MLK Library, DCPL will strategically invest in staff and resources to bring more D.C.-based artists to the Library.





**“I’d like to see DCPL continue to be a leader in the city, having their talented staff continue to innovate and show the way forward.”**

**— Community Meeting Participant**

*Source: DC Public Library community meeting, Shaw Library, 2015.*

# Achieving the Plan — Stewardship

**Ensure the Library is positioned to respond to the changing needs of the community.**

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In order to achieve these ambitious goals and best serve the residents of D.C., the Library must continue to evolve the way it provides services and conducts business every day. Emerging trends, 21st-century technologies and the changing demographics and needs of many District neighborhoods demand an organizational structure and culture that is nimble, streamlined, transparent and responsive to the needs of the community and new ideas. Strengthening stewardship involves securing new resources, better aligning and leveraging existing resources, training staff so they can better serve library users, using data and physical space more effectively and efficiently, and constantly evaluating and improving upon systems and processes.

While more and more residents are using their local library branch and find great value in the variety of services offered, a sizable number of current users and non-users still have limited knowledge of the complete range of library offerings. As a result, more effective communications and marketing will be another key to achieving this strategic plan.

## **Align library resources with community needs.**

### **Match staff skills to neighborhood needs.**

An important way in which the Library will improve its responsiveness to evolving neighborhood needs will be through an updated staffing model that is informed by internal and external data and includes the needs of each location’s service area, as well as feedback from branch and department managers and other stakeholders.

In addition to devising a new staffing model, the Library will create positions based on new public services and ensure that existing staff have opportunities for change and growth within the organization.



## Use customer interaction data to better understand how individual library branches are used.

Currently, the Library collects a good deal of usage data, such as the number of books borrowed, the number of visits to each location, and the number of times computers are accessed by the public. However, the Library doesn't have data on the types of interactions that staff members have with users—be it frequency, topic, duration, location, time of day, day of week or other indicators.

Staff will log every interaction they have with library visitors, providing a rich data set for analysis going forward. The Library will use this data to form a better picture of how services are used at different branch locations, including help with job search or skills development, computer assistance, and referrals to social service agencies and nonprofits. Once DCPL has compiled a year's worth of interactions, the Library will use the data to inform how locations are staffed to better meet user needs.

## Plan and design library spaces to better serve the community.

### Develop a facilities plan to inform future decisions about the Library's physical campus.

Over the past decade, DCPL has fully renovated or rebuilt 16 libraries in every quadrant of D.C. The investment that District residents have made in these spectacular new buildings has resulted in a significant increase in use across all libraries. These new libraries were designed using a standard building program that prescribed the same or similar spaces at all new libraries. However, data indicates that libraries are used differently in different neighborhoods. In some locations meeting rooms are more in demand while public computers or books are the most used service at other locations. As such, there is potential to increase use even more by customizing building programs based on community needs. In addition, as neighborhoods in D.C. have changed and grown over the past several decades, some residents are without easy access to a neighborhood library.

To address the needs of the rapidly changing city, the Library will complete a facilities plan. The plan may evaluate branches of various sizes and those that specialize in services for specific populations, information about ongoing maintenance, and the possibility of public-private opportunities. With a thoughtful facilities plan in place, the Library can better work with elected leaders on appropriate funding for buildings and services where they are most needed.



Credit: Mecanoo Architecten | Martinez+Johnson

## MLK Library Modernization

Beginning in 2017, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK Library), D.C.'s central library, will undergo a comprehensive three-year modernization. The landmarked building, one of the country's first, largest and most significant memorials to the slain civil rights leader, is almost 50 years old and long past its useful life. The \$208 million project will preserve modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's classic glass-and-steel exterior but also significantly alter and expand the interior to accommodate new programs and spaces unimaginable when the building was originally designed in the late 1960s.

Visitors can look forward to a new, welcoming and transparent entryway; sculptured monumental stairs; a large auditorium and conference center; creative spaces for fabrication and music production; a ground level café with patio; a double-height reading room; inspiring special collections and exhibition spaces; and a rooftop event space and terrace. When the new MLK Library opens in 2020, it will welcome more than one million visitors per year and serve as the center of the District's educational and civic life.

**Explore public-private partnerships to redevelop or expand library locations.**

While the District has made significant investments in new and renovated libraries, in light of competing priorities and limits on D.C.'s borrowing capacity, it will take many years before the branch campus is fully modernized. To continue to deliver modernized branches across the city in the near and distant future, the Library is exploring ways to extend its capital budget, including leveraging existing assets through public-private partnerships. Across the country, many municipalities have integrated new libraries into mixed-use development projects. In fact, the West End Library is scheduled to open in 2017 on the ground floor of a new residential building connected to a café. The community benefits of public-private partnerships could include new libraries that cost less to build than traditional, stand-alone libraries, as well as additional amenities, such as more affordable housing options and complementary retail.

**Identify and develop a new Library operations center.**

The Library is currently in the process of modernizing the historic MLK Library — a once in a lifetime project that will offer District residents a variety of new opportunities for learning, reading and collaborating. One of the project's goals is to convert as much back-office space as possible into new, publicly accessible space. The Library must therefore relocate many of its business functions currently housed at the MLK Library to a new operations center.

The operations center will house a variety of departments, including collections and business services, and in the future may house an expanded collections and delivery operation to accommodate a new, shared services partnership with D.C.'s public schools. (For more information on the Library's partnership with public schools, please refer to the All-Access program on page 14.)

## Use data to improve all aspects of library services.

### Build data function and capacity.

The Library collects and shares data on how the community uses its branches and services. It also collects citywide and neighborhood demographic data. However, this data is not easily compiled or readily available to staff, users or other stakeholders. To improve how data is collected, shared and used, the Library will hire a data analyst and develop automated data reports. Improved data collection and analysis will inform the Library's operations and management decisions and help ensure greater efficiency, transparency and accountability. In addition, DCPL will improve the performance data it provides to the Board of Trustees and the public to provide a better understanding of the Library's activities across the system.



Credit: Kate Warren

## Pursue external funding and resources to deepen the Library's impact.

### Partner with the DC Public Library Foundation and local Friends of the Library to secure private contributions to the Library.

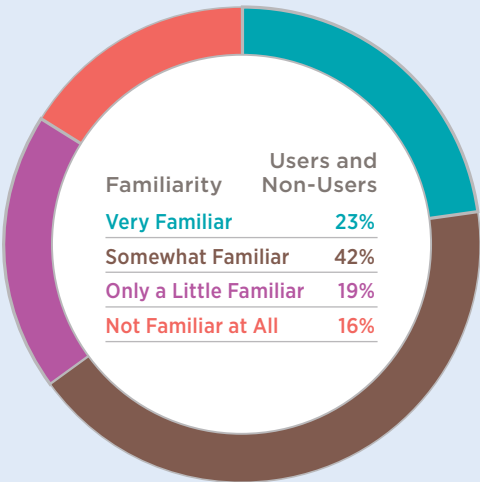
The DC Public Library Foundation and the neighborhood branch Friends of the Library are key partners in the Library's success. In recent years, the Foundation has undergone substantial growth, added influential new board members and increased its reach to new donor communities. Likewise, Friends of the Library have expanded their support of system-wide initiatives, such as the Library's Summer Reading program.

The Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works with the Library to enhance its resources and programs, will plan and execute a campaign to raise funds to support programs and services in the modernized MLK Library and throughout the library system. The effort will continue through the building's reopening in 2020 and potentially beyond.

### Identify and pursue revenue-generating opportunities.

The ability to generate revenue allows the Library to develop new programs and services and complements its traditional funding streams. In 2015, legislation was passed that allows the Library to generate revenue from the rental of its spaces, among other activities. That same year, the Library partnered with the U.S.

Across users and non-users, there are opportunities to increase awareness of library offerings.



Department of State to open a Passport Acceptance Facility at the MLK Library, which has generated additional revenue for the Library and introduced thousands of individuals to the Library.

DCPL will continue to identify and pursue opportunities to generate revenue. The Library will create guidelines for the rental of its spaces as well as examine other revenue-generating possibilities. Upon the reopening of the MLK Library, staffing and processes will be in place to generate revenue from event spaces in that new facility.

**Increase awareness and understanding of evolving library services.**

**Implement innovative methods to raise awareness of the evolving Library.**

Many library users understand that the Library offers many services beyond lending books. It is a community gathering place for civic engagement, a cultural institution that showcases music and arts, a career development center that supports job seekers, a repository for D.C.’s history, and much more.

Based on the research conducted for the strategic plan, it is clear that many District residents are unaware of the Library’s unique value to the community and the evolving range of programs and services available to them. It is the Library’s responsibility to share information about its services with all D.C. residents and gather their feedback on an ongoing basis.

In the past decade, DCPL has updated and simplified its website and established a portfolio of social media platforms that help it better connect with users. The Library has implemented ongoing satisfaction surveys to better understand the user experience, and it has connected with residents through community outreach, advertising, news media and other platforms to connect more people to its spaces and services. However, key areas remain for improvement and growth.



The Library plans to fully develop and clearly articulate its “brand,” which should represent everything from the overall vision of the Library, the goals and expectations around the user experience, and the range of programs and services offered — united by a consistent and compelling physical and virtual identity represented in all forms of public communications. Ultimately, this will also include articulating customer service expectations and protocols and training library staff.

In addition, the Library will regularly conduct market research and gather community feedback to help it communicate in a consistent, strategic and intentional way about programs and services. Currently, the Library collects feedback from users through surveys. As part of an ongoing effort, the Library plans to expand its portfolio of market research (e.g., focus groups, surveys, polling and secret shoppers) and gather community feedback to better understand the changing needs and wants of library users and non-users as well as changing demographics that will inform library services now and in the future.



Credit: Kate Warren



Credit: Valerie Brown

# Acknowledgments

**“The DC Public Library Foundation is proud to partner with the Library to expand educational opportunities for all residents of the District. We look forward to working with the Library to build on the plan’s successful implementation and partnering with the private sector and community groups to broaden the impact of the Library’s work.”**

**— Bonnie Cohen, president,  
DC Public Library Foundation**

The DC Public Library and Board of Trustees would like to thank the thousands of community members whose voices and input contributed to the creation of this strategic plan. A meaningful and representative plan would not have been possible without this community input and the engagement, contributions and leadership of DC Public Library employees, Friends of the Library and the DC Public Library Foundation.

The following groups and individuals contributed to the development of the Library’s strategic plan:

## **Strategic Plan Working Group**

- Lami Aromire
- Sarah Black
- Jonathan Butler
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- Laura Gonzales
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- Joi Mecks
- Meaghan O’Connor
- Manya Shorr
- LeoNard Thompson
- Archie Williams

## **DC Public Library Foundation**

- Bonnie Cohen, president
- Honorable Anthony Williams, vice president

## **Friends of the Library**

- Susan Haight, president, Federation of Friends

## **Former Members of the DC Public Library Board of Trustees**

- Valerie Mallett
- Cleve Mesidor
- Brenda Richardson
- Donald Richardson

# Appendix



The Library's strategic plan would not be possible without participation from library staff, members of the Board of Library Trustees, community partners and the residents of Washington, D.C. The information collected from the Library's meetings and conversations with these stakeholders helped shape the vision, goals and objectives of the strategic plan. To ensure a diverse range of input, the Library, working in tandem with community partners and staff, widely promoted the strategic planning process and ways to participate. This promotion included updates on the Library's website and in the Library's monthly e-newsletter, along with announcements in local media outlets and blogs, posts on DCPL's social media channels and flyers and bookmarks at branches and community events.

The following is a detailed summary of the methods used to collect data and input for the strategic plan. Summaries of the results can be accessed by visiting the Library's website:

**[dclibrary.org/strategicplan](http://dclibrary.org/strategicplan)**.

## **Community Phone Survey**

The Library conducted a one-on-one phone survey of 600 District residents who were representative of D.C.'s racial, ethnic and linguistic background, age and gender makeup, education level, and neighborhoods. Half of respondents were considered "users" of the library — people who used the Library's online or branch services either very often, somewhat often, or not too often. The other half of respondents who indicated that they rarely or never used library services were considered "non-users." Conducted Sept. 17-24, 2015, the survey invited participants to share their perspectives on the Library, including



Credit: James Jackson

awareness about library programs, reasons they do or don't visit the Library, and which programs they are most likely to use. The survey also shed light on exactly who uses the library, which services they use, and what factors lead to familiarity about DCPL and its programming.

This statistically valid survey was designed and conducted by Widmeyer Communications, a Finn Partners company. All participants were reached via cell phone or landline and could choose to take the survey in English or Spanish.

### **Community Web Survey**

A shorter web survey, conducted Sept. 23-Oct. 14, 2015, captured additional insights from more than 1,500 people who visited the library website, visited a library branch or participated in community events across the District. Respondents had a choice to take the survey in English or Spanish and had the option to record their responses on a paper version of the survey. They were asked which services and programs they were most likely to use, how often and why. In addition, respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions regarding their future use of the library and the programs and services they would like to see added or improved.

For additional context, respondents were provided with an online interactive map that captured library usage data for all 26 branches over a 12-month period, from July 2014 to June 2015, and community demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

### **Library-Hosted Community Meetings**

DCPL hosted a series of community meetings designed to engage residents in a conversation about the Library's future. To ensure participation from a representative cross section of D.C. residents, organizers held the gatherings at the Tenley-Friendship Library (Oct. 1, 2015), Shaw (Watha T. Daniel) Library (Oct. 5, 2015) and Anacostia Library (Oct. 8, 2015). More than 50 residents who attended shared their input on the Library's programs and services in open and honest small group discussions led by library staff. In addition to verbally sharing their insights, attendees also completed a two-page worksheet and ranked eight guiding principles that might drive the plan's direction. To inform the conversation, support staff also shared data reports and poster boards with all meeting attendees to provide additional context on library usage data over a 12-month period, from July 2014 to June 2015, and D.C. community demographics from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey.



As a result, the Library was able to collect helpful qualitative data on priorities for program usage and access, the future role of technology in branches, suggestions for improvement in communications and marketing, and opportunities to strengthen community partnerships and outreach, among other areas.

### **Library Staff Focus Groups**

More than 70 library staff members were engaged in a series of focus groups facilitated by fellow staff members in May and June 2015. Staff were asked to respond to open-ended questions about who the library serves and how, and they were invited to offer input on new communities to serve and new ways to serve them. In addition, they were asked to rate the importance of 10 guiding principles, somewhat similar to the list reviewed by residents.

### **Library Staff Survey**

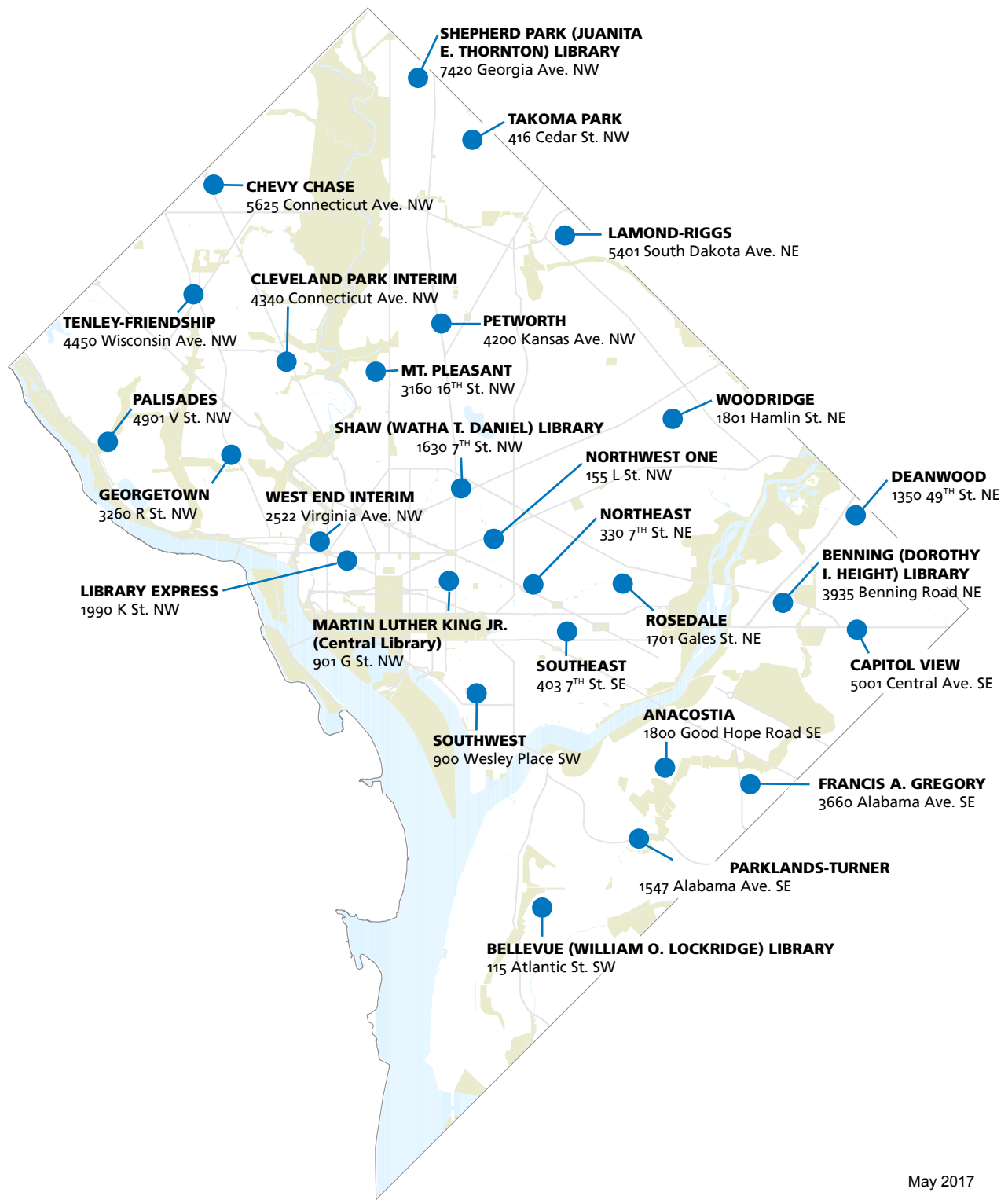
One hundred and fifty library staff members responded to an online survey during a two-week period in October 2015. Along with ranking eight guiding principles, they were asked to share their vision for the Library's next five years.

### **Partner and Service Provider Focus Groups**

Focus groups featuring library partners, non-profits, government agencies and staff were held in October and November 2015 with more than 75 participants. Representatives from the following targeted communities engaged in a discussion about their partnership with the Library, the programs and services they use and need, and their vision for the next five years:

- Service providers working with previously incarcerated residents
- Service providers working with the homeless population
- Teens and young adults and their service providers
- Service providers for children ages 5-12
- Digital services and innovation community
- Cultural and creative community
- Friends of the Library

# Location Map



May 2017

Muriel Bowser  
Mayor, District of Columbia

### **Members of the Council of the District of Columbia**

Phil Mendelson, chairman

Anita Bonds, At-Large

David Grosso, At-Large

Elissa Silverman, At-Large

Robert C. White, Jr., At-Large

Brianne K. Nadeau, Ward 1

Jack Evans, Ward 2

Mary M. Cheh, Ward 3

Brandon T. Todd, Ward 4

Kenyan R. McDuffie, Ward 5

Charles Allen, Ward 6

Vincent C. Gray, Ward 7

Trayon White, Sr., Ward 8



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