

**RANDOLPH
COUNTY
PUBLIC
LIBRARIES**

**Nurturing Readers
Empowering Learners
Creating Connections**

**Archdale · Asheboro · Franklinville · Liberty
Ramseur · Randleman · Seagrove**

2021-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The 19th century Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke observed that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. I prefer Hannibal Smith's triumphant A-Team cry, "I love it when a plan comes together."

While our strategic plan is complete, it is not static. It will continue to come together over the next five years as we implement the actions it recommends. And while von Moltke had a point – changing circumstances render many a plan ineffective as soon as the pixels are dry – we believe that our approach has resulted in a plan that is both durable and adaptable.

Our process was highly participatory, with individual interviews, focus groups, staff workshops, a community survey, and a deep dive into community and library data. We were informed by goals in the 2016 Randolph County Strategic Plan – developing "lifelong learners who have the ability to change and innovate"; promoting partnerships around arts, history and culture; and preserving our cultural assets to encourage education.

Believing that the library is a bedrock at the heart of the community's success, and hearing your great ideas for new ways to ensure that it remains so, we developed four strategic priorities: access and inclusivity; readers and learners; civic and community engagement; and staff development. For each priority, we outlined actions to deploy our services in a manner that empowers both individuals and the community at large, and enables us to assess developing needs and pivot accordingly. While we focus on these priorities, we will continue to provide the essential functions and excellent service you and your families value so much.

"Ultimately, this plan is for you, the library user - or potential user."

Ultimately, this plan is for you, the library user – or potential user. The Seagrove family just embarking on their child's reading journey. The middle school student in Ramseur struggling through a homework assignment. The high school student in Archdale finding solace in a young adult novel. The kids in Asheboro learning about the importance of bees and butterflies while tending the pollination station. Researchers in the Randolph Room developing a historical project. The Parents as Teachers family in Franklinville building the skills necessary to ensure their children's success in school. The teacher in Randleman collecting additional resources for class. The adult in Liberty relaxing with the latest best seller or movie after a taxing day at work. Kids who can't get to a library swarming the Mobile Library at a remote stop. The senior gratefully receiving a delivery from Extension Services. Individuals and groups using library spaces for reading, study, working, collaborating or just being. Community members exploring a compelling topic with a guest speaker. All of the above using our sophisticated information technology infrastructure for access and discovery.

You will hear more from us as we put this plan into action, and we welcome your continuing feedback, ideas and questions. As this plan goes from being to becoming, in five years as we look back, the community will be able to say, "We love it when a plan comes together."



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MISSION

Randolph County Public Libraries cultivate a thriving community by nurturing readers, empowering learners, and creating connections.

VISION

Libraries are a point of pride and connection for all residents of Randolph County, serving as vibrant centers of community, anticipating evolving needs and interests, and providing relevant materials and transformative experiences.

VALUES

Service - We serve with heart and provide friendly, helpful faces and welcoming, accessible spaces. We are positive and responsive, compassionate and kind, and greet everyone with a smile.

Teamwork - We work together in order to better serve our community. We are flexible, adaptable, and respectful of our coworkers and community members.

Inclusion - We embrace people from all walks of life and provide a safe, judgement-free place for all. We remove barriers to access, value diverse perspectives, and welcome traditionally marginalized voices.

Curiosity - We are open to new ideas, especially when they challenge our own beliefs and assumptions. We believe that the library and the community thrive when minds are inquiring and hearts are open.

Stewardship - We are co-owners of community assets and caretakers of public resources. We engage the community in decision-making and promote trust, transparency, and accountability in all we do.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- Collect and circulate materials for enlightenment and recreation
- Provide reliable information and research resources
- Support educational success and lifelong learning
- Offer programs for individual and community enrichment
- Provide a place for everyone

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- **Libraries are welcoming, accessible, and inclusive for all**

While it is easy to say “libraries are for all,” it can be hard to make that a reality. We are committed to doing the work to make our libraries truly a place for everyone.

- **Libraries encourage and engage readers of all ages, stages, and interests**

Reading is both an essential life skill and a source of lifelong comfort and joy. Regardless of reading ability, interest, or taste, we are committed to serving readers.

- **Libraries are essential partners in community well-being and civic life**

Libraries change lives. We believe that we can play an even greater, more vital role in supporting the mind, body, and soul of the county and its residents.

- **Library staff are empowered, engaged, and connected**

Our staff are our most valued and valuable resource. In order to deliver on our mission and achieve our vision, we must invest in supporting and developing our team.

LIBRARIES ARE WELCOMING, ACCESSIBLE, AND INCLUSIVE FOR ALL

FACILITIES/SPACES

- With local/county governments, complete ADA audits and implement recommendations
- Create clear, consistent exterior signage at all locations to promote visibility and branding
- Create clear, consistent interior signage at all locations to promote wayfinding and branding
- Invest in fixtures and furnishings to support library as a “third place” where users can gather for informal social interaction and conversation
- Invest in fixtures and furnishings to support library as a place for both individual work and collaborative co-work
- Assess and improve strength of WiFi and availability of power outlets at all locations
- Assess and improve meeting & study rooms, with a focus on accessibility and functionality

SERVICES/PROGRAMS

- Assess pandemic-era services, including curbside pickup and virtual programming, and continue services that increase access and equity
- Create a system-wide welcome program for new library card sign ups that may include free books and/or branded promotional items
- Create a system-wide “welcome back” program to encourage residents to re-engage with the library, in conjunction with launch of new brand identity

POLICIES/PROCEDURES

- Continue to pursue a more unified, sustainable approach to county-wide library service, staff, funding, and facilities
- Engage key stakeholders and consider cost/benefit of adopting a fine-free model
- Conduct a system-wide policy review in order to decrease barriers, increase access, and promote consistency, including conduct, food/drink, Internet, and borrowing
- Assess operational hours, with attention to need for evening and weekend hours

PEOPLE/PRESENCE

- Actively recruit and retain diverse staff
- Refresh logo and brand identity to align with mission, vision, and values. Establish and enforce clear, consistent brand standards to promote system-wide identity
- Develop a system-wide marketing work group to implement brand standards, marketing campaigns, and cohesive social media strategy
- Assess website usability, make associated improvements and align with brand standards
- Identify community festivals and events to participate in and leverage mobile library and staff for community engagement

LIBRARIES ENCOURAGE AND ENGAGE READERS OF ALL AGES, STAGES, AND INTERESTS

COLLECTIONS

- Assess diversity of collections in order to increase representation and inclusion, including needs for materials in languages other than English
- Review and revise collection policies and practices to focus on popular materials of high community interest
- Create system-wide merchandising guidelines to support discovery, including displays, shelving standards, and collections signage

SERVICES/PROGRAMS

- Enhance and extend outreach services, including the Mobile Library, to provide greater access to underserved populations and areas of the county, and those who have difficulty visiting a library
- Resume consistent Spanish-language/dual-language story times in areas where native Spanish speakers live
- Assess current slate of book club offerings, consider community needs and interests, experiment with new and different clubs
- Expand Summer Reading program to include all ages
- Assess and enhance Reader's Advisory services, both passive and active, physical and digital
- Train all staff to offer assistance with ebook platforms and processes

POLICIES/PROCEDURES

- Implement system-wide weeding standards and regular weeding schedule
- Review procedures for purchasing, cataloging, processing, and circulating materials to create clear and consistent system-wide standards
- Create system-wide collections and cataloging working group

LIBRARIES ARE ESSENTIAL PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND CIVIC LIFE

CIVIC CONNECTIONS

- Continue to develop the Randolph Room/History Museum as an essential way to connect the past, present, and future of the county and its residents
- Collaborate with key community organizations, especially those serving traditionally marginalized populations, to deliver targeted services and programs
- Deploy library staff to volunteer with civic organizations, serve on nonprofit boards, etc.
- Position libraries as community information hubs, with bulletin boards, resource fairs, etc.
- Establish "Community Conversations" forums on key community issues and challenges

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

- Partner with local agencies to experiment with social workers embedded at libraries
- Provide Mental Health First Aid and other staff training to embrace trauma-informed service
- Identify partners to help activate outdoor spaces for gathering, programming, and play

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL PROGRAMS

- Maximize partnership with the Friends of the Library to offer programs aligned with mission and strategic priorities
- Assess diversity of programs to assure broad representation of perspectives and subjects
- Establish an outcomes-based framework for program creation and assessment, aligned with strategic priorities
- Partner with arts, culture, and tourism agencies to offer programs aligned with community interests and strategic priorities

INTERNET ACCESS & DIGITAL LITERACY

- Collaborate with local agencies to deliver effective digital literacy programming
- Collaborate with local agencies to deliver broadband Internet access to underserved areas

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

- Maximize partnerships with schools across the county to intentionally advance shared goals
- Expand Parents as Teachers program to reach more families and children
- Develop outcome-based programming to enrich learning for children and teens
- Deploy Mobile Library to engage caregivers, teachers, parents, and children, and raise awareness of library resources, services, and programs.
- Identify partners to provide regular "Life 101" programs and classes, including financial literacy, health literacy, job seeking, etc

LIBRARY STAFF ARE EMPOWERED, ENGAGED, AND CONNECTED

TRAINING

- Conduct an annual system-wide staff training needs assessment
- Invest in ongoing training that aligns with staff needs and strategic priorities, especially customer experience, reader's advisory, community engagement, and diversity
- Offer periodic, relevant, high interest workshops, such as displays, social media, etc.
- Establish annual opportunities for all employees to connect and learn together
- Invest in training to establish a shared approach to supervision, management, and leadership

SERVICE

- Create system-wide customer service standards aligned with the organizational value of service
- Adopt a system-wide "One Point of Service" model so that all staff can respond to the most common service requests
- Create a system for staff to work at different locations and/or in different departments
- Allow staff from across all divisions and locations to participate in mobile library and outreach functions

CAPACITY

- Incentivize staff to learn Spanish, ASL, and other languages that respond to community needs and strategic priorities
- Increase staff capacity for conceiving, developing, and managing projects and initiatives that advance strategic priorities
- Increase staff capacity for grant seeking, writing, and administration
- Assess organizational structure in order to align with strategic priorities, increase efficiency, and grow

COMMUNICATION

- Resume regular All Staff meetings, consider ways to maximize staff attendance and communicate information for those who cannot attend
- Resume regular Library Leadership meetings, with a focus on operationalizing mission, vision, and values and shepherding strategic priorities
- Create platform(s) for regular communication between Asheboro and branches
- Create platform(s) for regular communication and collaboration between subject matter experts across branches

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

With stakeholders, we examined the political, economic, social, and technological factors influencing Randolph County, right now. Here's what we heard:

- The **county is large with many municipalities**, urban/rural mix, and shifting demographics
- The **county is in transition** on many fronts – political, socio-economic, cultural
- **Economic development is challenging** and workforce needs are changing
- **Educational attainment is low and poverty is high**, both of which lead to associated health outcomes
- Some parts of the county are becoming **retiree destinations**, while some function as **bedroom communities** for surrounding counties
- **Few opportunities for black/brown residents** to engage with civic life and thrive

With stakeholders, we also examined the state of the libraries from a high level, county-wide perspective. Here's what we heard:

- Libraries operate in a complex, multi-jurisdictional ecosystem – and there's a **desire for more unity and efficiency**.
- Individual municipalities have great pride in their community libraries – and there's a **desire for more cohesiveness and consistency**.
- Programming and outreach is appreciated and valued – and **more can be done to meet community needs and advance community outcomes**.
- Library is one of few educational/cultural institutions in Randolph County – and **library locations can be a source of connection, identity, and pride**.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

With staff, we turned inward and assessed our strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and challenges facing us and our community:

- Our strengths include **a welcoming and friendly staff who enjoy personal relationships with users**, a positive reputation in the community, a wide variety of collections, and responsive services, especially during COVID.
- Our weaknesses include **a lack of connection with Black and Latino families**, a lack of diverse staff, outdated, crowded spaces, and a lack of strategic marketing.
- The opportunities we identified include engagement with Black and Latino families, **building relationships and partnerships with local agencies and nonprofits**, and playing a key role in education, both formal and informal.
- The challenges include the continuing uncertainty and recovery from the pandemic, the lack of local media outlets, and the **lack of Internet access in many parts of the county**.

With our community survey, we turned outward and asked residents about how they use the libraries now and what they would like to see in the future:

- A **large majority of the 500+ respondents use the library frequently**, citing weekly or monthly visits.
- Of those frequent users, **the most used service is checking out materials for adults**, with checking out materials for children being second.
- A large number of respondents also cited **virtual services, library spaces, and computers/WiFi** as reasons they use the library.
- Infrequent library users said that **inconvenient hours were the main reason they did not visit the library often**.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1

- Analysis of library data and county demographics
- Steering Committee formation and kickoff
- Individual interviews with 20+ elected and appointed officials

Phase 2

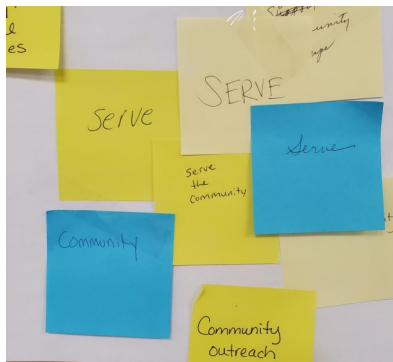
- Individual interviews with 16 branch and division managers
- 3 focus groups with 20+ staff

Phase 3

- 3 regional focus groups with 16 participants
- 15+ individual interviews with community leaders
- 500+ survey responses

Phase 4

- 4 action planning workshops with staff
- 3 action planning sessions with Board, Friends, Steering Committee



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strategic planning is a significant undertaking, any time an organization does it. Strategic planning in the middle of a global pandemic is an even more daunting endeavor. However, thanks to the support of the community we serve and the willingness of stakeholders, residents, and staff to contribute their time and attention, we completed this hard work in the most difficult of times.

Steering Committee

Melissa Blalock
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Ryan Gibbs
Steve Grove
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Hope Haywood
Don Herndon
John Ogburn
Marcelo Pariz
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SPECIAL THANKS TO STAFF FROM ALL LOCATIONS

Archdale • Asheboro • Franklinville • Liberty
Ramseur • Randleman • Seagrove