

Hardin County Public Library Strategic Plan - 2019-2021

Background of Proposed Funding Change:

In recent years, the Hardin County Public Library has tried twice to have Fiscal Court establish a special library taxing district in accordance with KRS.67.715 with a rate of 3 cents per \$100. In 2015, the proposal was removed from the agenda due to lack of support. In 2018, the proposal was presented and voted on but failed to pass with a 4-4 tie. There was one vacancy on the court.

Since that time the director, staff, and trustees have attempted to plan for the future based on our current funding situation while still providing a wide range of library materials in a variety of formats, programs, community space, public events, and effective staff assistance to our citizens.

Mission:

We are your contemporary resource connecting generations through learning and exploring, thereby enriching the community and culture.

Vision:

To continue to provide excellent library service to the people of Hardin County in an equitable and confidential manner using the resources we have available.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats:

Informal surveys have been conducted and citizen input has been organized and shared. Circulation reports detailing program attendance, public computer usage, meeting room usage, new patron registrations, and, most importantly, circulation of materials have been carefully examined. Hours of heavy and light library usage have been studied. These reports are tools used to determine the best allocation of resources in each department and for each facility. Cost cutting measures have been strengthened and every expenditure is scrutinized. The director has sought advice from peers both in Kentucky and outside Kentucky for ways to reduce costs and still provide materials, programs, and services to the public. Alternative methods of providing library services have been discussed including reducing hours at both locations, increasing outreach vehicles hours on the road, and consolidating all materials and programming under the main library. The board and staff decided to emphasize and allocate resources to areas that were most consistently used by our patrons and seemed to provide the best cost per beneficiary. While we listened to patron requests, we also kept in mind the need for resources, available hours, and locations for those most in need of our services who might not be as vocal or responsive to our inquiries.

As in most service industries, the largest expense of our library system has always been personnel. The majority of our staff are now part-time. Unemployment in Hardin County and the surrounding areas is very low and employers are having a hard time filling positions even offering \$12 and \$15 an hour wages for an entry level job. Turnover has been high especially at the North Branch. We have had 11 children's librarians since 2010 at that location. Since we now have no children's librarian in Radcliff, we currently have a former employee who is working with the First Connections Early Childhood Group for Hardin County School District providing a weekly story hour for preschoolers. This has been very successful. There are times when no customers are in the building in Radcliff. For safety reasons, two staff must be in the Radcliff location during all hours open to the public even though there is often not a sufficient amount of work for two people.

The board has expressed concerns about the management practices at the North Branch and an in-depth questionnaire was answered by the Branch Manager covering topics such as patron complaints, circulation and usage decrease, lack of programming, community partnerships and involvement, overall

branch performance, staff turnover, and community benefits as a cost of branch library operation expenditures.

Our Outreach Department consists of a bookmobile and an outreach van staffed by 30 hour per week employees, each working 4 days a week. The Bookmobile has included various stops and a variety of days/times in Sonora and Upton for the past 2 years with very little use. There seems to be little or no interest in library services in those areas. Two administrative staff members are taking turns driving the outreach vehicle on Fridays to deliver pre-selected items to homebound individuals who do not require bookmobile services thus utilizing the more energy efficient outreach van 5 days a week. This also frees up slots on the bookmobile route making room for more new customers who do require the larger collection and who are able to climb up into the bookmobile and browse the shelves for their own selections.

Our Outreach Department is also supplementing preschools who do not have an abundance of funds for books and learning materials for their very young children. Pre-packed book kits are rotated among 20 centers every two weeks and are well used by the child care centers. A new program, called "Teach Me Totes" are subject specific items placed in canvas totes and serve as supplemental learning materials for these child care centers. We will be asking businesses and our Friends Group to help sponsor these.

The Ft. Knox military base has not sustained the previous population growth enjoyed in the past. The base has closed its hospital and an elementary school. This loss of population has contributed to a change in the demographics of North Hardin County. The county clerk's office has closed its Radcliff location and finds it more cost effective to serve customers under one roof. Local restaurants and businesses are closing in Radcliff. Many Radcliff residents are using the main library for meetings, events, and programs. Even elementary schools in Radcliff are visiting for tours and story hours with our children's librarians at the main library.

Staffing: Hours have been reduced at both locations. Staff have taken on additional responsibilities. The library works with ECTC's student work-study program to help staff the main library's circulation desk. The library has between 12-15 adult volunteer programmers who work at no charge. The library also has 5-8 volunteers who clean materials, shelf books and shelf read, assist with promotions, and do other assigned tasks in the main library. The Youth Department also has teen volunteers who help with children's programming.

Materials: The quantity of materials has decreased, particularly in areas of music cds and dvds, print periodicals, and print books. The library ranks high statewide in the percentage of total circulation that is in electronic format...it's almost 25%. Either our citizens are very tech savvy or they realize we have a very limited print collection for our population size. We allow all Hardin County students the use of our digital collection and databases with a digital only card.

Operations: Building Maintenance continues to be a large portion of the annual library budget. A separate account has been established with funds from donations, gifts, and funds carried over at the end of the fiscal year. The main library is in need of a roof within the next 6-12 months. The main building was constructed in 2002 and still has the original interior paint, carpet, shelving and furniture. A complete refurbishing is required. In the event the North Branch loses more hours or even closes, the main library will need to be expanded to handle the materials, programs, outreach, and public visits.

We have repurposed spaces throughout our building to provide meeting areas and programming areas but often these events disrupt regular library operations. The library ranks high statewide in number of programs offered and number of attendees in both children's and adults programs.

Needs: A Building Maintenance Committee has been in place the last few years to prioritize repairs, furnishings, maintenance, and landscape issues. This committee continues to look at ways to improve and repurpose our existing space at both facilities, while trying to keep up with repairs, maintenance and furnishings. This committee is committed to exploring ideas to reflect the best and future use of our buildings and how they might be impacted with future funding.

The Library Board needs to meet with the Central Kentucky Community Foundation Board and ask that the property lines be redrawn to better reflect the library's ownership and responsibility for upkeep of the parking lot and the side lot closest to their new building.

Technology continues to change and we are not up to date. Hardware and software upgrades are needed yet no funds have been set aside or budgeted.

Our Teen Group is growing and needs a dedicated space away from the Children's Department. This area needs to use three distinct spaces: a media area, a social area, and a study area. Our children's department is extremely busy and also needs more space for programming, planning and preparation, shelving, parent-child computer areas, a Mother's Room, and family style restrooms with a changing table. They also need more storage, an office, and exits to the children's garden and amphitheater.

We continue to serve as a community hub. Many visit our library exclusively for programs and meetings. We need to provide clean, comfortable, safe space that is conducive to learning. We value the individuality of our patrons and are committed to children and youth. We have retained the services of 5253 Design Group to provide us with a feasibility study for a future addition and renovation of the main branch facility so that we can be eligible for a state construction grant if they become available.

Goals and Objectives:

Plan for future use of facilities and vehicles to match patrons' needs and expectations. We would like to have some local government financial support to use as leverage for grants.

Continue to apply for grants and donations in areas of construction, collection development, vehicle purchase, technology, personnel, and any resources of value to our patrons.

Consider more efficient delivery of library materials to patrons whether electronically or through vehicles.

Rewrite job descriptions to provide more flexibility for employees to serve those who are most difficult to reach. Consider employee job sharing and more team building experience between employees.

Continue to find ways to provide non-monetary rewards for excellent staff performance.

Promote library services in an attempt to reach nonusers and those most in need of our services.

Continue to partner with community members, agencies, and businesses to pool resources that benefit our citizens.