

Newport Public Library Strategic Plan

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

10/25/24

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate an organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. For our strategic planning process, staff members contributed their insights by identifying what they believed were the library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This collaborative exercise helps ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, guiding us in building on our strengths, addressing challenges, leveraging opportunities, and mitigating risks to enhance our services and meet the evolving needs of our community.

Strengths of the Newport Public Library

1. **Dedicated and Knowledgeable Staff:**

- Highly skilled, bilingual, and diverse in background, age, and life experience.
- Strong leadership, teamwork, and camaraderie, fostering a supportive work environment.
- Excellent customer service, with positive feedback on being cheerful, patient, and helpful.

2. **Engaging Programs and Services:**

- Wide range of programs for all ages, interests, and cultural backgrounds, including literacy, cultural programming, and harm reduction initiatives.
- Community-focused offerings like the Food Pantry, Seed Library, Curiosity Cabinets, and hygiene products.
- Creative events such as art displays, geocaching, and community gardens.

3. **Comprehensive and Inclusive Collections:**

- Broad and diverse library collections, including books, DVDs, the Library of Things, and world language materials.
- Collections continually expanded and thoughtfully curated to meet community needs.

4. **Welcoming and Accessible Space:**

- A beautiful, well-maintained, and comfortable facility known as "Newport's living room."
 - Designated spaces for teens, children, and private study or meetings.
 - Refill stations, accessible technology, and resources available to everyone.
- 5. Community Engagement and Trust:**
- Strong partnerships with local organizations and initiatives like Juntos en el Jardín and harm reduction efforts.
 - A trusted hub for information, education, and support for all members of the community, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, religion, or sexual orientation.
 - Open to everyone, with limited barriers to accessing services.
- 6. Commitment to Growth and Innovation:**
- Regularly improving systems, procedures, and communication.
 - Budget allocations to grow collections and support programs.
 - Emphasis on inclusivity and diversity in all library operations.
- 7. Volunteers and Community Support:**
- A strong and committed volunteer program involving both teens and adults.
 - Active support from the Library Board, Library Foundation, and community partnerships.
- 8. Access to Technology and Resources:**
- Free access to the internet, online resources, and technology assistance.
 - Unique resources like a 3D printer and meeting/event spaces.
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Weaknesses of the Newport Public Library

- 1. Facility Limitations:**
- Building size is insufficient to accommodate the growing needs of the community and library operations.
 - Limited meeting rooms, study spaces, and event spaces hinder community engagement.
 - Small teen room, story corner, and children's area; lack of dedicated juvenile spaces.
 - Insufficient storage space for supplies, collections, and program materials.

- Outdated furniture and signage, with a need for updates to interior and exterior painting.
 - Parking lot is small and difficult to navigate.
- 2. Technology and Infrastructure:**
- Outdated technology, including children’s computers, security cameras, and IT systems.
 - HVAC issues and lack of air conditioning in some areas create uncomfortable working conditions.
 - Inefficient IT support and infrastructure impacting operations.
- 3. Staffing and Workload Challenges:**
- Insufficient staffing levels, especially when covering for absences or hosting events.
 - Vacant positions take time to fill, impacting service delivery and staff workloads.
 - Staff feel stretched thin, particularly when taking on roles that require specialized training (e.g., social worker-like tasks).
 - Limited staffing prevents extended public hours, including opening seven days a week.
- 4. Community Outreach and Services:**
- Need for more proactive outreach to underserved parts of the community to raise awareness of library resources and services.
 - Limited resources to offer additional educational and social services.
 - Lack of formalized tracking of patron feedback to identify areas for improvement.
- 5. Safety and Security:**
- Limited support from local law enforcement when dealing with disruptive patrons.
 - Outdated or insufficient security systems, including cameras.
- 6. Communication and Collaboration:**
- Challenges in effectively communicating the library’s mission and value to other city departments.
 - Internal communication and collaboration occasionally require improvement for smoother operations.
- 7. Public Access and Hours:**
- Limited public hours and inability to open seven days a week due to staffing constraints.
 - Some patron’s express frustration with hold notifications and other system inefficiencies.

8. Maintenance and Cleanliness:

- Inconsistent cleaning standards, particularly in upstairs restrooms.
- General maintenance of the building and grounds needs improvement to ensure a welcoming environment.

9. Training and Professional Development:

- Staff require more training in mental health, handling challenging patrons, and providing enhanced customer service.
 - Opportunities for professional development are needed to support staff growth and address the evolving needs of the community.
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Opportunities for the Newport Public Library

1. Community Support and Partnerships:

- Leverage the supportive community and leadership to advocate for library growth and improvements.
- Strengthen partnerships with the school district and college, potentially providing library cards for all students.
- Expand collaborations with local organizations, businesses, and other city departments to enhance services and reach.
- Build a definitive, all-in-one resource guide for community services to better serve residents.
- Increase engagement with individuals with disabilities to ensure inclusivity.

2. Facility and Infrastructure Enhancements:

- Advocate for a larger facility with additional storage, office spaces, meeting rooms, and event spaces to better serve a growing community.
- Explore the possibility of a small indoor auditorium or a covered amphitheater for year-round events and programming.
- Update the building with air conditioning, adjustable window coverings, and improved temperature control for staff and patrons.
- Incorporate more USB ports and updated technology throughout the library.

3. Innovative Programming and Engagement:

- Expand adult programming, including workshops, lectures, book talks, and mixers targeted at millennials (25–45 age group).
 - Increase outreach to underserved groups, such as millennials without children, and develop targeted programs for these demographics.
 - Restart and expand outreach programs with additional staff support.
 - Offer more events with free music, particularly during the winter season, to foster community engagement.
- 4. Digital Presence and Technology:**
- Utilize the new Integrated Library System (ILS) to improve the digital presence and enhance online marketing of materials.
 - Expand digital resources such as eBooks, audiobooks, and streaming services to meet growing demand.
 - Modernize the library's website to create a more dynamic and user-friendly online experience.
- 5. Staff Development and Collaboration:**
- Provide more opportunities for staff training, continuing education, and attendance at seminars and conferences.
 - Encourage collaboration between staff through small committees or task groups to improve communication and teamwork.
 - Support new staff in taking on higher-level tasks and leadership opportunities.
 - Focus on morale-boosting activities to strengthen team spirit and job satisfaction.
- 6. Marketing and Outreach:**
- Enhance marketing efforts to raise program attendance and awareness of library services.
 - Expand communication efforts within the City of Newport to highlight the library's impact and value.
- 7. Arts and Cultural Initiatives:**
- Promote public art projects, including more art relevant to Newport and expanded community art programs.
 - Develop a larger library garden for outdoor events and community engagement.
- 8. Modernized Spaces and Resources:**
- Create more study spaces and meeting rooms to accommodate diverse patron needs.

- Update and expand the collection to include a wider selection of books, courses, and trainings.
- Add technology enhancements, such as more resources in the teen room and better marketing tools for library programs.

9. City Leadership and Direction:

- Leverage the energy and direction of the new city manager and leadership in Newport to align library goals with city initiatives.
- Capitalize on the city's renewed focus on communication and collaboration to build stronger ties across departments.

Threats to the Newport Public Library

1. Funding and Budget Constraints:

- Persistent risk of budget cuts that could limit services, staffing, and programming.
- Insufficient funding for critical areas, including cataloging, technology upgrades, and expanded services.
- Fear of losing financial support after significant investments in programs and resources.

2. Staffing Challenges:

- Chronic understaffing, leading to burnout among employees who are covering multiple roles.
- Delayed hiring processes impacting operational efficiency and service delivery.
- Difficulty recruiting new staff due to the high cost of living and limited affordable housing in the area.
- Upcoming retirements of experienced staff members, with concerns about timely replacements.

3. Workplace Safety and Infrastructure:

- Limited safety measures, such as a lack of cameras to prevent theft or other incidents.
- Overcrowded spaces, including the teen room, causing tension between patrons.
- Outdated and insufficient building infrastructure, including a lack of privacy for sensitive work, inadequate meeting spaces, and no air conditioning.

4. Community and Communication Gaps:

- Lack of clear communication between staff, management, and city leadership (peer-to-peer, top-down, and bottom-up).

- Feelings of underappreciation or invisibility compared to other city departments.
 - Misunderstandings within the community about the library's capabilities, policies, and limitations.
 - Insufficient follow-up on outreach efforts to the Hispanic community, risking disengagement.
- 5. Social and Political Pressures:**
- Threats of book bans and community censorship limiting access to diverse materials.
 - Polarized opinions about library content and services, which can lead to conflict.
 - Evolving political climates affecting library funding and operations.
- 6. Housing and Socioeconomic Factors:**
- Community housing crisis affecting staff recruitment and patron stability.
 - Growing demand for social support services, such as food pantries, that the library struggles to fully meet.
- 7. Technological and Usage Shifts:**
- Outdated technology and limited digital resources hindering patron access and engagement.
 - Rapid changes in library usage patterns and technology, requiring continuous adaptation.
- 8. Environmental Risks:**
- Potential natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tsunamis, posing risks to the building, staff, and community.
- 9. Service Limitations:**
- Lack of resources to expand outreach programs, such as delivering books to homebound patrons.
 - Limited public resources and meeting spaces, which fail to meet the community's growing needs.
 - Challenges in adapting the library to accommodate changing demands without adequate staffing and funding.
- 10. Staff Well-being:**
- Risk of staff burnout due to prolonged understaffing and increasing responsibilities.
 - Limited opportunities for staff morale-boosting activities and professional development.