

Summary of the Library Board Meeting – SWOT
March 11, 2008

Present: Mark Anderson, Larry Biddison, Diana Blake, Elaine Main, Deanna McCue,*
Linda Podhajsky, Denise Timmerman, and Frank Williams.

* is also the Board representative to the Community Planning Committee

The meeting opened with an overview of the Planning for Results process and the Library Board of Trustees conducted SWOT analyses on eight service responses. The SWOT follows:

A. Stimulate the Imagination

Strengths:

- Lots of windows; stained glass windows
- Gardens and Commons
- Concerts and cultural activities

Weaknesses:

- Space limitations for programs or events like a concert
- Funding in general; computer by bulletin board in particular
- Technical support for downloadable formats
- Continuation on the work of the non-fiction collection; it is hard to keep current.

Opportunities:

- Coffee shop
- Computer by the bulletin board for information that focuses on Waverly Area Development and the City's website for example.
- Coordinate with smaller musical groups for cultural events
- Something for the middle-school/younger age of the young adult population
- Marketing opportunities such as news column featuring who is reading what? Why?
- Work with video stores

Threats:

- In an effort at collaboration, some community groups may feel this is a threat or feel offended
- Funding
- Space limitations
- How to get people out of their box and think beyond the norm

B. Know Your Community

Strengths:

- The Library is a high-traffic area; a lot of people visit daily
- Knowledgeable staff who are an active part of the community, are pleasant and really want to help patrons
- People are very aware of the Library; the Library has high visibility in the community
- Logical place for information

Weaknesses:

- While geographically centered, the Library is not at the crossroads near businesses
- Staff – This would be a huge job. “Massive” There should be one person exclusively devoted to this service response and that gets back to an issue of funding

Opportunities:

- Staff will be provided with the opportunity to have a greater understanding of the community
- Library will be indispensable; a center of understanding
- Might there be an opportunity here for transportation to the library? A partnership perhaps? A way of reacting to the need to reduce dependency on fossil fuel and help people who cannot get to the Library?
- The Library can be a “connector” to the community

Threats:

- Not a Library role – the Chamber of Commerce and the Waverly Area Development group also work at this and we would not want to step on toes
- This service would require so many resources that it might overwhelm other Library services
- The Library wouldn't be generating this information and the groups responsible for providing it might not also do this, or be able to do this under changing circumstances

C. Connect to the Online World

Strengths:

- 18 terminals
- 24/7 wireless access (people can use outside the Library when it is closed)
- Staff
- Classes offered
- Keeping up with technology
- Web site
- Downloadable books

Weaknesses:

- Only 18 workstations
- Don't have a full-time tech person on staff
- Electrical outlet problem to accommodate many lap top computers
- Technology is ever-changing
- Financial limitations

Opportunities:

- Offer varied classes at different skill levels and provide one-on-one instruction
- The Library can become known as the cutting-edge technological resource in the city
- Foresight in relations to sharing knowledge
- Coordinate with others; for example Wartburg College and CUNA

Threats:

- May become overwhelmed by need
- Overtaken by changes in technology
- Investing in technology – are we investing in the right thing at the right time?
What might just be a fad, or what if the format is a fleeting thing?
- What if funding was eliminated?
- Increased access increases the vulnerability of the Library from patrons accessing inappropriate content on the Internet.

D. Create Young Readers

Strengths:

- Existing programs
- Staff
- Facility
- Community awareness of the Library's Children's service and the expectation

Weaknesses:

- Time available – as well as staffing to accomplish everything
- Need to increase child-friendly technology
- Funding
- Existing furniture is getting worn

Opportunities:

- Involving parents and caregivers in early literacy education/awareness
- Involving preschool and elementary schools
- Opportunity to work with hospitals
- Connect to Wartburg College's education classes or recruit educated retirees to assist

Threats:

- A decreasing number of children
- There is so much technology in homes; a need to go to the Library for it?
- Now that the public schools are offering preschool, this can take away from the audience; take away from the Library

E. Visit a Comfortable Place

Strengths:

- Facility
- Gardens
- Location
- Staff
- Plants make the Library more "home like"
- Meeting space
- Parking

Weaknesses:

- Furniture – needs to be updated and be more comfy
- Lack of nooks and crannies in the building
- Funding – more hours for early and late visitors

Opportunities:

- Coffee shop
- NW/SW doors for more flexible entry to the gardens
- Culture – Increase community involvements, display art, hold concerts

Threats:

- Would a coffee shop threaten other businesses?
- Someone has to manage the coffee shop; staff time away from work to devote to the coffee shop can hinder library service
- Increasing the number of doors might require increased security

F. Discover Your Roots

Strengths:

- Genealogy collection
- Photo collection
- Working with the City's Historical Preservation Commission
- Microfilming of newspapers
- A strong volunteer base exists with the Genealogical Society

Weaknesses:

- Space
- Funding
- Hours might limit use – must be present at the Library to use the resources
- Not everything is digitized

Opportunities:

- Digitize the collection
- Increase collaboration with the museum and the Genealogical Society

Threats:

- Copyright infringement
- Fire

G. Learn to Read and Write

Strengths:

- Kiwanis has a homework help program
- Self-guided teaching programs
- Study spaces
- Well-educated staff
- Summer programs reinforce reading skills for children and young adults
- Proctor exams

Weaknesses:

- Staff not trained as teachers of literacy
- Space for classes will compete for meeting room space for other programs and events
- Funding of special materials

Opportunities:

- Self-guided literacy
- Coordinate with Wartburg College and their teacher education program
- Tap into the talents of retired teachers/faculty

Threats:

- Development of this service response may divert areas in the library that are strong and have a lot of support
- There could possibly be a public backlash for devoting significant resources to a small group in the community

H. Satisfy Curiosity

Strengths

- Databases
- Internet
- Interlibrary Loan
- Variety of newspapers
- Staff with diverse educational backgrounds
- Staff involvement
- Staff is approachable
- Website

Weaknesses

- Collection not balanced
- Hours may be somewhat limiting as far as when someone can be here
- No downloadable books for Mac products

Opportunities

- Be all things to all people
- Partnerships
- Transportation

Threats

- Trying to be all things to all people
- Training
- Funding

Discussion on the Preliminary Service Responses

- The Board agreed that it would like 3 service responses one of which should be Stimulate the Imagination. Whether there will be 2 or 3 in addition to Stimulate the Imagination will have to be determined by the Board after the final recommendations from the Planning Committee and will depend a great deal on the resources required for success.
- The Board felt that the service response “Learn to Read and Write” was not viable for the Library to take on. It would be a “mammoth” task and there are other resources available in the community.