

Perth & District Union Public Library

Strategic Plan 2017-2021

Introduction

The Perth & District Union Public Library has served the Town of Perth and the Townships of Drummond/North Elmsley and Tay Valley for more than 150 years. The library's role in the community has evolved, and continues to do so over time. This strategic plan sets out the library's Mission, Vision, Strategic Directions and Objectives for the next five years, from 2017-2021. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the library continues to evolve in response to changing community needs, while delivering exceptional programs and services, and offering the best possible value for contributing municipalities and library users alike.

Our Mission

The mission of the Perth & District Union Public Library is to provide access to information and reading resources in an open and welcoming environment, thus supporting and improving the community's quality of life.

As part of our community-led strategic planning process, the library's community committee identified the following visions for our community and for our library:

Our Vision for the Community

We envision a community in which: everyone belongs, and no one is left out; everyone has access to opportunities for lifelong learning, discovery and growth; everyone has access to health care, healthy food, secure housing, public transportation, stable employment or income, and a healthy environment; history is celebrated *and* diversity is welcomed; and community organizations, businesses and local governments are working together to improve quality of life for all.

Our Vision for the Library

We envision the library playing a key role in realizing this future by continuing to evolve as a vibrant community hub for lifelong learning that: brings together information, technology and people both at the library and in our community; is supported by the community through advocacy, fund-raising and volunteerism; and has a loyal membership. Everyone has a library card!

Strategic Directions & Objectives

This section sets out strategic directions and objectives for the Perth & District Union Public Library over the next five years, from 2017-2021.

- 1. Tell our story:** Raise our profile and change perceptions of the library by informing residents, elected officials, and community organizations about who we are and what we do.
 - Develop and implement a communication and marketing plan to raise the library's profile with key audiences (including cross-promotion with other organizations).
 - Offer virtual visits/tours to familiarize people with the library.
 - Encourage community members to share their library experiences
- 2. Create a welcoming space:** Create a vibrant, accessible and welcoming environment that draws people to the library.
 - Reconfigure and redecorate the library to create a welcoming and vibrant space.
 - Better communicate the library hours, and/or extend our hours of operation.
- 3. Take the library to the people:** Offer programs and services off-site and online.
 - Explore options for providing services in townships.
 - Continue to collaborate with other community organizations.
 - Expand the range of services offered online.
- 4. Support literacy and life-long learning:** Collaborate with other community organizations to deliver literacy programs and support life-long learning.
 - Offer a mentorship program that pairs volunteers with those who need assistance with technology, literacy or navigating programs and service.
 - Connect people to information, resources and each other through technology.
 - Renew and expand our collection (print and digital, English and French, for all literacy levels).
 - Continue to deliver our flagship literacy programs
- 5. Build resources for a changing role:** Work with the community toward sustainable funding that enables the library to build the facilities and staff necessary to fulfill its mission.
 - Use technology to increase staff capacity. Take advantage of proven technology, and teach staff and members how to use it.
 - Update our financial plan and our ten year capital budget.
 - Diversify our funding sources by partnering with other organizations and applying for grants to deliver innovative programs.
 - Continue to support and build our strong volunteer corps

Next Steps:

Library staff and board members will develop detailed plans for achieving these goals, starting in 2017. Progress toward the goals identified in this plan will be tracked on the library's website: www.perthunionlibrary.ca

Appendix

Process:

The model for the process was based primarily on *Strategic Planning for Results* by Sandra Nelson for the Public Library Association (American Library Association, 2008) and secondarily on *Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning* by Anne Marie Madziak for the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS, 2007). With input from these sources and others, the library elected to continue using a community-led model for the strategic plan renewal process. In August 2016, the library conducted a survey of users and non-users to evaluate current use and expectations of library service and compare changes with a survey conducted in 2011. In October 2016, an advisory committee of community members met with a facilitator to develop visions for the community and the library and to provide strategic direction. Library staff and board members conducted a similar exercise and merged results with those developed by the community. The vision developed by these groups was reviewed by the community committee for additional input and will be sent to working groups of the board and staff to develop detailed objectives for tasks to meet the goals.

Participants:

Members of the community committee

Allan Brown, Town of Perth
Arlene Roach, Town of Perth
Dennis Riggs, Town of Perth
Delaney Campbell, Tay Valley Township
Lynn McIntyre, Drummond/North Elmsley Township
Ross Dickson, Town of Perth
Sharon Bissonette, Town of Perth
Susan Neilson, Tay Valley Township
Rod Agar, Drummond/North Elmsley Township
Kim Spence, Tay Valley Township
Jennifer Dickson, Tay Valley Township (Library board representative)
George Sachs, Drummond/North Elmsley Township (Library board representative)
Julie Hansen, Town of Perth (Library staff representative)
Wayne Stryde, Lanark Highlands (Friends of the Library representative)

Facilitator

Jeff Kohl

Members of the library board

John Gemmell, board chair, deputy mayor, Town of Perth
Jennifer Dickson, councillor, Tay Valley Township
Lynda Kanelakos, Town of Perth
John Kalbfleisch, Drummond/North Elmsley Township
Richard Morris, Town of Perth
Ted Parkinson, Drummond/North Elmsley Township
George Sachs, councillor, Drummond/North Elmsley Township
Carol Rigby, Tay Valley Township
Heidi Taber, Tay Valley Township

Members of the library staff

Erika Heesen, CEO
Rachel Warren, library specialist
Rae Ann Prosser-Cochrane, library technician
Laurie Murray, library technician
Julie Hansen, library technician
Jill Walters, library assistant
Jenn Bain, library assistant
Ketsia Snider, library assistant
Kendra Miller, page
Silas Jordan, page
Brian Echlin, caretaker

Community Trends

The following community trends, strengths, and challenges were identified in visioning exercises with the Community Committee, Library Board and staff. They should be considered as the library develops and implements its strategic plan over the next five years.

Changing Demographics

- Aging population / Growing seniors population
- Diminishing number of young families

Changing Technology

- Access to technology is vital
- Technology is changing fast (and we need to stay current)
- The digital divide is growing (between those who do & don't have access to technology)
- The need for technological literacy (especially for seniors)
- The challenge of retrieving information from old technologies (e.g. floppy discs and VHS)

Social Isolation & Inclusion

- A large number of people live in isolation, and don't feel connected to others (particularly seniors, and people experiencing poverty, poor mental health and/or addictions)
- There is a need to connect people with each other (through technology and programs)

Community Outreach

- Challenge to reach the rural population, isolated people
- Challenge to draw non-readers to the library

Economy

- Many households have constrained financial resources
- 'Gig' economy: many people work more than one job (also known as 'income patching')

Literacy & Life-long Learning

- Baseline literacy levels appears to be decreasing
- The need to support self-directed life-long learning

Strengths

Our staff members inspire people to discover, learn and grow through all ages and stages of life. We go the extra distance to help people find the information, resources and services they need.

The library has great staff, directors and volunteers!

- Our staff members are welcoming, friendly, knowledgeable, helpful and supportive.
- We go the extra distance to help people.

The library makes a big difference in people's lives:

- We change lives!
- We contribute to people's health and well-being by encouraging social inclusion.
- We open doors for people by linking them with information, programs and services.
- We inspire people: we are a catalyst to success.
- We are flexible and innovative, and can respond nimbly to members' needs.

We create a welcoming environment:

- We create a safe, welcoming environment where everyone 'belongs'.
- We have an accessible and beautiful building in a central location.
- We are open and welcoming to everyone: we bridge the age, wage, culture and gender gap.

We are well-connected in the community:

- The library is a 'go-to' place in the community. We are approachable and responsive.
- We are outward looking. We do a lot of community outreach.

We offer a wide range of programs and services for all ages:

- We offer programs for all ages, not just for kids.
- We also focus on children – children who love the library and often don't want to leave!
- Teens and tweens are engaged, and feel a sense of 'ownership' and belonging.
- We create opportunities for families experiencing poverty (e.g. museum passes).
- We even have a button-maker, chopsticks expert and sock knitter!

We offer much more than books:

- We have an amazing collection of print and digital media.

We are a community meeting place:

- We offer a place to meet, share ideas, build relationships and create community connections.
- We offer accessible meeting spaces for community groups.

We accomplish a lot with little money.

- We stretch our resources and make every penny count.

Challenges

The library is challenged to expand its collection, diversify its programs, take advantage of technology, make deeper connections in the community, and grow its membership – all within the constraints of limited space and finances.

The need for sustainable funding:

- A large proportion of the library's budget is received from three contributing municipalities. There are significant pressures and financial constraints on municipal budgets that make it difficult to request additional funding. These constraints come from both the taxpayer and from an elimination or freezing of funds from other levels of government.
- The library is perceived by some as a discretionary service, a luxury. The library is competing for funding against other essential municipal services, such as roads, fire and ambulance.

The changing role of public libraries & public perception of the library:

- Libraries are continually evolving to meet the expectations of new technologies, changing demographics and community needs.
- What the library offers has changed significantly over time, but the library is perceived by many as an 'institution' that houses books, and only books.
- The community is not fully aware of the full range of programs and services offered by the library.

Physical space:

- Physical space at the library is limited for both the collection and programming.

Hours:

- The library has varied hours throughout the week, which some people do not find intuitive and discourages them from visiting.

Reliance on technology:

- We rely heavily on technology such as computers and e-readers - for both staff and library users - which necessitates ongoing trouble-shooting, maintenance and replacement of equipment.

Staff workload:

- Staff workload continues to increase, which can lead to stress and burnout.
- There is a perceived lack of time to coordinate staff activities.

Library Experience (Stories From Library Users)

- 'My whole wellbeing is nourished by a visit to the library.'
- 'My HUGE stroller fits everywhere.'
- 'Kids actually cry when they have to leave the library.'
- 'It is a great library. In particular, the staff are kind, helpful and knowledgeable.'
- 'I love the Perth Library! Beautiful building in the heart of downtown. Friendly, helpful staff. Bravo!!'
- 'Very inviting and inclusive of all age groups, locals and visiting folk. I think the library does a great job of posting local events and creating clubs and great programming opportunities for people of all ages! It's one of our favorite places to come in Perth to find out what's going on.'
- 'The library has done a great job of being child friendly. Similar effort should now be invested for seniors. Book clubs, a comfortable reading room reserved for quiet reading, discussion rooms for book club meetings, etc. Emphasis should be on connecting people, particularly seniors, to help them engage with others and the community and reduce isolation.'
- 'I love this place. I think it's the heartbeat of our great community.'
- 'Apart from the stair climbing to the adult section, the library has a warm, friendly atmosphere and offers everything I need.'
- 'The library is wonderful -- the hub for the town. The interlibrary loan service means I can get just about any book I want, in a timely way. I wonder if the magazine selection is routinely reviewed -- perhaps some little-read/checked out could be replace with other Canadian magazines (e.g. Walrus, Maisonneuve)'
- 'I love the speed of the internet and service here it is the best place I've found since moving here.'
- 'You provide great service and a positive atmosphere. As a teenager, I enjoy the book club you host and as a reader, I really appreciate the wide variety of books you guys hold.'
- 'Any chance we could have an adults night once a month? Nummies and conversation around books, without the commitment and cost of of joining a book club would be nice. Many in our community struggle financially but would welcome an opportunity to share their love of books.'
- 'We love baby time and story times. Thank you so much to Rachel and everyone there who make our family feel welcome each visit!!! :)'
- 'More audio books please!!'
- 'I really appreciate that you give notice by e-mail when books are due!'
- 'Love the books with larger print as we age it is harder to see the small print even with glasses.'
- 'Love the access to the museum passes! Great idea, & they sure save us money!'
- 'I love that you go to Kindergarten orientations, my two oldest sons both got their library cards there. Those are the cards we use.'
- 'We need our library to stay a strong part of our community. Keep up the good work!'

Survey:

In July and August 2011, the library surveyed users and non-users. The survey was distributed in paper and electronic forms at the library, on the library website, and at various community events including the Perth Farmer's Market, the Stewart Park Music Festival, the Perth Garlic Festival, and area lake association annual meetings.

In August 2016, the library again surveyed users and non-users. The survey was distributed in paper and electronic forms at the library, on the library website, and on social media sites. Select responses follow:

July/August 2011

Demographics of respondents (n=411)

Library use	Place of residence	Age
Library users: 399	Perth: 174 (43.3%)	Under 18: 24 (6%)
Non-users: 12	Tay Valley: 105 (26.1%)	18-39: 55 (13.7%)
	Drummond/North Elmsley: 90 (22.4%)	40-54: 76 (18.9%)
	Other: 41 (8.2%)	55+: 247 (61.4%)
		No response: 9

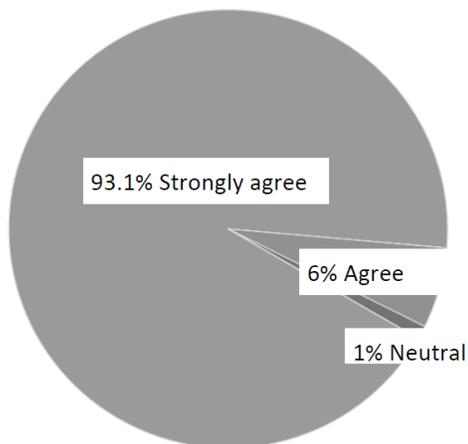
August 2016

Demographics of respondents (n=419)

Library use	Place of residence	Age
Library users: 355	Perth: 170 (43.7%)	Under 18: 19 (4.88%)
Non-users: 34	TVT: 123 (31.62%)	18-39: 73 (18.77%)
No response: 30	DNE: 67 (17.22%)	40-54: 85 (21.85%)
	Other: 29 (7.46%)	55+: 212 (54.5%)
		No response: 30

JULY/AUGUST 2011

Please indicate your response to the following statement:
The library is an important resource for the community.



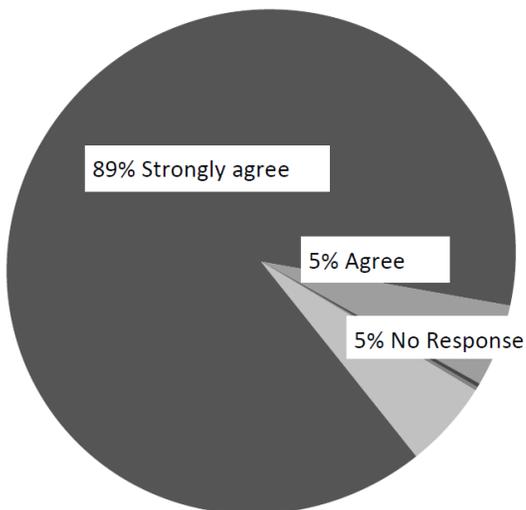
No responses: Disagree; strongly disagree

How should the library prioritize its resources?

- 1) Older children (age 6-12); teens
- 2) Readers; those with literacy needs of any age
- 3) Adults; seniors
- 4) Babies/small children (age 0-5)
- 5) Researchers; write-ins (technology, disabled groups, low-income families)

AUGUST 2016

Please indicate your response to the following statement:
The library is an important resource for the community.



How should the library prioritize its resources?

- 1) Readers (any age)
- 2) Those with literacy needs (any age)
- 3) Older children (ages 6-12)
- 4) Babies and small children (ages 0-5)
- 5) Teens (ages 13-18)
- 6) Seniors (ages 55 & up)
- 7) Adults (ages 18 & up)
- 8) Researchers (any age)

JULY/AUGUST 2011

What one thing would you change about the Perth library if you could? (Common answers)

1. Longer open hours/standardized hours
2. More space for collection, reading or study, and computers/larger building
3. Larger collection, especially new books, DVDs, and teen books
4. More computers/separate computers for kids and teens
5. New services, such as a bookmobile or coffee shop

Additional comments

“The library is wonderful, a real enhancement to life in Perth with a dedicated and helpful staff.”

“I love the library and the staff are great, but I do wish that it was not so small.”

“The people at this library are the most knowledgeable, pleasant, and helpful individuals that I have met in any library. Thank you. Keep up the great work.”

AUGUST 2016

What one thing would you change about the Perth library if you could? (Common answers)

1. Longer open hours/standardized hours
2. Larger collection, especially new books and DVDs

Additional comments

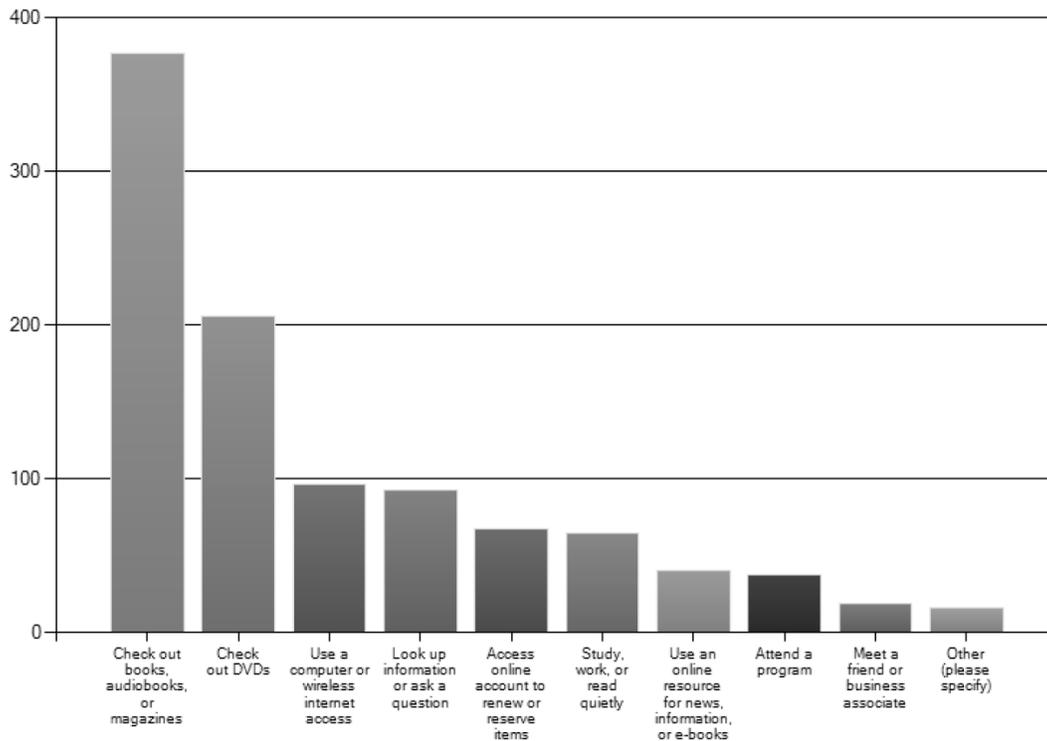
“It is a great library. In particular the staff are kind, helpful and knowledgeable.”

“An incredible resource, great staff. May funding to maintain the library programs never fall short. We should be very proud of our library.”

“I love going to the Perth library! I get great service and able to access interesting books, audio-books and movies that would be too expensive to buy. Thank you!”

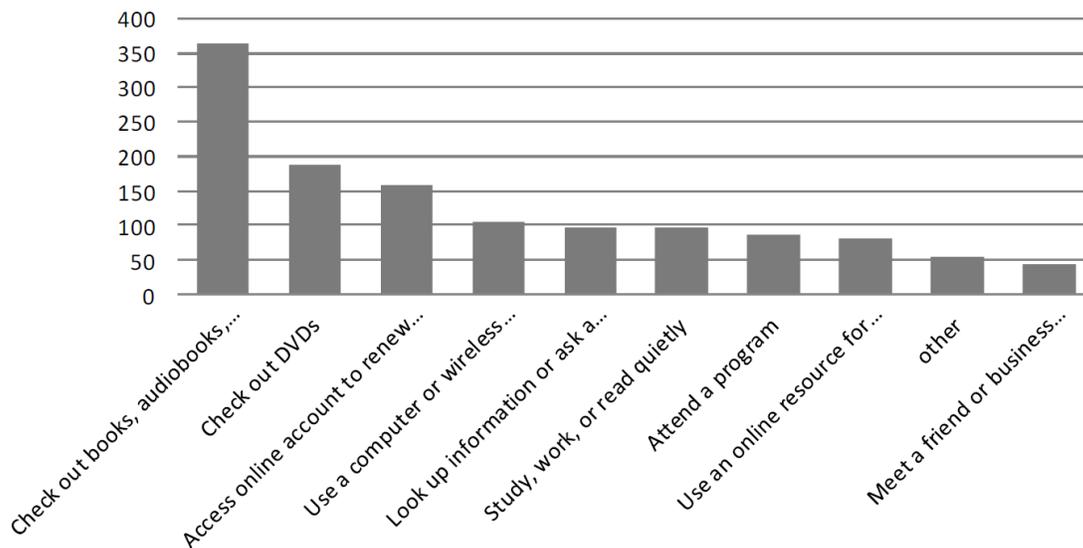
JULY/AUGUST 2011

How do you use the library? (Check all that apply.)



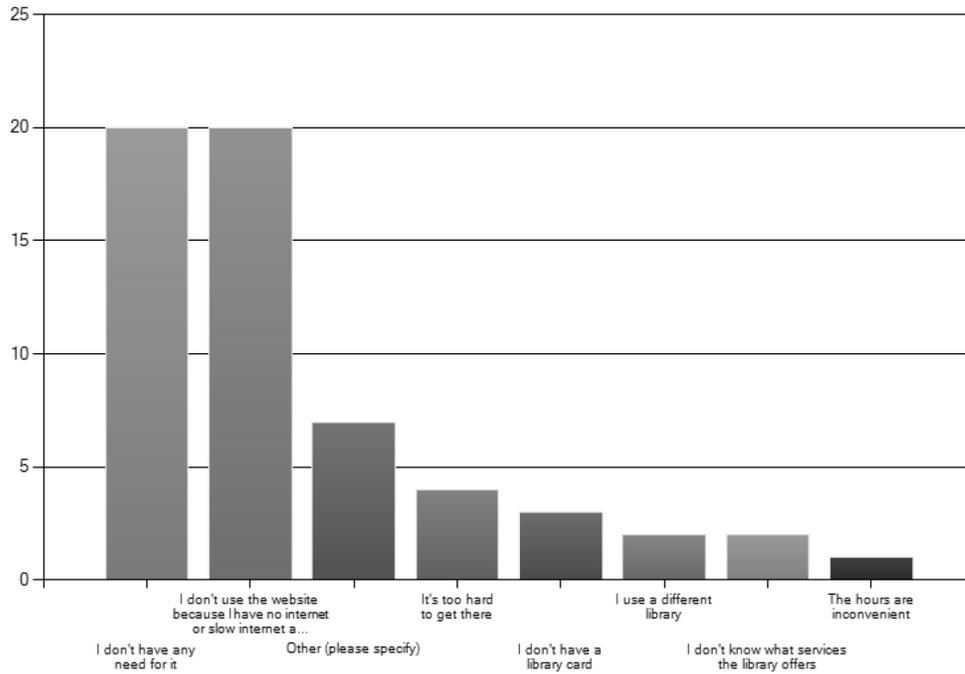
AUGUST 2016

How do you use the library? (check all that apply)



JULY/AUGUST 2011

If you don't use the Perth library or our website, why not? (Choose all that apply.)



AUGUST 2016

If you don't use the Perth Library, why not? (check all that apply).

