

A PROGRAM OF SERVICE

This Program of Service is based upon the considerable input the consultants gathered during their site visits, analysis of background data and information, and professional experience. We set the stage for the Program of Service with the first section of this chapter, the Community Vision Report.

COMMUNITY VISION REPORT

Based upon a sampling of public opinion¹ the consultants have drawn the following conclusions with regard to the Laramie Library, the “main” library facility of the Albany County Public Library:

The public likes the Library because it is:

- An inviting place for families and children and it is handicap accessible
- In a very good location
- Peopled by a staff that is helpful, friendly, and knowledgeable
- Making available a Library website that is inclusive and up-to-date
- Planning and staging outstanding programming, especially for children and young people

- Making its meeting room available as a good place for community meetings
- Providing free Interlibrary Loan service.

However, there are aspects of the Library that the public does not like, because:

- The hours of service are too few, especially being closed on Mondays
- There is not enough parking
- The number of computers is inadequate, are slow, and the computers in the Children’s area are not of the quality they should be
- The carpet is worn and old
- The lighting needs to be improved and the restrooms renovated.

When asked about improvements in the physical space the consultants heard several requests, not all of which applied to the physical plant. We heard that the Library should have:

- Different types and sizes of meeting rooms, including rooms for small groups to meet and/or study
- Improved space for staff offices and workrooms
- A computer lab
- New carpet and furniture
- A more attractive and appealing appearance
- More parking
- More seating
- A larger area for both the Children’s Library and the Teen Services area

¹ See Chapter 8, “The Vision of the Community.”

- Separation of spaces in the Children’s Library that would “divide” toddlers from older children
- An expanded Wyoming Room with new equipment
- A coffee machine in a quiet corner for reading, e.g. a small café or coffee bar like in the modern-day bookstores
- Increased hours of service.

We also heard from the public that:

- The basement is not being utilized to its fullest potential
- The Library needs a focus, it cannot be all things for all people
- There is a lack of understanding of what the mission of the public library is, and what elements of the population can the public library serve that are not being served by the University.

We asked Focus Group participants to think of the Library building as a person and how would they describe that “person.” We heard that the Library is:

- Friendly and inviting, like an old friend
- Thrifty and adaptable
- Dated, old and worn out -- a little run down.

As to why there are not more users of the Library, the consultants heard that:

- People do not know what the Library offers
- It is not adequately advertised or marketed
- There are other libraries that present competition e.g. University of Wyoming (UW) libraries

- The hours of service at the Library have been reduced
- The Library needs more computers and improved work areas
- The parking is poor
- Some people buy a book because they want to read it “right now” rather than wait for a copy to become available
- Laramie’s population is a problem because about 1/3 of the population is comprised of UW students.

The above viewpoints represent 2009. Ten years previous the Library commissioned a telephone survey. That survey indicated that:

- There were as many users as non-users surveyed
- Those who did use the Library was principally persons who were in the Library every two to four weeks, or every one to three months
- The reading of books and magazines and/or obtaining tax forms were the primary reasons for using the Library
- The primary reason for persons who library patrons in the past and now (1999) no longer using the Library was that it, the Library, no longer provided the services they needed
- Six of 10 persons surveyed used other libraries, especially the University of Wyoming.

The results of the 1999 survey are not significantly different than those of 2009. It is well to remember that in 1999 there may not have been any public use computers in the Library.

THE LARAMIE LIBRARY FACILITY

The consultants have found no one who is not in favor of a public library in Laramie. The range of opinion runs from “it is fine the way it is” to “we need a new building (if we can afford it).”

The prevailing opinion is that the present location is excellent. It is centrally located and it is downtown. However, it does not have enough parking.

As for finances, there is not a lot of favor for increased funding. Improvements are desired, but most will cost money and that money may be difficult to come by. However, the Specific Purpose Tax initiative may have the answer provided the Library can be included among the list of projects. The consultants believe a compelling “include the Library story” can be prepared and presented. It may be more difficult to obtain additional operating funds than capital improvement funds.

Usage of the Library is not what it could be – or should be. Increased usage will strengthen the Library’s position when it comes time to seek added funding for operations. The Program of Service, presented below, addresses the consultants’ recommendations on where the focus of the Library should be.

A PROGRAM OF SERVICE

A Program of Service should clearly state the service priorities of the library are (1) responding to expressed community needs for library services, (2) reflecting the mission of the organization, and (3) doable.

If any of these three elements are missing or unclear then it is unlikely that the Program of Service will be successful.

Success is best measured (1) by usage made of the library by the residents, businesses, and others who may use the library and (2) by the amount of financial support provided by both the government and the private sectors.

As we at Godfrey’s Associates draft this proposed Program of Service for the Albany County Public Library – and specifically – the Laramie Library, we fully understand that at the present time economic conditions are not on as solid foundation as anyone would like – not in the State of Wyoming, Albany County, the City of Laramie, the private sector, and certainly not at the federal level. Therefore, this Program of Service will strive to be realistic in terms of what is doable now and for the next one to three years.

Then we will look at what may be possible once the economic turmoil now being experienced by many subsides.

COMMUNITY NEEDS FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Laramie is both blessed and cursed by the presence of a major state university in its midst. Blessed by the fact that it brings a lot of jobs, good paying jobs, into the community (and the County); a lot of students, usually with more than average discretionary funds to spend with local merchants, food and drink establishments, and the like; an expanding campus that by the nature of new construction adds additional jobs albeit of a somewhat temporary nature; and a highly educated community with the potential of providing meaningful leadership.

On the other side of the coin, the university demands a lot of local government services to support its population – police, fire, streets, trash removal, and the like; removes taxable property from the local tax roles as the campus expands its boundaries; and becomes competition – whether perceived or not – for the public library, competition which can never be anywhere near equal in terms of available resources.

The competition factors make it easy for some to question the need for a public library, or at least the need for a library that is adequately supported via local tax dollars. However, if this “curse” were unique only to Laramie and Albany County the consultants would place more stock in this perception. We know, based upon our experience with public (and academic) libraries across the country, that hundreds of communities support a major university(ies) and a well-funded, highly used public library.

So, what are the needs of the Laramie community when it comes to public library services? Let us first take a quick look at what we believe are the primary service responsibilities of the UW Libraries.

The University Libraries have as their primary responsibilities to:

- Support the curriculum of the Institution
- Support the faculty in its research
- Be the first resource for the student body in their library and informational needs as they relate to the curriculum
- Be a welcoming place for students, faculty, and staff.

The principal consultant for this study, in one brief visit to the newly expanded Coe Library, certainly believes that the library is a welcoming place. The consultant can only assume that its collections and services are supportive of the curriculum and research endeavors of the faculty, and that it is, for the vast majority of students, the first resource they turn to (or given today’s students “wedding” to electronics, perhaps the second after some of the many websites they frequently access).

What then about the public library? What are its primary responsibilities to its constituents?

Library Service Response Rankings

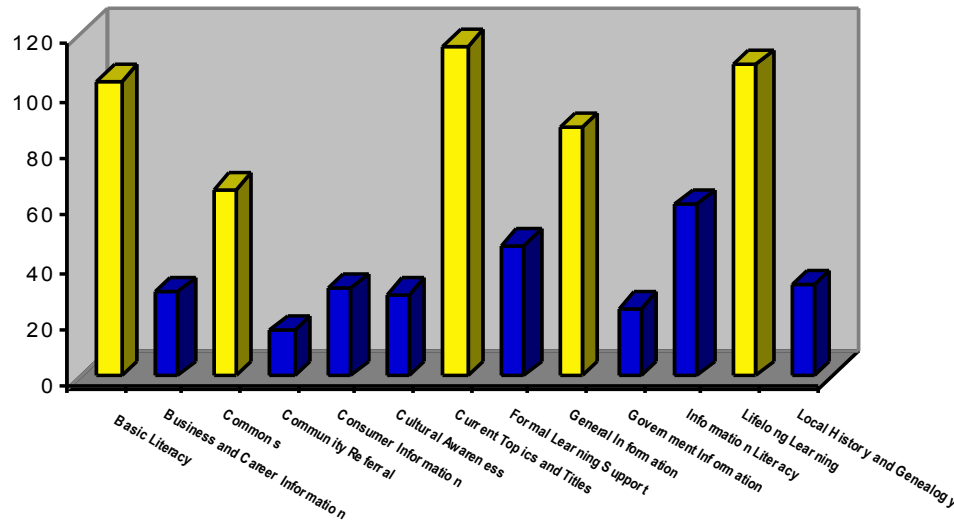
The Focus Group Discussions facilitated by the consultants asked each participant to complete a brief “Library Service Responses” ranking exercise. Thirteen service responses were presented in printed form with a brief description of each. The participants were asked to rank the service they believed to be of greatest importance as far as the Laramie Library was concerned, then indicate the second most important, third most, etc. to the fifth most important. They were further asked to indicate which two of the 13 they believed the Library should invest neither time nor money in providing. In other words, which were the two least important service responses.

Subsequently, the Library asked its customers to participate via the Library’s website and newsletter.

The consultants tallied the several completed forms, assigning five points for each top ranked service, four points for each second ranked service, etc. to one point for the fifth ranked service. There was no point value for the least important.

Of the 13 service responses five clearly stood out as the most favored, and two clearly emerged as the least favored. The top five, in order of preference, illustrated by the yellow bars in the graph below, are:

- Current topics and titles
- Lifelong Learning
- Basic Literacy
- General Information
- Commons.



The two responses marked as least important among the participants were:

- Business and Career Information
- Formal Learning Support.

Current topics and titles means an emphasis on a good collection of new publications, media, and programming that addresses matters of current interest:

- General information means a good collection of resources dealing with information of general public interest
- Commons means that the library is a meeting place for the community
- Basic literacy means that the library is a source for those who need to improve their ability to read, write, and compute
- Lifelong learning means have a good collection of resources that would enable a person to continue their “education” in a non-formal setting
- Formal learning support means the library would have materials directly, or closely related, to curriculums in local schools
- Business and career information means a good collection of resources that would assist a person wanting information on a possible career and/or a business establishment and its need for data and information related to good business practices.

The service responses are not age based. The thought is that a child can be as interested in “current topics and titles” as an adult and that a senior citizen could be as interested in “business and career information” as a teenager. Table 11.1 provides the “scoring” for each of the 13 service responses.

Table 11.1
Summary of Library Service Response Rankings

<i>service</i>	<i>rank:</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>5th</i>	<i>total points</i>	<i>least important</i>
Current Topics & Titles		6	4	4	1		60	4
General Information		8	1		5	1	55	2
Commons		2	6	2	2	2	46	4
Basic Literacy		4	2	3	2		41	4
Lifelong Learning		2	3	3	4	2	41	
Information Literacy			3	3	2	2	27	
Formal Learning Support			2	3	1	2	21	9
Consumer Information		1	1	2	1		17	2
Business & Career Information		1	1	1		2	14	8
Local History & Genealogy				1	1	8	13	3
Cultural Awareness			2	1	1		13	4
Government Information				1	2	4	11	1
Community Referral			1				4	3

THE MISSION OF THE LIBRARY

As the saying goes (liberties taken), “what comes first, the responsiveness of Program of Service to the needs of the community, or the Mission Statement?” The consultants believe being responsive to community needs is paramount. The Mission Statement (and Vision Statement if there is one) should reflect the Program of Service.

The current Mission Statement of the ACPL reads as follows:

The mission of the Albany County Public Library is to meet the needs of the public by offering open access to a diverse collection of materials, a friendly environment, and community-based programs to encourage learning throughout life.

We have no real quarrel with the Statement as presented. However, we do suggest a modest change or two in the current Statement is to remain basically in place. We would state it this way:

*The mission of **The** Albany County Public Library is to meet the **informational** needs of the **general** public by offering ~~open~~ access to a diverse collection of materials, a friendly environment, and community-based programs to encourage lifelong learning. ~~throughout life.~~*

In our review of the Mission Statement (Step 5 of Phase 1 of our work plan) we offer two other suggestions for a Mission Statement as well as two suggestions for a Vision Statement.

Is it doable?

In order for a Program of Service to be doable the following elements must be in place:

1. The annual operational budget must be adequate.
2. The collections of library materials, including electronic resources, must be adequate or be able to become adequate over a two/three year period of time.
3. The facility must be adequately sized to house all of the resources necessary – staff, collections, and technology.
4. The infrastructure of the facility – power and power distribution, HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning), security (library materials and building), lighting, and maintainability – must be adequate.

If any of the above is missing or is deemed inadequate then it will be quite difficult for the organization to implement and sustain its Program of Service.

Of the four elements the easiest one to address and “get right” is number 3 – an adequately sized facility. Why? Because the Program of Service can – and should be – tailored to “fit the building.” To do otherwise is to set up a Program of Service that is doomed to fail.

Element number 2 is also comparatively easy to realize if a realistic analysis of the operational budget is in place. One would not strive to have 10 copies of every top ten book on the *New York Times* Best Seller list unless it 1) had the budget to pursue such action and/or 2) greatly reduced expenditures for other parts of the collection.

As for the first element, that should also – of course – be able to support the Program of Service. However, it is important to bear in mind that the Program may need to be less ambitious than initially conceived. This could result in fewer hours of service, a limited collection, not as many programs planned, etc., etc.

Element 4 is perhaps the most difficult one to achieve because it may require funds that are not available – at least not as readily available as an operational budget which is, in Albany County, partially assured by means of state statute.

With the above in mind the consultants present our recommended Program of Service for the Laramie Library of the Albany County Public Library system.

THE RECOMMENDED PROGRAM OF SERVICE

Our recommendations are presented at this stage of our study for a Laramie Library facility that is sized to what we believe it needs to be to meet the 30 year planning horizon as set forth in the RFP. Without question the ultimate decision as to how the needed space will be rendered will be important and will have some impact. As this study progresses and a decision is made with regard to the facility needs of the Laramie Library we can adjust the Program of Service as needed. However, we believe any adjustments will be minor in scale.

COLLECTIONS

It is collections of library materials that draw most people to a library. If they find that the library has what they are interested in then they are most likely to return for a second visit, a third visit, and become “regular” library users, or customers, or patrons – the descriptive term is not important in the grand scheme of things.

The collections **should not** be limited to the printed word. A responsive collection will include books (of course), magazines (or if you prefer, journals), newspapers, non-book media (i.e. books-on-CD, DVDs, and music CDs), and most certainly electronic resources (databases, Internet connectivity, computer software packages, and games).

For the three major age groupings at the Laramie Library, we recommend a collection focus as outlined below.

Book Materials for Adults

- New titles in multiple copies, new defined as published within the past six months, a minimum of one copy for every five reserves (or holds)
- Large print, usually single copies of fiction and non-fiction
- Fiction, comprised of the best of the “no longer new titles,” selected classics, and genre fiction based upon staff’s knowledge of reader interest

- Non-fiction, comprised of the best of the “no longer new titles,” a few selected classics, and titles that relate everyday living and issues that many folks have or want to deal with – do-it-yourself, travel, medical information, current biographies of notables, regional history, and finances.

The above would constitute the largest percentage of the adult circulating collection, between 57,000 and 58,000 volumes initially, slowly increasing to between 61,000 and 62,000.

Book Materials for Teens (Young Adults)

A book collection of 3,000 volumes should exist at the outset, increasing to 3,500 or 4,000 over the next 30 years. Graphic novels, series books, and titles of current interest should comprise the bulk of the collection.

Book Materials for Children

- A collection should be divided between volumes for children age 0 to 7 or 8, and then older children
- For the youngest a collection of Easy, Picture, and Board books should start at about 8,000 volumes and grow to 8,500 or 9,000
- For the older children the start-up number is recommended to be 12,000 and the 30-year number in a range of 14,500 or 15,500
- A collection of adult materials that deal with parenting as part of the Children’s collections, with appropriate signage.

Reference Materials for All Ages

- The print-on-paper reference collection is recommended to be no more than 800 volumes, including ready reference titles
- There should be no growth of the print-on-paper reference collection.

Special Collections

In this category we propose three types of materials; Spanish language, literacy, and the Wyoming Room collection.

- **Spanish Language.** We propose a collection of 800 volumes, with a growth to 1,000 to 1,100. However, the demographics of the County may reflect an increase in persons of Hispanic origin and/or English language deficiencies possibly indicating a larger such collection
- **Literacy.** As one of the five most favored Library Service Responses, the Laramie Library should establish and maintain a good collection of basic literacy materials
- **Wyoming Room.** We estimate the on-shelf number is somewhere between 500 to 750 items. If the Room is to be maintained a decision will need to be made with regard to the thrust of the collection, e.g. materials that deal only/primarily with Albany County, or materials that also deal with neighboring counties and perhaps the state.. Also, will the Room collect and preserve non-book materials such as papers, artifacts, maps, and the like. From our experience we know that left un-checked a “local history” collection and space can, over time, become a financial burden but not attract a lot of users.

Magazines and Newspapers

- A magazine and newspaper collection equal to one current subscription for every 200 residents in Albany County
- Backfiles of magazines should be limited to the number of issues that can be placed on a flat shelf positioned beneath a hinged periodical display shelf.
- Newspapers should focus on state coverage plus appropriate regional papers, e.g. Denver, Fort Collins, Salt Lake City as well as a few national papers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. Backfiles of newspapers should be restricted to one week for all non-Wyoming papers, three months for all non-Laramie papers, and the *Laramie Boomerang* retained for six months in hardcopy
- Every effort should be made to develop a repository of all Laramie papers in electronic format. If electronic format is not possible, then microfilm would be an acceptable alternative.

Media

- The Media collection should total 14,000 Books-on-CD, music CDs, DVD movies, Computer Software, Games, and Kits (combined print/media items for children)
- Adult collection should have 70 percent of the total
- Children’s collection about 25 percent
- Teens about five percent
- Over the next 30 years the collection size should grow to 15,000 or 16,000
- The percentages for the three different age groups should reflect the demographics of the County.

Electronic Resources

- We group Internet connectivity, subscription (or free) databases, productivity packages such as Word and Excel, PAC stations (public access catalog), children’s games, and self-check stations together.
- Number of public use computer units, now and the future:
- All Internet connectivity stations except the Express stations should be able to access all databases for which the Library has “subscriptions.”

<i>unit</i>	<i>current</i>	<i>2039</i>
PACs	4	6
Self-check	2	4
Adult computers, internet express *	2	3
Adult computers, internet **	15	17
Adult computers, productivity ***	2	3
Adult computers, dual screen ****	1	1
Teen computers, internet express *	1	1
Teen computers, internet **	4	5
Teen computers, productivity ***	1	2
Children’s computers, games *****	2	2
Children’s computers, internet/productivity	4	8

- * Stand-up use, 15-minute timed limit, no printer connectivity.
- ** Sit-down use, 60-minute timed limit, black & white and color laser printer connectivity.
- *** Sit-down use, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc. software, black & white and color printer connectivity, also connected to photocopier machine for printing.
- **** Two large screen Macs with two task chairs at a 48 NSF workstation with b&w and color laser printer connectivity, also connected to photocopier machine for printing.
- ***** Age-appropriate games, tailored for very young children.

Programs & Programming

- The existing large Meeting Room is one of the more appreciated spaces – and services – the Laramie Library provides. There were many favorable comments expressed regarding the space, its availability, etc.
- There were also comments that bemoaned the elimination of the smaller space, and a few negative comments regarding the décor of the large room.
- To adequately respond to community needs the facility must have at least one meeting room – and three or four of different sizes would be better.
- The Program of Service focuses on how the room, or rooms, is/are used, and regardless of the number of meeting rooms we recommend:
 - The Library should review its policies regarding who can/cannot use the room and what charges for room use should be levied
 - The policies, in our opinion, should be restrictive in only two ways – groups for which their stated purpose is the overthrow of the federal government, and groups which have a record of not meeting their financial obligations as far as the Library is concerned
 - Use of the room should be allowed at least two hours prior to the normal opening time and extend at least two hours beyond regular closing time
 - The Library should mount a marketing campaign that calls attention to the room, its availability, and how a person/group can use it and at what charge
- Booking fees should take into consideration the amount of time the room will be in use, the amount of set-up/take-down time required, and the utility costs
- Booking fees should continue to be different for profit and non-profit organizations, with the latter pay somewhat less
- Advance booking of the room should be limited to no more than one use per month for non-library sponsored activities in order to offer as many groups and organizations the opportunity to use the space
- Library use should be planned at least six months in advance and should strive to be as consistent with regard to times and program lengths as possible.
- The Library should also seek to keep the room as busy as possible by maintaining and expanding its partnerships with community-based organizations that can plan and stage a program, with the Library role to provide the space. These kind of partnerships would likely reduce room revenue but would increase use of the room and the Library.

Hours of Service

- The Laramie Library is now open six days a week for a total of 42 hours
- Given the present economic situation any significant increase in service hours is not practical

- The consultants believe that to be closed on Mondays is a mistake as our experience is that of the five weekdays Monday is usually the busiest for most public libraries
- We recommend a Friday closing and Monday hours of 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
- Over time the hours of service should be extended as outlined below:

Initial change	Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Next change	Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Followed by	Sunday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Then	Monday thru Thursday 10:00 am to 9:00 pm
After that	Friday and Saturday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
And later	Monday thru Thursday 9:00 am to 9:00 pm
Finally	Sunday 9:00 am to 9:00 pm

- It may take several years to achieve an open schedule of 78 hours per week.

A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT REVENUE

We believe it is incumbent on public libraries to strive to generate as much revenue as they can without decreasing access for basic services in any way. The ACPL generated \$4,148 in fines and fees in 2008 and \$7,208 in 2007. Not a significant amount of money (0.005 percent of total income in '08).

The Library does get good support from the Friends of the Library, and from the Library Foundation. However, these funds – especially from the Foundation – should not be for day-to-day operations but rather Program of Service enhancements and/or capital expenditures.

The consultants make three specific recommendations and one general recommendation:

- Charge fines for overdue books and other materials consistent with the practices of other Wyoming public libraries
- Charge for Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service
- Initiate a “Pay Duplicate” collection of very popular books.²

As an explanation for those three specific recommendations we offer the following:

- **Fines.** Not charging a fine for an overdue book is a disservice to those who return their materials on time. Not charging a fine sends an inappropriate signal to some people, especially young people, that there are no consequences to their actions. Not charging a fine means that all taxpayers must make up the difference, admittedly quite small, but a difference nevertheless
- **ILL Charges.** ILL is probably the single most expensive service the ACPL provides its users; it is extremely labor intensive. The service is probably well used by a relatively few customers (The Focus Groups seemed to support this.). There is ample precedence for levying charges
- **“Pay Duplicate.”** For those users who want to read the latest best seller give them an opportunity to “rent” the book for however long they take to read it by instituting a modest daily charge, say \$0.25 per day,

² The “Pay Duplicate” collection would be a part of the “one copy for every five reserves” discussed elsewhere.

with a maximum charge of \$5.00 (must less than it would cost if the person where to buy the book at retail). Use all income from the “Pay Duplicate” collection to re-stock the collection as new books are published and become best sellers.

A general, indirect revenue recommendation is to establish a formal volunteer program and strive to have the equivalent of one full-time position filled by volunteers. Volunteerism is alive and well in most public libraries. There are ample examples of outstanding library volunteer programs on which the ACPL can use to structure a program that is right for Albany County and the Laramie Library.