Strategic Planning for Libraries
What it is and why it is so important

What is a strategic plan?
• Living Document
• Management tool for organization
• Blueprint for service enhancements over the next 3-5 years
• Sets the course for the future based on where a library has been, where it is going and what strategies will be used to meet those future trends, needs & wants of the library user
• Answers the question: What is the role of the library in the community (whether it is a town, school, academic environment, corporate structure)?

Why does a library need a strategic plan?
• Helps library gain recognition, funding & staffing for accomplishing the goals and objectives set out in the plan
• Explains programs to others
• Identifies priorities, strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results
• Develops budget related to the plan
• Provides goals, objectives and actions for future development
• Gives a clear sense of purpose
• Provides opportunity for evaluation and assessment

Parts of the Strategic Plan
• Assessment of Users Needs and Wants (Library users & non-users)
• Mission Statement
• Vision/Value Statements
• Strategic Directions/Goals
• Multi-year Objectives
• Actions/Activities with timeframes
• Outcomes
• Methodology (what did you do to bring this plan together)
• Technology should be incorporated in your plan (or developed as a separate plan)

How do you start?
• Include/Invite Library Board, staff and community members to be part of the process*
• Library Director prepares demographic information, library statistics, programs and services currently offered, and trends of libraries today
• S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) analysis
• Brainstorming session – what does the community want and need?
• Community Goals and Vision Exercise
• Community Input/Feedback (survey, focus groups, target audience input)
• Prioritize needs and wants from input and feedback
• Develop goals/objectives/actions
• Communicate plan

**Key Elements:**
• Input
• Where is the library going and why?
• What will be accomplished by the plan?
• How will it be done?
• Feedback from community

**Advantages of a Strategic Plan**
• Contract between: Board/Director – Director/Staff – Users/Library – Funders/Library
• Accountability
• Transparency = Trust
• Creates transformation/change
• Everyone is part of the plan (buy-in)
• Prioritizing makes hard choices easier
• Resource allocation

**Strategic Directions can include:**
• Collections
• Environments
• Marketing
• Services
• Staff
• Resources
• Facilities
• Advocacy
• Communication
• Customer Service
• Staff Development

*Strategic Plans create a plan to better serve the citizens of the community and guarantee them free public library services of the highest caliber.*

*Strategic Plans cannot be done in a bubble - they must be inclusive.*

To see more about planning, go to the MLS Resource Guide on Strategic Planning found at: [http://guides.masslibsystem.org/strategicplanning](http://guides.masslibsystem.org/strategicplanning)

*The Planning Committee will vary depending on the type of library. In an academic environment the members could include students, faculty liaisons, library staff, student workers, someone from admissions, administration. In some cases, the library staff/faculty is the committee and plans the process for getting assessment and input in other ways already provided through the college process (NEASC for example).*