

Project 2015

Onondaga County
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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INTRODUCTION: INTERNAL SCAN

The changing demographics in Onondaga County will have an impact on OCPL in relation to services and resources offered and access to them. Our current direct consumers, who borrow materials, use computers, seek information, attend programs, and are the recipients of bulk loans and Book for the Homebound Service, will remain consumers. As they age both healthy adults and adults with health care issues will need more specialized materials and remote access to resources. The same changes in need for specialized resources and remote access to information will affect our indirect consumers, our member libraries, and other agencies. Our internal scan and a survey of our member libraries show that library policies related to collection development, access to information, partnerships, staff, and marketing and promotion will need to be prioritized and addressed.

An increase in the elderly population will create an increased demand for avocational materials across the board. Collection development will target materials related to avocational and retirement issues. There will be increased reliance on technology for delivery of online and Internet resources, and increased collaboration with other agencies to provide programming and delivery of services. Additional outreach services could include delivery of materials by staff, volunteers or partner agencies, pre-selection of materials for pick-up by an aide or family member, and fees for service.

Growth in the number of people with disabilities related to mobility will require increased reliance on technology for delivery of services; services to those who cannot travel to the library through visits to adult residences and nursing homes; expanding our Books for the Homebound Service; and revisiting the possibility of bookmobile service. There will also be a need for better access to library facilities to accommodate those with physical limitations. Sight and hearing disabilities will require non-print resources, large print resources, magnifying glasses, screen reading software, adaptive equipment and assistance in using equipment. Larger fonts will need to be an option for the catalog and online resources. Printed materials will need to use a larger type size, greater contrast in paper and ink colors, lower gloss paper to reduce reflections, and layout that flows easily. Libraries' interior and exterior signage will need adjustment to be truly helpful to our patrons.

Growth in racial and cultural diversity will increase the need for foreign language resources, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) resources, foreign language options in our Library Information System, graphic and foreign language signage, and printed materials using plain (i.e. simple) English.

A shift to community based living environments will make it practical for libraries to be located in community centers and share services. As well as adapting to avocational and retirement issues, collections will reflect the needs of their immediate neighborhoods. Reference will be centralized and offered as a remote service, by telephone, email, and virtual methods.

Aging staff and staff with eldercare issues will create the need for flexible scheduling, educational programming and resources on aging and care-giving. At the same time, an increase in the elderly part-time workforce will create a pool of workers familiar with eldercare and intergenerational issues and OCPL can make use of their expertise. Staff from more diverse backgrounds will be needed. All workers will need training in communicating with older adults, foreign languages and cultures, and serving people with various disabilities.

OCPL currently serves a broad spectrum of users. We have integrated library service to older adults and diverse populations into our overall plan. Existing services that benefit older adults and diverse populations include specialized materials, foreign language and large print books, audio books on cassette and CD, adaptive equipment for persons with health problems and disabilities, remote access to the catalog, online resources, remote reference, and technology training. We partner with adult residences for book talks and bulk loans of collections, and the Department of Aging and Youth in purchasing resources for the elderly and their caregivers. We have cooperative projects in place with other literary providers to serve low literacy and ESOL individuals and families. We work with the County Health Department to promote our materials and services to low-income families.

PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS

OCPL's internal scan focused on programs and services that will be impacted by the changing demographics. We serve a broad spectrum of users and library services to older adults and diverse populations are integrated into our overall operations. The increasingly aging population provides opportunities for expanded programs and services throughout the County. Increasing diversity will impact communities that are experiencing growth in this sector of the population. Collection development, access to resources, and personnel issues emerged as priorities.

Collection Development: We will need to identify subject information, and formats needed to satisfy demand of increased elderly and diverse populations. Formats will expand to include digital talking books, electronic materials, plus adaptive equipment to accommodate these formats. Print material collections will need to be increased.

Access to Resources: We will need to identify ways to improve physical access to facilities. In addition, we will need to identify diverse methods of improving access to, and delivery of resources. Access will include users visiting libraries in person, virtual visits (electronically), plus an increase in outreach visits by library staff to residential and community-based environments.

Personnel: We will identify training needs of staff that provide services to aging and diverse populations. The needs of aging staff will be identified to enable OCPL to plan for their increasing need to meet their own eldercare responsibilities. In addition, we will address the physical needs of aging staff to increase workplace and personal safety.

ACTIONS AND RESULTS

Recommended Actions in the next 5 – 7 years

OCPL (Central and Branch libraries) will include Project 2015 information in all long range planning efforts, beginning immediately.

The OCPL System will revise and update its current system-wide Plan of Service in 2005. A new Plan of Service will eventually be in place for 2008-2013. Priorities identified in Part II will be addressed in current and future Plans. Input from a wide range of staff, trustees, advisory committees and County Departments is considered as the Plans are devised. The library's annual planning, reporting, budgeting, and application for basic aid and additional funding from New York State Education Department are tied directly to the Plan of Service.

OCPL will continuously assess and reassign staff responsibilities where necessary to implement the Plan of Service.

OCPL will shift budget dollars as appropriate to implement the Plan of Service.

OCPL will follow closely the direction of these New York State Division of Library Development's initiatives, which address the priorities identified in Part II:

- Library Services and Technology Act 5 Year Plan
- Division of Library Development's Strategic Plan

OCPL will continue collaborative efforts and look for similar opportunities. Examples:

- With County Health Department: "Ask Me" women's health project, Adult Literacy identification through Visiting Nurse Program;
- With County Department of Aging and Youth: information and referral, possible delivery point at NORC;
- With American Library Association: joint project with Walgreens to promote health education and libraries as sources of accurate, reliable health information.

Expected Outcomes and Benchmarks

OCPL will adopt changes and/or expansion of methods of service to the 65+ population:

Based on disabilities or other conditions restricting mobility, etc.:

1. Increased collections of large print material, books in audio formats;
2. Expansion of Books for the Homebound program, with lenient requirements;
3. Reinstatement of Bookmobile or development of other methods of bringing library service to people instead of expecting people to come to the library. Examples: library presence at retirement communities; collaboration with programming at senior residence and community centers.

Based on living longer and well component of the 65+ population:

1. Opportunities for learning; library-sponsored programs, collaborations with other community programs/agencies to provide programs at the library.
2. Collection Development responses to retirement interests and plans. Examples: travel, investment, new vocations or avocations.

Other:

1. OPCL will continue to develop materials collections that serve people who speak languages other than English.
2. OCPL will use or make available larger fonts in catalogs, online text, printed text.
3. OCPL will improve and expand remote access to materials and services.
4. OCPL will encourage staff training in working with culturally diverse populations.

OCPL will use benchmarks stated in Division of Library Development's initiatives as basis for local goals. They measure attendance, usage, registration, circulation, outreach contacts, evidence of partnerships, etc.