



Contra Costa County Library

Strategic Plan Update

2024



Mission

Bringing people and ideas together.

Vision

Contra Costa County Library is the pulse of our community. Working together, we spark imagination, fuel potential, and connect people with ideas and each other.

"Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve and contribute to improving our quality of life."

- Sidney Sheldon.

Introduction



Four years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic struck and changed the way we all live, work and play, and also how libraries serve their communities. Since then, Contra Costa County Library has been responding to the many shifts in societal issues, needs and trends brought on by the pandemic, such as rapid digitalization, the epidemic of loneliness, low literacy levels, the need to address racial and other inequities in our services, and an increase in attacks on intellectual freedom.

Even before the pandemic, digitalization influenced everyone's lives with an increased reliance on technology. While digital devices bridged physical distance for many

during the pandemic, for others the digital divide became even more pronounced and debilitating.

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory declaring loneliness a public health crisis, particularly among older adults who may live far away from family, lack local community, and face additional health problems. Government agencies were advised to invest in social infrastructure, such as libraries, in order to support and facilitate bringing people together in meaningful ways.

As education was disrupted during the pandemic, literacy levels were severely impacted. Experts agree that we are in a national literacy crisis, and it is no different in Contra Costa County. According to the California Department of Education, more than 50% of third graders in the county are not reading at grade-level. Data also shows that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and low-income children are disproportionately represented among those who are not reading at grade level by third grade. This negatively impacts individuals their whole lives. Approximately 12% of adult native English speakers in Contra Costa County struggle with basic reading and writing, and another 13% of adult residents who are non-native English speakers speak English less than very well.

The murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020 brought to national attention the impact and prevalence of racism in this country. While systemic racism was well-known to Black and other non-white people in this country, Floyd's tragic death starkly highlighted this ugly truth and helped to galvanize and advance anti-racism work in our communities. Libraries across the country, including the Contra Costa County Library, invested in equity, diversity, and inclusion work with an increased focus on implicit bias and anti-racism training for staff and other initiatives to make libraries safe and welcoming spaces for all.

The focus on equity, diversity, and anti-racism across the country has led to an unprecedented, coordinated effort to restrict access to certain books in libraries, especially books focused on the LGBTQ+ experience. This places libraries at the center of the fight to preserve intellectual freedom, one of the cornerstones of democracy.



"This is a fight for the truth that has always existed even if it rarely gets told. When the youth are empowered with stories about the experiences of others, they become adults who understand the necessity for equity and equality and have the tools to build a world the likes of which we have never seen."

-George M. Johnson

Because there have been so many significant changes in the world and our county in the last four years, we knew it was time to update our Strategic Plan so that it better reflects the current needs and challenges of our community. This new plan will guide our work and ensure we are providing the most critical services and resources in the most welcoming environments possible. What is outlined below are updated goals, objectives and strategies based on input from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, Contra Costa County Library Commissioners, library staff, and members of the general public.



GOAL 1

The Library champions personal and community engagement in literacy, learning and reading to enrich lives.

OBJECTIVES

- A** Increase opportunities for literacy, education, and lifelong learning through physical and digital collections, programming, and access to technology by 10%.
- B** Increase library use by 10%. This includes website visits, in-branch visitation, and circulation from both physical and digital items.
- C** Increase market penetration in the service area by 5%.

STRATEGIES

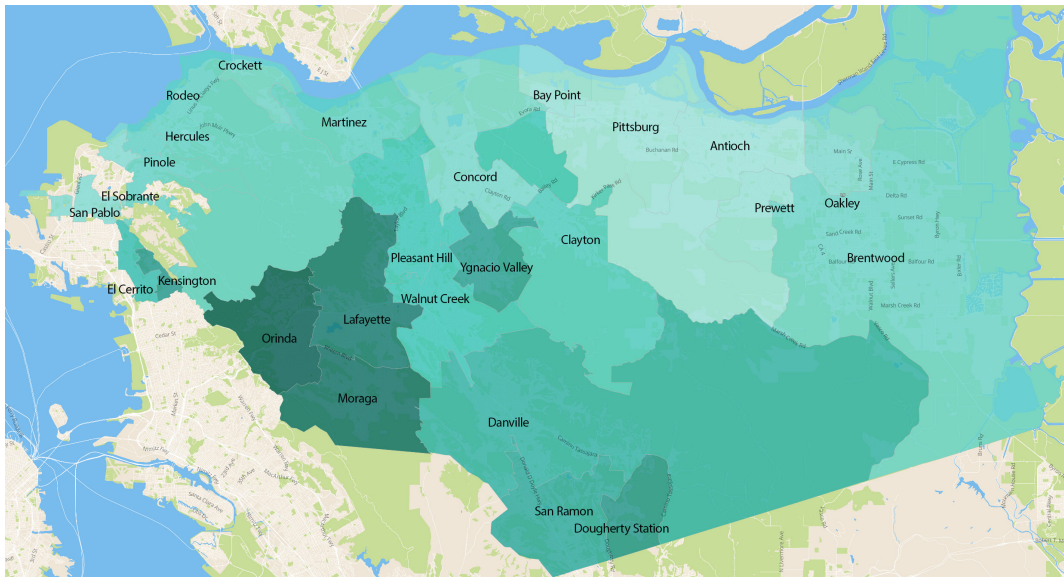
Establish literacy focused initiatives for all ages, especially in communities with low market penetration.

Work with school districts and County office of education to register all enrolled children for a Student Success Card and enact initiatives that will result in the use of library resources.

Offer programs and services to support adult literacy, English language learning, and educational and career success.

Create digital literacy initiatives and services geared towards the aging population.

Increase the Library's budget by securing new revenue sources.



At this writing the Library is actively used by 26% of the county, though 57% of the population has library cards.

Market penetration by census tract; lighter colors indicate areas of less library use; darker colors indicate areas of higher library use.



GOALS	GOAL 2: All library users feel welcome, included, and have a sense of belonging when using library services, resources, and facilities.	GOAL 3: The Library delivers a consistent, high-quality, and inviting experience at all points of contact.	GOAL 4: The Library successfully promotes its value, programs, and opportunities to the community.
<div data-bbox="53 594 245 632">OBJECTIVES</div> <div data-bbox="53 684 245 814">*The policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial equity</div>	<div data-bbox="289 594 698 1176"> <p>A. The Library is committed to actively and intentionally advancing anti-racism* within the organization.</p> <p>B. The Library is a cultural hub that reflects the diversity of the community in its collections, programs, displays, staff, and services.</p> <p>C. The Library and its resources are easily accessible to people with varying abilities.</p> <p>D. The Library upholds the promise of intellectual freedom with access to full, diverse collections and resources.</p> <p>E. The Library is a place of connection and community building.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="735 594 1112 1018"> <p>A. All Library facilities are a destination point.</p> <p>B. Library collections are substantial, meticulously curated, and well-maintained.</p> <p>C. Library staff embody excellent customer service principles.</p> <p>D. The Library will implement technology and digital resources to enhance the customer experience.</p> <p>E. The Library will explore options to increase open hours.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1161 594 1559 892"> <p>A. Create and implement a library marketing plan.</p> <p>B. Increase the Library's capacity to market itself.</p> <p>C. Promote cost-saving resources for the community.</p> <p>D. Collaborate with community partners to cross-promote resources.</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="53 1262 245 1299">STRATEGIES</div>	<div data-bbox="313 1262 665 1921"> <p>Mirror the Community:</p> <p>Create and implement a Racial Equity Action Plan.</p> <p>Identify and implement industry-wide best practices to cultivate a diverse and inclusive workforce.</p> <p>Regularly assess the diversity of the collection and implement purchases accordingly.</p> <p>Create and implement a programming framework that incorporates equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.</p> <p>Develop and leverage partnerships to reach new library users and expand services.</p> <p>Use an equity lens in budgeting.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="735 1262 1112 1795"> <p>Accessibility for All:</p> <p>Create design standards for library facilities that address accessibility, sustainability, and evolving community needs.</p> <p>Organize and coordinate Library programming to create a consistent experience across communities.</p> <p>Pilot self-service entry for Sunday open hours.</p> <p>Develop and implement "pro-access" ** customer service training for all staff.</p> <p>Ensure staff expertise in technology and digital literacy.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1161 1262 1559 1774"> <p>Smart Messaging:</p> <p>Implement branch and region-specific messages for programming and resources.</p> <p>Expand signage and communications to include more languages that reflect the community.</p> <p>Expand marketing resources to reach new library users.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1193 1682 1542 1785"> <p>**Embracing the spirit of 'yes' while also upholding library policies.</p> </div>

Our Commitment to Progress

The Contra Costa County Library is committed to working towards realizing these goals and objectives and will provide annual updates for all stakeholders. The updates will serve to not only evaluate our progress, but will help to determine if our strategies need to be adjusted in order to more effectively support the county in creating more resilient and equitable communities so that all our residents can thrive.

