

PORTER COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

**Long Range Plan
2023-2025**

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Community Profile

The purpose of the Porter County Public Library is to support the growing Porter County community and provide the highest quality informational, cultural, and recreational resources and services to residents, while continuing to meet all Indiana state standards for class A libraries. Porter County is proud to be one of the top 12 most populous counties with the largest percentage increase in the minority share of their populations. Since the establishment of the Porter County Public Library System in 1973, it has grown to a service population of 152,580, according to the 2020 census. As of December 1st, 2022, 53,337 residents hold a library card.

The library serves 11 of 12 townships in Porter County: Boone, Center, Liberty, Morgan, Jackson, Pine, Pleasant, Portage, Porter, Union, and Washington. Porter County is bounded in the North by Lake Michigan, in the South by the Kankakee River and Jasper County, in the West by Lake County, and finally LaPorte County in the East.

Among these neighbors, the library is a leader in resource-sharing initiatives, such as the Statewide Reciprocal Borrowing Covenant, the Statewide Remote Circulation Service (SRCS), the Indiana Digital Library, and the Evergreen Indiana Consortium. This allows library patrons throughout the county and the entire state to access our collections, and more importantly for our own patrons, access to millions more resources from around the state. The state library's Share program also provides access to materials outside of Indiana for our patrons.

The library values its relationships with school districts and with the homeschool community, and supports them through tours, class visits, programs, and bibliographic instruction. Area colleges and universities also make use of library resources.

Through technology, innovative programming, excellent patron service, and well-trained, motivated staff, the Porter County Public Library System always seeks to pivot towards its patrons by offering engaging and pertinent library services.

Statement of Community Needs and Goals

To assess community needs, the Porter County Public Library underwent a community survey initiative, reviewed updated census data, and underwent a strategic planning process including a board of trustees planning workshop and staff retreat in 2022.

The community survey included physical and electronic methods through a variety of channels. Physical surveys were offered in branches, at festivals and outreach events, and through

partner organizations. Electronic distribution included the Library’s website, social media channels, and email lists. Survey results included both multiple-choice and open-ended responses. The survey was conducted from March 2022 through September 2022 and analyzed by Valparaiso University Senior Research Professors. Additional patron data from prior surveys and patron comments was also reviewed and the data was presented to the strategic planning team.

Community needs and goals identified included expanded community partnerships, increased outreach and community engagement, continued facility and technology enhancements, the expansion of programming to pre-pandemic levels, the diversifying of revenue streams, a focus on staff development and appreciation, and the development of detailed business plans to support and inform future goals.

Strategic Plan

Our strategic plan below consists of measurable objectives for service responses to our communities needs and goals. The planning process included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of library services and operations, discussed library and community needs, and developed goals, objectives, and strategies for improving library service. Multiple planning sessions, including members from various departments in the library as well as board members, led to the formation of a new mission statement and strategic plan that is founded upon community needs and goals.

The goal of this plan is to clarify service priorities through the creation of area-specific long-range plans and measurable objectives.

1. Mission Statement: To enrich the residents of Porter County through discovery, exploration, and the sharing of books and resources.
2. Critical Issue: Staffing expertise and diversity
 - a. Strategy: To attract and retain talent that reflects the community while offering opportunities for growth and advancement.
 - i. Objectives:
 1. All public services staff will be trained and mentored to the core competencies tied to their position within three years.
 2. The diversity of our staff will reflect the community it serves.
 3. Increase awareness and use of benefits.
 - ii. Action Plan:
 1. Design and implement a core competency training program for all public services staff.
 2. Institute a coaching and mentorship program.
 3. Implement a learning management system.
 4. Implement a performance management and evaluation system.
 5. Create a staffing plan including community data, recruitment process, and diversity goals.
 6. Update compensation and benefits study.

7. Regularly engage staff regarding their benefits package.
3. Critical Issue: Supporting and financing our infrastructure, including facilities and technology.
 - a. Strategy: Ensure that PCPLS has the appropriate revenues and reserves to fund library services, materials, and facilities.
 - i. Objectives:
 1. To prioritize services and expenditures based on community needs revenue projections.
 2. Diversify and increase library revenue sources.
 - ii. Action Plan:
 1. Develop a 5-year financial business plan.
 2. Create a comprehensive fundraising plan.
 3. Update and enhance the technology plan.
 4. Update the facilities assessment plan.
4. Critical Issue: Engaging our community through the development and marketing of our materials and services.
 - a. Strategy: PCPLS will develop strategies to increase community engagement and assure patrons from all backgrounds can connect with materials and services that are relevant to their goals and interests.
 - i. Objectives:
 1. Increase community awareness of library services and resources.
 2. Able to identify key metrics and service benchmarks and apply them to library services.
 3. Identify underperforming areas and encourage innovation to pivot as necessary.
 4. Strengthen and expand community partnerships with schools, senior services, ESL organizations, and businesses.
 - ii. Action Plan:
 1. Conduct a community needs and market research assessment.
 2. Conduct ongoing surveys to gauge awareness of resources.
 3. Develop a comprehensive community engagement plan including marketing, outreach, and programming.
 4. Develop a system for ongoing feedback on programs and resources.
 5. Develop staff training procedures for the promotion of resources and materials.
 6. Develop relationships with all school districts and senior centers.

Ongoing Annual Evaluation

The success of our strategic plan is the responsibility of library staff at all levels. The PCPLS Management team will form annual work plans using our strategic plan above, and additional measures outlined below, to assist in the advancement of strategic objectives. In conjunction with the Annual Report, these work plans will help the management team assess the progress of the strategic plan and make adjustments as necessary to adapt to the changing needs of the community.

The Director, Board of Trustees, and system staff will review annual work plans, goals, and objectives of the Long Range Plan on an annual basis for effectiveness. Progress assessments will be documented and needed updates to the Long Range Plan will be recommended.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships and resource sharing are one of the primary goals at PCPLS. The library seeks to actively participate in, strengthen, and expand partnerships that are of benefit to the residents of Porter County.

In 2021, the library board agreed to join the Indiana Evergreen Consortium, a resource-sharing initiative providing cost savings for libraries and access to almost 8 million items for over 1 million Indiana residents.

Statewide borrowing in Indiana is a reciprocal borrowing program that covers the entire state. Porter County Public Library is a member.

The library is part of SRCS (Statewide Remote Circulation System), the statewide interlibrary loan program, which gives Porter County residents access to materials statewide. The library also shares materials statewide through SRCS.

The library is a member of the Indiana Digital Library ebook consortium that provides shared access to electronic books, audiobooks, magazines, and videos to Porter County residents.

PCPLS participates in and hosts NILBA (Northwest Indiana Library Boards Association) meetings throughout the year.

Branch libraries are all members of their local chambers of commerce and other service organizations as offered in their community. Administration, branch managers, and other staff are individual members of various service organizations.

The library works, coordinates, and partners with its eight public school systems, private and parochial schools, and homeschool associations in the library district. Youth services librarians visit schools throughout the year and host school visits in their branches.

The Porter County Library partners with the Porter County Parks Department, Valparaiso Parks Department, NWI Literacy Coalition, Porter County Aging & Community Services, Porter County Airport, Purdue Extension, United Way, Porter County Museum, Health Link, NWI Genealogical Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, local civic organizations such as the Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary clubs; and the Portage mayor's Senior Advisory Board to develop and provide programming for all residents.

Financial Resources and Sustainability

PCPLS is funded in large part by a property tax levy. This plan assumes that the library operations will continue to be funded through continued local tax support. Such tax support is dwindling due to state tax caps and a state-mandated limited growth factor in tax receipts and budget increases. Expansion or enhancement of services will be met by increases in funding or reallocation of existing resources.

The PCPLS management team conducts an ongoing five-year line-by-line analysis of all budget items including all appropriations and revenue. The foundation of PCPLS fiscal responsibility policies includes zero-based budgeting and comprehensive investments.

Alternative revenue sources such as grants and donations will be actively sought out and encouraged. Library staff will actively network and explore alternative funding support for programs, services, and facilities.

Professional Development

In an effort to support and encourage quality and professional service to the residents of our community, Porter County Public Library staff are encouraged to attend local, state, and national seminars and conferences. The Library will conduct an on-site staff development training day each year. Library leadership will also develop and train selected positions for effective succession planning for top management.

Professional staff is required to be certified in accordance with current certification standards and the Library places a premium on professional development and continuing education that will enhance community services being delivered in Porter County.

PCPLS has created an internal training program focused on providing fundamental skills to all employees. The creation of a learning management system to handle non-professional skills and advancement tracks is currently being investigated.

Technology Plan

PCPLS is committed to providing the residents of Porter County with updated and relevant technology to meet their needs. As part of this commitment, a technology plan, including the expansion and improvement of offerings as well as a replacement schedule has been created. This technology roadmap includes staff and patron machines, WiFi, cameras, and back-end infrastructure. The technology roadmap and replacement schedule may be delayed or accelerated based on the needs of the organization, technological obsolescence, or budgetary constraints..

Technology Roadmap

Technology Area	2023	2024	2025
Staff Support	Helpdesk expands to patrons; covers all hours of operation.	IT staff delivers tech programming and 1-to-1 tech support	Assess and probe for needed technology support initiatives
Staff Training	Redevelop internal document repository	Implement LMS solution	Assess and enhance formal staff technology training
Servers	Remove unnecessary duplication of VMs	Investigate cloud printing options	Consolidate IDF/MDF
Security	Enhance MFA solution	Offer authenticator option for staff	Evaluate physical security
Mobile Lab	Assess mobile lab needs	Purchase and deploy units for mobile lab	Reassess functioning of mobile lab
Copiers & Printing	Assess & repurpose staff copiers as needed	Assess & select patron printing solutions	Update patron copiers & printing
Cameras	Implement cloud-based Valparaiso cameras	Implement cloud-based north co. cameras	Implement cloud-based south co. cameras
Phone System	Select and implement a new phone system	Assess and add PA system	Evaluate use of and optimize phone system
Public Computers	Deploy new public PC solution	Reassess mobile & youth technology services	Plan and implement needed mobile or youth technology services
Web Presence	Launch new website	Reassess library app options	Explore local history data publishing options
Self-Checkouts	Assess use of existing self-check machines; probe RFID options	Select self-check / RFID solution	Implement self-check / RFID solution
Disaster Recovery	Implement updated backup solution; transition incident reports to tickets	Partner with ITSM to comprehensively assess disaster recovery; update formal plan	Implement any recommended Disaster Recovery improvements

Replacement Schedule

Staff and public computers will be evaluated for replacement yearly. Each year, some computers will be replaced to avoid large purchases and stay more current with technology. These replaced computers may be retained as spares or repurposed as needed until they are also replaced. Printers are to be assessed every 3-5 years or earlier as needed. If they still function and are supported properly by the vendor, they may continue to be used. Any server may be in primary production through the warranty cycle of 5 years before being moved to a secondary role or as a lab testing system while supported.

This schedule is included below and includes a percentage of machines that may be replaced in that calendar year. Year one includes 100% of patron machines being replaced as a result of those machines being over 8 years of age. Of this 100%, 50% will be new machines and 50% refurbished to assist in updating the machines quickly while building in future replacement cycles. In subsequent years a combination of new and refurbished machines may be utilized to meet plan targets and library needs. This roadmap may need to be amended because of the supply of machines, budgetary constraints, or community needs.

Technology Replacement Schedule

Focus	2023	2024	2025
Patron Computers	100%	50%	50%
Staff Computers	25%	25%	25%
Infrastructure	25%	25%	25%
Security	30%	30%	30%
Copier/Printer/Fax	25%	25%	25%