

**EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY
LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE CONVERSATIONS
SUMMARY REPORT
November 4, 2014**

I. Background

Eugene Public Library held a series of focus groups/conversations, in October 2014, to engage community members and staff in exploring key questions about current library services and facilities and priorities for the future. In a period of resource scarcity, with the changing role of libraries and changing demographics, library leaders wanted to get a wide variety of perspectives on a long-term vision for library services and facilities in Eugene.

II. Overview

Twelve focus groups were scheduled for staff, teens, the Board of the Eugene Library Foundation, Friends of the Library Board, open public meetings, and members of the Library Advisory Board. The focus groups were held at a variety of times of day to maximize the diversity of attendees. In addition, three sessions were offered at branch libraries, and one session was offered in Spanish. Margot Helphand, a private consultant, facilitated the focus groups. In addition to the focus groups, an on-line survey was offered, in English and Spanish. The survey questions mirrored those used in the focus groups and the survey results are included in this report.

Extensive outreach was done to maximize wide participation in the focus groups and surveys. The outreach efforts were conducted in both English and Spanish, and they included personal invitations extended to a variety of groups from school district staff, social service providers, college students, and business owners; media stories; posters displayed at the Library and around the community; social media posts; and strong presence on the Library website homepage. A full list of outreach activities is included in the addendum at the end of this report (p. 14).

A total of 443 community members and staff participated in this process representing a wide range of ages and race/ethnicity. Participants brought a diversity of life experiences and perspectives to the process. They included avid library users and first time visitors. A breakdown of participant demographics is included in the addendum (p. 10).

III. Key Findings – Strengths – Main Themes

Community participants in both the focus groups and survey were asked to identify the key strengths of the Eugene Public Library. The following are the key themes.

- **Staff:** The Library staff is consistently described as the primary strength of the Library. They are high-level, dedicated professionals, who demonstrate a drive to serve ALL patrons. They are willing to answer questions, and are patient, friendly, and welcoming.
- **The Collection:** The collection is highly valued for its variety – both depth and breadth. It reaches all ages, is good for browsing. The collection, including books, eBooks, audio books, CDs, magazines, videos and DVDs, regularly exceed the expectations of patrons.
- **Welcoming, Accessible, Free:** The Library demonstrates an openness and inclusiveness. All patrons, regardless of socio-economic status, physical disability, age, are welcomed and treated with dignity. The Library is “easy to use”. The Library provides a warm/cool, safe place to be.
- **The Main Library Building:** The Main Library is described as beautiful, comfortable, clean and quiet. It has an excellent location, accessible, near downtown and the bus stop, with parking.
- **Programs and Events:** The Library is recognized as so much more than the collection. The programs and events are geared to children and adults. These include guest authors, workshops, music and cultural events.
- **Branches:** The branches are highly valued for their accessibility, connection to neighborhood and personal attention afforded to patrons.
- **Information Resource:** The Library is a hub for any kind of information that can be accessed at the library or remotely from home or other locations.
- **Services to Children:** Services to children are valued, both materials and programs. The summer reading, Storytime-To-Go, Imagination Library were frequently mentioned.

In addition to the strengths identified above, Library staff also identified the following theme:

Community support and volunteers: The community is involved and proud of its Library. The Library is extensively used. Friends of Eugene Public Library and Eugene Public Library Foundation are huge assets in supporting the library and its programs. Library volunteers are highly valued.

IV. Key Findings – Challenges/Areas for Improvement – Main Themes

Community participants were asked to identify the key challenges and areas for improvement of the Eugene Public Library. The following are the key themes.

- **Lack of stable funding:** The lack of stable and adequate funding underpins most of the challenges described below. The themes below were seen as directly related to the lack of stable funding.
- **Space:** More space is needed downtown and in the branches. In the downtown Library there is the need for more space for teen services. The space is not flexible to meet needs. The collection is outgrowing the available space.
- **Branches:** With only two branches, there are many underserved Eugene neighborhoods. The existing branch libraries are small and it is a challenge to hold programs without interfering with other library uses. Branch collections have outgrown available space.
- **Hours:** There is a need for more hours of access downtown and at branches. The reduction of hours at both Sheldon and Bethel branches, as well as Sunday hours Downtown, were frequently mentioned.
- **Technology** – While technology is a strength of the library it is a challenge to keep up-to-date while still serving people who use older technology or who have no access to technology. There is a need for scanning, wireless printing, and up-to-date software. There are frequently waits for the available computers.
- **People’s life challenges impact others’ experience at the library:** The Library is open to everyone. It is a challenge to balance the community’s social services needs regarding poverty, mental health and homelessness with the core mission of the Library.
- **Staff:** Some mentioned a need for improvement of staff customer service.

In addition to the themes above Library staff mentioned the following challenges:

- **Marketing and Outreach:** It is a challenge to let people know the vast variety of services offered by the Library. It is a challenge to reach people who have barriers to using the Library, such as transportation or language.
- **Safety:** While the Downtown Library is safe for users there may be a perception by some in the community that the Downtown and Downtown Library are unsafe.

V. Vision of the Future 2024

Community members were asked to create a headline and main points of an article describing the Eugene Public Library in 2024. The themes articulated in these future headlines were consistent across community and staff groups and survey responses. Respondents consistently described a future in which the challenges listed above have been overcome. A few sample headlines:

- **Facilities Growth** – *“EPL celebrates 10 years of growth with new branches”*
- **Growth in Services** – *“EPL has more staff, more security, more programs”*
- **Creativity and Creative Spaces** – *“Attention: inventors, artists, and entertainers. MIND, Art Center now at your local library!”*
- **Funding** – *“Larger tax base created for Eugene Library.”*
- **Community Hub** – *“EPL is central gathering place for the community”*
- **Usage** – *“Eugene Public Library sets usage record”*
- **Technology** – *“The EPL leads the way in technology”*
- **Literacy** – *“Kindergarten readiness reaches 100% due to Eugene Public Library’s early literacy outreach”*
- **Outreach** – *“EPL goes mobile and takes the library to the people”*

VII. Priorities for the Future – Community Priorities

Community members were asked to prioritize a set of library goals and associated service functions developed by the Public Library Association (full descriptions in addendum, p. 12). They spell out eighteen key functions for a 21st Century library.

Priority	Library Goals
1	Create young readers: early literacy
2	Connect to the online world: public internet access
3	Satisfy curiosity: lifelong learning
4	Stimulate imagination: reading, viewing, and listening for pleasure
5	Visit a comfortable place: physical and virtual spaces
6	Learn to read and write: adult, teen, and family literacy
7	Understand how to find, evaluate, and use information
8	Be an informed citizen: local, nation, and world affairs
9	Celebrate diversity: cultural awareness
10	Succeed in school: homework help
11	Know your community: community resources and services
12	Get facts fast: ready reference
13	Make informed decisions: health, wealth, and other life choices
14	Express creativity: create and share content
15	Make career choices: job and career development
16	Welcome to the United States: services for new immigrants
17	Build successful enterprises: business and non-profit support
18	Discover your roots: genealogy and local history

VIII. Summary and Scenario of Library of the Future

The community members and the Library staff who participated in this process affirm a strong commitment to Eugene Public Library and the role it plays in the community. Eugene Public Library is recognized as being aligned with and in service of the values central to Eugene residents: learning, open-mindedness, fairness, diversity, making informed decisions, inclusiveness, and more. Community members and Library staff recognize that expanding access to education, information, learning opportunities, enhanced leisure activities, and social connections for all is one of the great challenges of our time.

Scenario for the Future: People, Place and Platform

The themes and ideas raised by community members and Library staff in this process are part of a larger conversation across the country about the future role of libraries. One report illustrates this very well. The Aspen's Institute's report, "Rising to the Challenge: Envisioning Public Libraries" (Addendum, p. 11), sees a future for the public library that aligns well with the ideas expressed by participants in Eugene Public Library's recent process. In the Aspen Institute report a public library is seen as a "key partner in sustaining the educational, economic and civic health of the community." The report identifies three central assets of the library of the future – people, place and platform.

People: Eugene Public Library is a hub of civic engagement. While continuing to serve the individual needs of the residents of our community, the library will continue to foster new relationships, facilitating learning and creativity for children, teens and adults. The Library will grow as interactive centers of learning, research and leisure where people not only consume, but create.

Place: Eugene Public Library of the future is a welcoming, accessible space, designed for a wide range of purposes from reading to playing, to meeting and getting business done. The Eugene Public Library of the future includes both virtual and physical space. The physical spaces include the expanded Downtown Library as well as several branches serving the many neighborhoods of our community. These spaces are supported by sustainable funding.

Platform: The public library is a portal to the world. It will grow in providing opportunities for individuals and the community to gain access to

a variety of tools and resources with which to discover and create new knowledge. While retaining its traditional functions, the Eugene Public Library of the future will be home to varied informational experiences, where great ideas and learning happen and people have the tools and facilities to act on them.

Eugene Public Library has been and will continue to be a center of our community, a community that values learning and opportunity for all of its residents. The shared vision of community members and staff is a Eugene Public Library system that has a unique opportunity, as a trusted community hub and repository of knowledge and information, to play a central role in the life of our Eugene community well into the future.

ADDENDUM

Total Participation in conversations:

Community members – 58

Staff members – 35

Total Participation in the survey:

Community member – 305

Staff members - 45

Total Participation -

Community Members – 363

Staff - 80

DEMOGRAPHICS – COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Age

5 to 17 = 10

18 to 24 = 17

25 to 44 = 125

45 to 64 = 123

65 and over = 84

Did not answer = 84

Race/ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native - 7

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - 1

Asian - 7

Black or African American - 9

Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin - 12

White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic) - 318

Multi-racial(other) =19

Did not answer = 70



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries
A Report of the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries
October 14, 2014, by Amy K. Garmer

Rising to the Challenge is the culmination of a year-long exploration and examination of the challenges and opportunities facing communities and their public libraries as society moves deeper into the digital era. It projects a new vision for public libraries and promotes new thinking about libraries, their critical assets, new networked forms and the essential role they now play in providing opportunities for individuals and communities to succeed in an economy and society that reward learning, creativity, innovation and social connection.

Specifically, this report is based the work done over the last year, including conversations and explorations with COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies) members. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries* explores how communities and their public libraries can respond as the digital age increases the demand for high-speed information access, changes in our education systems, innovative job training models and additional community services to help people and communities compete in the new economy.

This report also provides key strategies for building strong libraries and communities, and offers a series of action steps for those who are motivated by the Dialogue's vision to get started in their own communities. View the [full digital report](#) and/or the [executive summary](#) (both are in PDF format).

21st Century Public Library Service Functions

1. BE AN INFORMED CITIZEN: LOCAL, NATION, AND WORLD AFFAIRS

Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels, and to fully participate in community decision-making.

2. BUILD SUCCESSFUL ENTERPRISES: BUSINESS AND NON-PROFIT SUPPORT

Business owners and non-profit organization directors and their managers will have the resources they need to develop and maintain strong, viable organizations.

3. CELEBRATE DIVERSITY: CULTURAL AWARENESS

Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

4. CONNECT TO THE ONLINE WORLD: PUBLIC INTERNET ACCESS

Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of these services.

5. CREATE YOUNG READERS: EARLY LITERACY

Children from birth to age five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write, and listen.

6. DISCOVER YOUR ROOTS: GENEALOGY AND LOCAL HISTORY

Residents and visitors will have the resources they need to connect the past with the present through their family histories and to understand the history and traditions of the community.

7. EXPRESS CREATIVITY: CREATE AND SHARE CONTENT

Residents will have the services and support they need to express themselves by creating original print, video, audio, or visual content in a real-world or online environment.

8. GET FACTS FAST: READY REFERENCE

Residents will have someone to answer their questions on a wide array of topics of personal interest.

9. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY: COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Residents will have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations

10. LEARN TO READ AND WRITE: ADULT, TEEN, AND FAMILY LITERACY

Adults and teens will have the support they need to improve their literacy skills in order to meet their personal goals and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, citizens, and workers.

11. MAKE CAREER CHOICES: JOB AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Adults and teens will have the skills and resources they need to identify career opportunities that suit their individual strengths and interests.

12. MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS: HEALTH, WEALTH, AND OTHER LIFE CHOICES

Residents will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives before making decisions that affect their lives.

13. SATISFY CURIOSITY: LIFELONG LEARNING

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

14. STIMULATE IMAGINATION: READING, VIEWING, AND LISTENING FOR PLEASURE

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

15. SUCCEED IN SCHOOL: HOMEWORK HELP

Students will have the resources they need to succeed in school.

16. UNDERSTAND HOW TO FIND, EVALUATE, AND USE INFORMATION

Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their needs.

17. VISIT A COMFORTABLE PLACE: PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL SPACES

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

18. WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES: SERVICES FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS

New immigrants will have information on citizenship, English Language Learning (ELL), employment, public schooling, health and safety, available social services, and any other topics they need to participate successfully in American life.

Public Library Association

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE
LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE PUBLIC MEETINGS AND SURVEY
(English & Spanish)

- News release: The release was sent on 10/1/14. Television station KEZI and radio station KLCC both did stories.
- Library website: promoted on Library home page and eight internal pages, including the Spanish page and the catalog opening page
- Posters throughout all three Library locations. Posters were also sent to all Recreation Centers.
- Item in the Library's eNewsletter that was sent on 10/1/14
- Item in the City Council's weekly email
- On the check-out receipts given to all who checked out materials
- Announcements at the begin of Library programs
- Posted on the Lane Community College internal student website
- Social media posts: Multiple posts were made by the Library on our Facebook page (with 1700+ Likes) and Twitter page (with 19,000 Followers). The social media sites give you a report of "reach" by your posts; combined that total was over 50,000. This was achieved through purchased increased pushing of posts on both Facebook and Twitter.
- Email was sent to all City employees requesting their participation in the process, as well as requesting their assistance in encouraging community members to participate.
- Emails, social media, and personal invitations were sent to many community contacts. Staff members, Board members, volunteers, and others sent out the request for participation:
 - UO student athletes
 - Neighborhood Association chairs
 - Social service providers including (Parenting Now!, Relief Nursery, Eugene Mission, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelter Care, United Way, Senior and Disabled Services, Looking Glass, Shelter Care, White Bird, Sponsors, Woman's Space, Relief Nursery, Veterans Services, Opportunity Village, and Egan Warming Center)
 - School district contacts at both 4J and Bethel
 - Fortnightly Club of Eugene
 - Email went to 40 people who work with Spanish speaking members of the community
 - Over 50 business community contacts received the email