

TOPEKA &
SHAWNEE
COUNTY
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Strategic Plan 2024 - 2029



Mission

Sparking curiosity and connecting our community through literacy and learning.



Values

- Excellence
- Curiosity
- Literacy
- Freedom
- Teamwork
- Accountability

Executive Summary

The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library engaged in a collective process to craft a new strategic plan. The library's last formal strategic plan was developed in 2009. Since that time many aspects of community life have shifted most notably after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with The Ivy Group Ltd, the plan grew out of a comprehensive community profile, deliberate engagements with residents, and direct involvement from internal and external stakeholders.

This research identified areas of service inequity and confirmed notable growth in the community's oldest and youngest age groups.

It crystallized community-wide aspirations for more opportunities to gather, celebrate and learn.

The community engagement process helped clarify how the library can best align its resources with the community's wants and needs. Residents and stakeholders reported a high level of satisfaction with the library in the online survey and defined a public library's most important role as being a source for books and other media. Across all engagements, people asked for more dedicated library spaces throughout the community, improved access to health care information, diversified entertainment options, more ways to learn and play, and the chance to connect with their neighbors.

The Ivy Group reported their research findings at a planning summit attended by the library's leadership team, trustees and invited community leaders. Staff representing all aspects of the library operations joined for a brainstorming session. Using the research findings, they identified five major themes.

- Connection
- Space
- Learning
- Joy
- People



Community Needs & Interests



CONNECTION

The library will support the diverse needs and interests of the community with services and resources that foster a sense of belonging and collaboration.



SPACE

The library will provide welcoming and inviting physical and digital spaces in which people have easy access to learning, connections and joy.



LEARNING

The library is committed to offering equitable learning and development opportunities to meet the goals and needs of diverse learners.



JOY

The library is committed to providing a variety of programs and services that enrich our community and spark wonder in residents across the county.



PEOPLE

The library will create a work environment where our staff and volunteers are valued, respected and empowered to contribute their best.

From the CEO

Today's public library is more than a place. We welcome everyone through our doors, we travel our community providing outreach services and for many their library is digital and on a device they carry. Public libraries are organizers (yes, the Dewey Decimal system still works), planners and connecting experts who use strategic planning that is reflected in our mission: Sparking curiosity and connecting our community through literacy and learning.

Our library is prepared for an exciting future with a new strategy based on a planning process that includes your voice. You let us know what you need from your library from more than 1,750 responses to a community survey and 9 meetings. You told us that the library is an integral part of your life, and you want more opportunities to learn, explore and connect. What does that look like? I am thrilled to share that it is focused on connection, learning, space, joy and people. Your input has enabled us to create not only a new strategy but also a working document that will empower our library to continue to be a trusted community institution for all our citizens throughout their lives.

The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan is our commitment to being everyone's place to learn, explore and grow. The Topeka and Shawnee County community truly values those connections, and our library plays a role in the social fabric of this amazing city and county.

Sincerely,

MARIE PYKO

CEO, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library



From the Board of Trustees Chair

Building on a strong library history and foundation, I am pleased to share our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan for the library. This new plan is the result of thousands of community members who answered questions, participated in focus groups and meetings to let us know what truly mattered to them about the future of the library.

I specifically want to thank the following groups who encouraged members to participate in community planning meetings: Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, El Centro, the Leagues of Women Voters Topeka-Shawnee County, Omni Circle, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Seaman School District, Shepherds Center of Topeka, The Sunrise Optimist

Club, Rotary Club of Topeka, United Way of Kaw Valley, Washburn University, Auburn-Washburn School District and the Topeka Public Schools.

The input from people in these organizations and many more community members helps to ensure the library's strategic plan represents the needs and interests of the Topeka and Shawnee County community.

Sincerely,

SHAWN LEISINGER

Chair, Topeka and Shawnee County
Public Library Board of Trustees





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PEOPLE

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DIGITAL EQUITY

The library will help equip individuals with the technology skills and access to resources needed to thrive



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

TRAINING

Increase digital skills in the community

- Expand digital skills training classes (2024)
- Start a digital skills training *On the Road* program (2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # of digital skills training classes offered increases by 10% by 2025
- # of customers attending classes increases by 10% over previous year (2029)
- Customers report they have improved their digital skills

RESOURCES

Increase access to digital tools and equipment

- Expand device loan program (2025)
- Expand *Get Digital* partnership (2025-2026)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # devices borrowed increases and usage increases
- Customers report they have improved their digital skills
- Customers report they have used the digital loan program to increase their access

INNOVATION

Increase opportunities for community members to stay on top of emerging technology trends

- Visit area innovation centers and local technology schools to strengthen local best practices and offerings (2024)
- Develop a marketing plan to increase awareness and participation (2024)
- Offer next-level emerging tech classes (2024-2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # of emerging tech classes offered at various skill levels increases
- Customers report they have improved their digital skills

DIGITAL EQUITY



SOCIALIZATION & COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



The library will help cultivate and strengthen community connections and resources for all of Topeka and Shawnee County

SOCIALIZATION & COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
PROGRAMS	Prioritize programming and events that build community and offer opportunities to engage with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update program review process to support social events for the public (2024) Expand civic engagement events and resources (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for events in 2024 # attendees at events increases by 10% Customers report they have made a social connection at a library event or program
RESOURCES	Expand access to community resources, especially those that build connections and support mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand use of health information and referral program among staff and the public (2024-2025) Expand the number of organizations that offer community office hours at the library (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 # referrals generated through community health collaboration program increases # office hours provided by local organizations at the library increases
COMMUNITY	Expand opportunities for customers to engage in services, collections and events that reflect our diverse community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand marketing of Spanish language collections to community (2024) Explore opportunities for emerging communities to feel connected with the library (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 Circulation and engagement with Spanish language resources increases in comparison to previous year # of new community members who have library cards and are actively using the library

CONNECTION

ACCESS

The library will be more accessible throughout the community, bringing resources to meet people where they are while continuing to transform library spaces to adapt to the changing needs of the community



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

EXPAND

Develop plan to expand the library's physical presence in the county, with a focus on the feasibility of satellites, kiosks and other service options

- Expand remote lockers to at least two more areas of the community (2025)
- Explore satellite/colocation of library services (2025-2029)

- Progress has been made on two new remote locker locations and the funding source (2025)
- Plan has been developed and/or progress made on satellites, kiosks and/or other service options by 2025

OUTREACH

Develop and implement long-range plan for the future of vehicle-based services and TSCPL@School

- Evaluate current Mobile Delivery Plan (2024)
- Review all outreach services to schools to determine optimal service model including @School and the Adventuremobile (2025)
- Review organizational structure of mobile services (2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- Survey bookmobile users with outcome of 33% returns

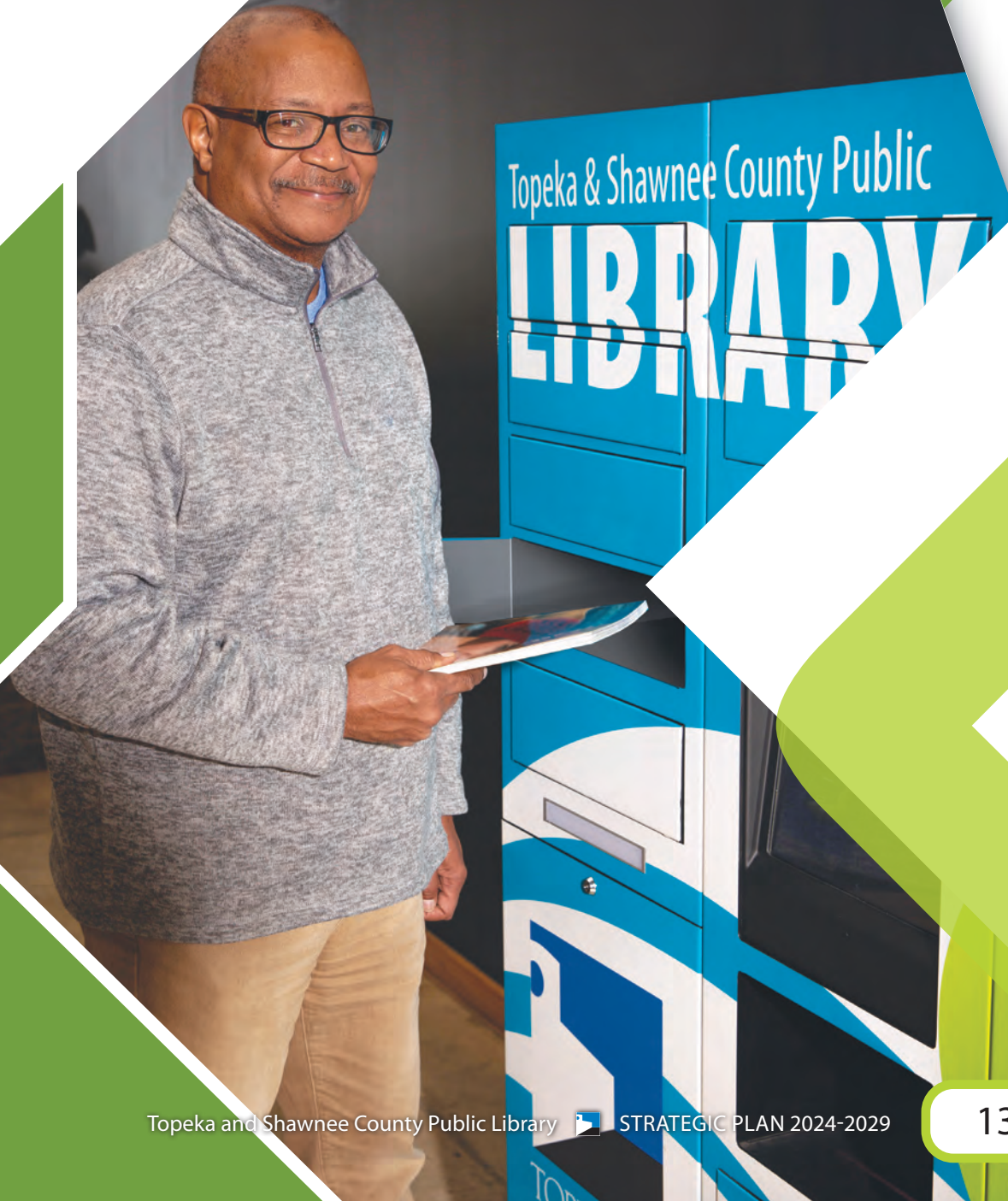
FACILITIES

Update the Facilities Master Plan to include deferred maintenance projects and next phase improvements to library facilities

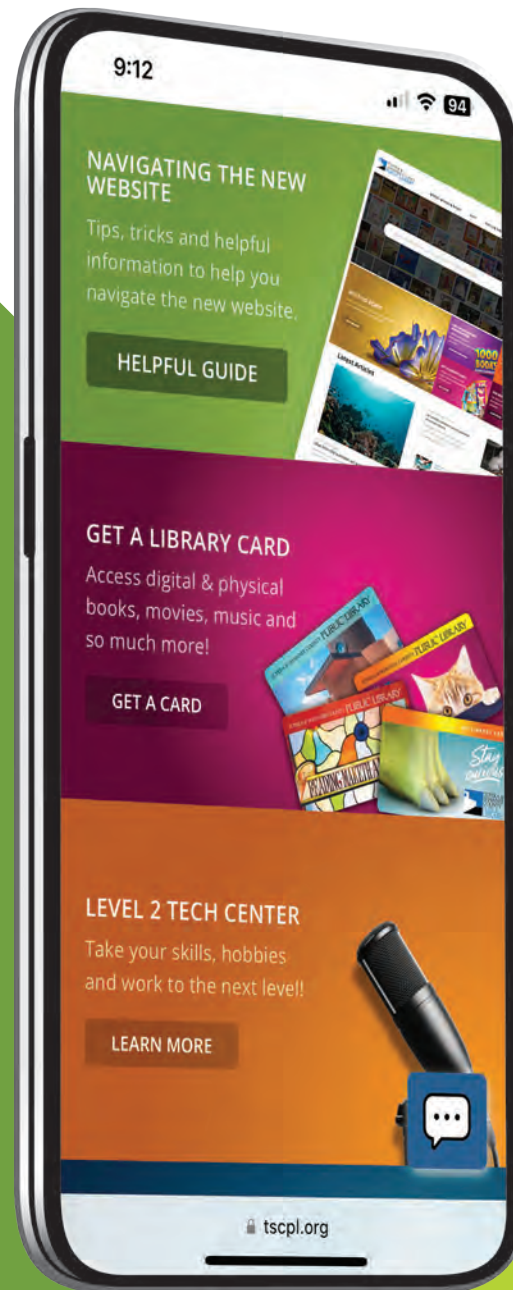
- Complete 2018-2024 Facility Master Plan projects (2025)
- Develop the next phase of the comprehensive facilities plan by reviewing all library spaces and systems (2025-2027)

- Individual facilities plan projects are reviewed and if implemented are on time and within budget

ACCESS



DIGITAL LIBRARY





The library will support our digital library customers with an exceptional and seamless experience

DIGITAL LIBRARY

	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
VISION	Develop a strategic work plan focused on improving the customer experience for the digital library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve the customer experience at major touch points ○ Provide easy to use services across platforms (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Progress benchmarks for the plan are on schedule and focused on improving the customer experience
DIGITAL CUSTOMERS	Provide a positive and dynamic experience with digital library resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Market and promote library digital resources to the community in an engaging way (2024) ○ Provide an inclusive search solution that makes database searching easy (2025) ○ Develop a customer feedback tool (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 ○ Database and digital learning product usage increases ○ Customers report they would recommend the digital library to a friend
DIGITAL PLATFORMS	Improve customer experience with digital platforms (library app, digital content apps, electronic resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch the new Digital Library website (2024) ○ Perform usability testing on the new website and on the library app, and make improvements (2024) ○ Complete Platform Analysis Project (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 ○ Customers report they find what they need with our new Digital Library website and would recommend the website to a friend ○ Customers report they would recommend digital content applications and electronic resources to a friend

READERS & READING

The library will grow and support an engaged community of readers



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

LITERACY

Expand programs and services that build readers and a love of reading in the community

- Create Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) program to support young readers (2024)
- Introduce community storytimes beyond daycares and preschools (2025)
- Expand Reading Challenge Program (2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- % of readers at JDC grows and indicate they like the books available (2025)
- # attendees at storytime programs increases
- Customers report they would recommend the reading challenges to a friend

CONVERSATIONS

Explore new services that foster reading and conversation

- Implement book talks and readers conversations in the newly renovated Readers Lounge (2024)
- Reprioritize book club offerings to focus on role as catalyst and hub for book discussion groups (2026)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # of people who attend a book talk increases
- # new book clubs started increases
- Customers report they would recommend attending a book talk to a friend

COLLECTIONS

Curate collections that reflect the interests of our diverse community

- Research feasibility of introducing community advisory groups for curating specialized collections, including those of identified emerging communities (2024)

- Determination of action for advisory groups in 2024
- # of searches for items in new curated specialized collections increases
- Circulation #s for specialized collections are benchmarked and increases

READERS & READING



PLAY & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



The library will cultivate play and experiential learning activities in library spaces for all age groups

PLAY & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

YOUTH

Cultivate play-based learning activities in library spaces and through outreach focused on family engagement

- Ensure the updated Kids Library design is infused with play-based learning opportunities (2024-2025)
- Expand hands-on STEM programming for school-age children (2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # families visiting and playing in the Kids Library grows
- # of school-age children attendance increases by 10% in STEM programming

YOUNG ADULT

Expand opportunities for engaging hands-on activities for young adults

- Ensure the updated young adult space is infused with experiential learning opportunities (2024-2025)
- Establish relationships with local young adult groups (2024)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- Young adults report they enjoyed the experiential learning opportunities
- # of collaborations with local young adult groups has increased

ADULT

Infuse fun into learning for adults

- Prioritize hands-on experiences in gallery exhibitions that appeal to adult visitors (2025)
- Expand experiential program offerings for adults (2025)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # of hands-on experiences offered during non-summer exhibitions increases
- Customers report they would recommend the experiences to a friend

DISCOVER & GROW PASSIONS

The library will support and provide opportunities to experience entertainment, culture and personal growth



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

DISCOVER

Prioritize programs and services that offer unique experiences for all interests, learning styles and age groups

- Update program review process to support unique offerings that can't be found elsewhere (2024)
- Develop a program/service focus for young adults beyond 18 years old (2025)

- # of people who attend unique library offerings increases
- Customers report they appreciate events and classes that connect with their interests
- # of young adults participating in experiences geared to their interests increases

ART

Expand offerings that nurture the next generation of artists and art lovers in the community

- Expand the variety of art creation classes and workshops offered to adults (2025)
- Share vision for traveling and community-based exhibits (2025-2026)
- Develop next phases for Artist in Residence and Curate This programs (2026)

- Establish a baseline for usage in 2024
- # of adults attending art classes and workshops increases
- # of visitors for traveling and community-based exhibits increases
- Visitors report they would recommend the art exhibits to a friend

CREATION

Offer programs, resources and spaces to support and showcase local creators and hobbyists

- Host skill-sharing workshops and groups covering a variety of creative disciplines (2025)
- Research the feasibility of starting a local creators showcase (2025)

- Establish a baseline for participation in 2025
- Creative professionals participate in workshops at a higher number than previously

DISCOVER & GROW PASSIONS



CELEBRATE LOCAL STORIES



The library will amplify the voices of Topeka and Shawnee County through programming, events and resources to honor our culture, heritage and history

CELEBRATE LOCAL STORIES



	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
DIVERSITY	Offer opportunities for the community to find their story and experience at the library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand library presence at community events focused on culture (2024) Expand collaborations with community groups (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 # of outreach events attended by the library increases in comparison to previous year
GENEALOGY	Expand collaborations with community partners to be the best, first and most accessible choice for genealogy research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a dynamic Genealogy & Local History webpage (2024) Reprioritize genealogy services and collections to serve as a local genealogy hub (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 Usage of online genealogy resources increases Customers report they have enjoyed the genealogy resources
HISTORY	Expand resources and events that celebrate the rich history of Topeka and Shawnee County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a Digital Memory Lab in the Level 2 Tech Center (2024-2025) Prioritize digitization projects that celebrate our rich history (2025) Expand number of local history programs that highlight diverse history (2025-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline for usage in 2024 # of people using the digitized local history increases # of people recording their stories at the library increases in comparison to previous year (2025) More customers report they appreciate events and classes that connect with their interests

TRAINING

Staff and volunteers will have the skills and knowledge to feel confident and empowered to perform their duties and responsibilities effectively



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

ACTIONS

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

PROCESSES

Develop a standard process and practice for all staff on how to effectively work in all public-facing areas of the library

- Organize staff intranet to prioritize coordinated workflows and documentation (2024)

- Staff report they are finding the information and resources they need for each service point/area

FOCUS

Incorporate a focus on principles of inclusion and belonging with staff development

- Respond to staff feedback on training needs and focus (2025)

- # of staff who participate in training opportunities increases
- Staff indicate they feel more confident in their role based on the training classes

RESILIENCE

Expand training focused on social-emotional learning for staff

- Provide training on de-escalation and trauma-informed practices (2024)

- # of staff attending trainings increases
- Staff report feeling more confident in helping customers who may be more challenging

TRAINING



RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



The library will be the employer of choice where staff and volunteers feel confident, trusted, fulfilled and appreciated in their work

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
STUDY	Review marketplace to ensure equitable compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in a compensation study (2024) Budget review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensation study stays on schedule (2024) Recommendation of any updates will be included in budget planning process
CAREER PATH	Investigate potential career paths and plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research education and/or training opportunities to provide career growth in the library (2025) Research feasibility of expanded career path for individual classification levels (2025) Research feasibility of skills-based pay differentials (2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of staff indicate there is a career pathway for their job growth increases in comparison to previous year # of staff consider continuing education trainings increases in comparison to previous years Determination of pay structure is finalized for 2027 budget cycle
STRUCTURE	Develop an organizational structure that optimizes the service areas identified that addresses community needs and interest goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the current organizational structure and determine optimal structure related to the new service response work (2024-2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress is made to develop a structure that optimizes service focus and reporting

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Connection

- The Topeka and Shawnee County Community Snapshot data indicated broadband internet access remains lower in Shawnee County than Kansas and the U.S. It is estimated 15% of the population is underserved by strong internet access.
- Based on 2023 user research, 500-600 customers use a library computer daily. Customers working directly with staff in the Level 2 Tech Center asked 5,500-8,000 questions per month resulting in 85,378 technology support interactions in 2023.
- In the community survey, respondents over 65 years of age indicated they want more support with internet security.
- In 2023 in collaboration with the *Get Digital* partnership, digital skills training attendance grew and has sustained the numbers. Focus group participants of all ages prefer in-person support and connection at the library.
- 78% of surveyed staff want to increase offerings to English language learners.
- Staff said the library needs to improve strategies to engage Spanish-speaking (60%) and Black (48%) community members.
- 81% of those surveyed are interested in expanding offerings that support mental health and social connections.

Space

- According to the community survey, the most common reason for residents not using the library was lack of time (46%).
- 59% of those surveyed would like to have space to read, study or work in a potential new library site.
- 52% of those surveyed think the primary role of a public library is a community gathering place.
- 60% of those surveyed would like to see programs and events in potential new library sites.
- 76% of those surveyed identified teens aged 12-19 as very important to serve. Staff and community conversation participants noted a decrease in the use and availability of the teen area.
- Community meeting and focus group participants identified transportation as a barrier to accessing library services and the need for branches to provide equitable access to library services.
- 55% of staff identified colocating in outside organizations as the best way to deliver library services to more residents.
- Based on current user research, Digitarians (library users who primarily borrow digital materials) remain consistent at 18% of the customer base. The 2023 annual use statistics show digital library users continue to be a growth area.
- 45.3% of those surveyed indicated they use the library to download digital materials.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Learning

- 60% of those surveyed agree it is very important to expand or enhance offerings to children.
- 80% of those surveyed think the primary role of a public library is a place for children to learn and explore.
- 76% of surveyed staff believe the library should increase offerings to teens.
- 71% of surveyed staff want to increase opportunities for children and teens to learn through play and engagement.
- Topeka has fewer residents with bachelor's degrees (30%) than Kansas and the nation (34%)
- 19% of Topeka residents and 16% of Shawnee County residents are enrolled in undergraduate programs.
- 81% of those surveyed are interested or very interested in expanding offerings that support mental health and social connections.
- According to focus group participants, access to health care is inconsistent in Topeka and Shawnee County.

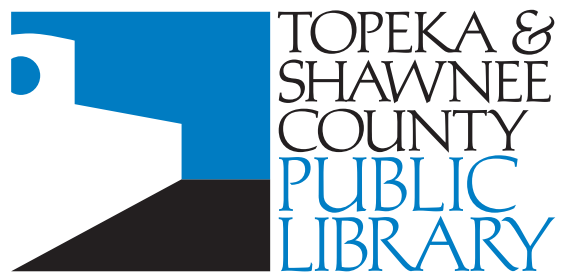
Joy

- Community meeting participants identified a lack of entertainment options and opportunities for parents and children to practice social skills in Topeka and Shawnee County.
- 52.4% of those surveyed use the library for reasons related to hobbies or entertainment.
- 77% of those surveyed are interested or very interested in increased cultural diversity in materials and programs.
- Community meeting participants requested increased content and events by and for the Black community.
- 33.7% of those surveyed indicated their primary reason for using the library is to view exhibits at the Alice C. Sabatini Gallery.
- 27.5% indicated it was to attend a program and 10.3% indicated it was to use local history and genealogy resources.
- Respondents said they enjoy the art lab aspect of the Gallery where they can dabble in art or a craft with family and friends.
- Respondents during the community forums identified the library as a repository for Topeka and Shawnee County history.
- Respondents suggested using the library's podcast and gallery exhibits to highlight the stories of the community.
- 51% of those surveyed indicated enhancing or expanding local history and genealogy resources and services was important.

People

As part of the research for the strategic plan, library staff participated in a survey to identify ways to deliver quality library services. The staff survey identified the following areas:

- The need to review library salaries and benefits.
- The need to review that the library is adequately staffed and appropriately allocated.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion needs to be included in library policies and procedures.
- Staff areas need improvement.



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