

Boston Public Library Action Plan FY11

**Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston
November 17, 2009**

The Boston Public Library

Developing a Strategic Framework for the BPL 2009-2010 and Action Plan FY11

The Boston Public Library (BPL) is an extraordinary institution that has served the citizens of Boston since 1848. Founded as the first municipal library and the first public library to lend books, BPL is dedicated to the advancement of learning and is “Free to All,” as is carved in the façade of the historic McKim building in Copley Square.

The Boston Public Library Today

The Boston Public Library encompasses a Central Library providing research and circulating collections, vibrant neighborhood libraries, a robust web site, digital resources, and community outreach.

- The Central Library’s professional staff and collection of 20 million items reflect its research status and includes books, manuscripts, photographs, drawings, maps, posters, musical scores, digital artifacts, and more. The BPL’s Kirstein Business Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center and the personal library of John Adams, all housed at the Central Library, contribute to the research status of the BPL.
- Twenty six branches serve Boston’s diverse population of over 600,000 with collections of two million books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs, along with an array of programs, book clubs, and services---all targeted to respond to neighborhood residents of all ages. The essential nature of the library as a center for learning and a community gathering place is captured in the branches, which serve as an ongoing and tangible gateway for lifelong residents and for New Bostonians from all around the world.

Decade of Transition: 2011-2021

The next ten years promise to be a decade of transition for the BPL in light of changing demographics, and an increasing demand for existing and potential services. More than ever, Bostonians will rely on the BPL as an essential information resource, a cultural anchor, an educational institution, a gateway to technology, and as a source for services and programs ranging from early literacy to career resources.

- Along with continuing to offer the traditional core services of book lending, youth services, and reference and readers’ advisory services, expectations are already running high for an ever-expanding collection of materials in a variety of formats, and for more open hours.
- Selection, retention and preservation criteria for the BPL’s vast collection will need to be honed by factors such as demand, resources, historic and intrinsic value, and placed in a sustainable context.
- As innovations in technology continue to unfold, the BPL will be called on increasingly to help people navigate complex online resources, provide enhanced access to technology, offer an interactive web environment and increase its selection of downloadable items.
- The backbone of the BPL’s services is, and will continue to be, a trained agile staff that will need professional development as services evolve and new ones are added.
- Ongoing financial challenges, exacerbated by the economic downturn, have adversely affected the BPL’s capacity to meet the evolving expectations of the public in the existing service model.

Purpose of a Strategic Framework

As the public uses the Boston Public Library today in record-breaking numbers, it is time to build on our strengths and plan for tomorrow. The purpose of a strategic framework is to identify core principles that will guide the BPL's overall direction for success within the context of financial sustainability.

- The system-wide strategic framework will identify principles that reflect the BPL's mission and its role as an institution with research and circulating collections, a Central Library and branches, an online presence, and community outreach.
- The principles will respond to the existing needs of the community as well as anticipating the changing patterns of usage for a future generation.
- They will inform library services---in turn guiding priorities, staff development, resource allocation, capital plans, building programs and space allotments, collection policies, technology initiatives and support, and partnerships and fundraising.

Building on Our Strengths and Planning for Tomorrow

The principles will combine the best of existing plans and initiatives with new ideas in light of the changes in the economic climate, the evolving landscape of library services, and advances in technology enablement.

- A cornerstone for the strategic framework will be the "Boston Public Library Neighborhood Services Initiative" developed by the Trustees' Neighborhood Services Committee and approved and adopted by the Trustees in 2008. Some of the initiatives are underway; others need further consideration and resources. The vision, initiatives and standards developed for branches, however, will provide a platform for system-wide principles.
- The "Central Library Service Initiative," developed by a staff Strategic Process Team in 2006, will also be key to development of a system-wide framework, incorporating the concept of designing seamless services from the customer perspective. The "Workplace Principles and Practices," identified in this plan, along with other ideas about services, will be reviewed for application for a system-wide approach.

Boston Public Library

FY11 Action Plan

Advancement of Learning

Focusing on early literacy: Babies to pre-kindergarten; Academic support: School age children and teens; Lifelong learning

Revitalize early literacy programs and services for children birth-5

- Design new early literacy program replacing Reading Readiness and implement program adjustments
- Collaborate with ReadBoston on Early Words program; pilot in 1 branch in FY11

Evaluate existing partnerships and explore new partnership opportunities as a means of achieving strategic framework objectives

- Review list of existing partnerships and programs at system-wide and branch level; make adjustments as resources and personnel support
- Implement criteria for vetting and implementing successful partnerships

Continue good working relationships with City of Boston partners to foster advancement of learning

- Evaluate and expand as appropriate number of Community Learning sites

Enhance public/private partnerships and student engagement

- Expand internship opportunities for local college students (Simmons, Tufts, Museum School, AIB, UMass/Boston, etc.)
- Maintain and enhance partnerships with UMass/Boston, Tufts and other academic institutions
- Work with Boston Public Library Foundation to determine consistent funding model for HAP (Homework Assistance Program)

Review and evaluate best practices for children's services

- Implement new meeting/committee structure for successful planning of key initiatives such as Summer Reading Program, block programs, early literacy. etc.; evaluate effectiveness; utilize technology solutions to replace in-person meetings to free up staff time
- Reading Readiness revitalized based on best practice

Easy Access to BPL Resources Most in Demand

Serving the greatest number of people with existing or reduced resources; includes open hours, electronic access, and collections

Foster excellent public service

- Complete retooling of Circulation and Book Delivery to optimize staff resources and enhance public services
- Implement self pick-up of reserves, and self-checkout at Central Library and 6 branches.
- Review hours of service for Special Collections; adjust in response to user needs
- Implement activities identified in the BPL strategic framework, review/amend Central Library Service Initiative and plan phasing
- Continue to improve public access technology throughout the library system
- Extend public computing options throughout library system, including public training opportunities.
- Reduce use of over-time and absenteeism rates to improve overall performance and public service
- Implement 3 essential goals of the Neighborhood Services Initiative
- Require all staff to attend a minimum of one CE course or workshop
- Evaluate branch hours to determine best way to meet community needs
- Create branch service plan that is responsive to community needs and staffing needs within the financial framework of the FY 11 budget

Provide improved access and stewardship of collections

- Complete transition to Centralized selection model and refocus use of Branch Librarian skills to public service and community relations
- Implement system-wide cataloging standards
- Complete review of off-site collections and determine ultimate utilization or disposition
- Continue to identify funding whether internal or through partnerships with outside funders on access, preservation and collection enhancement initiatives, including retrospective conversion and digitization.
- Complete assessment of ILS and present plan for moving forward

Participate in and encourage employee engagement at all levels

- Continue to engage staff in on-going review of service plan and planning for the future
- Continue to encourage excellence in performance by providing appropriate training, feedback, support and mentoring
- Continue to celebrate staff accomplishments in the ***BPL Weekly***
- Continue regular Neighborhood Services Team visits to branches
- Continue to encourage attendance by staff in departmental and service-based meeting

Libraries as Community Gathering Places

Existing facilities are clean, organized, and welcoming public environments

- Continue to implement improvements to facility and maintenance operations and to security systems and services that have been identified as means to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Implement standards of cleanliness to improve building cleaning and maintenance effectiveness
- Actively seek out opportunities for participation in “green” initiatives
- Implement new visual identity for BPL

- Complete comprehensive review of all branches for renovation or refurbishment; put forward priorities as part of capital budget planning process

Programs and Services that Help People during these Economic Times

Includes services such as job and career information, resume writing, foreclosure prevention programs, etc.

Bring BPL Technology to acceptable service levels both in staffing and infrastructure

- Technology infrastructure stable and sustainable
 - Determine and establish acceptable levels of service
 - Evaluate level of financial and personnel support; identify future needs
 - Continue regular meetings of Technology Roundtable of managers and staff to identify and implement initiatives, resolve problems and evaluate services
 - Continue to actively seek external funding support through federal and state initiatives

Plan for reinvented BPL virtual presence (in tandem with visual identity process)

- Implement new BPL web direction; evaluate current website, survey competitors, determine direction for new BPL site

Increase public awareness and access to research and special collections

- Continue to identify collections for retrospective conversion/digitization
- Coordinate active exhibitions schedule for library collections

Career and Financial Programming

- Create robust, sustainable set of personal finance/employment workshops to be offered in Kirstein Business Library as well as neighborhood branches
- Explore partnerships as a mean to support programming

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Improve financial planning, budgeting, revenue collection, and general financial management of the library to insure stability and long-term sustainability.

- Complete fiscal/service delivery review to inform budget decision-making; establish fiscal decision-making benchmarks

- Work with staff, city and state colleagues to identify service efficiencies and funding/revenue resources
- Fully utilize available technology resources to improve and streamline fiscal and revenue planning and management; complete activation of PeopleSoft accounts receivable module
- Review restricted/unrestricted trust funds to maximize financial benefit to public service delivery

Establish systems to expand access to information to insure clarity for staff and the public on operating and service policies of the library

- Review and update at least 3 core HR and 3 core financial policies and supporting procedures;

Streamline process around requests for funding made through BPL Foundation, Associates, Citywide Friends, granting agencies, and individual donors

- Develop BPL funding priorities list based on Library's strategic frameworks process to increase targeted funding for key initiatives.
- Formalize structures for grant applications and exhibitions planning and implement for staff efficiency and cohesive public service.