

June 10, 2022

Dear Library Board and Community Stakeholders,

The Lake Forest Library is pleased to present the attached Lake Forest Library Strategic Plan 2021–23 Progress Report. The Progress Report details key takeaways and action highlights for each of the Strategic Plan’s five goals.

The work done to implement the 2021–2023 Strategic Plan advances the Library’s pivotal role of providing access to unbiased information, safe spaces for civil discourse, and shared resources to help communities recover and progress from the pandemic and civic discord events of the recent past. The following serves as a brief introduction and executive summary to the Progress Report, which covers the period from January 1, 2021–April 30, 2022. Among other things, the Library accomplished the following:

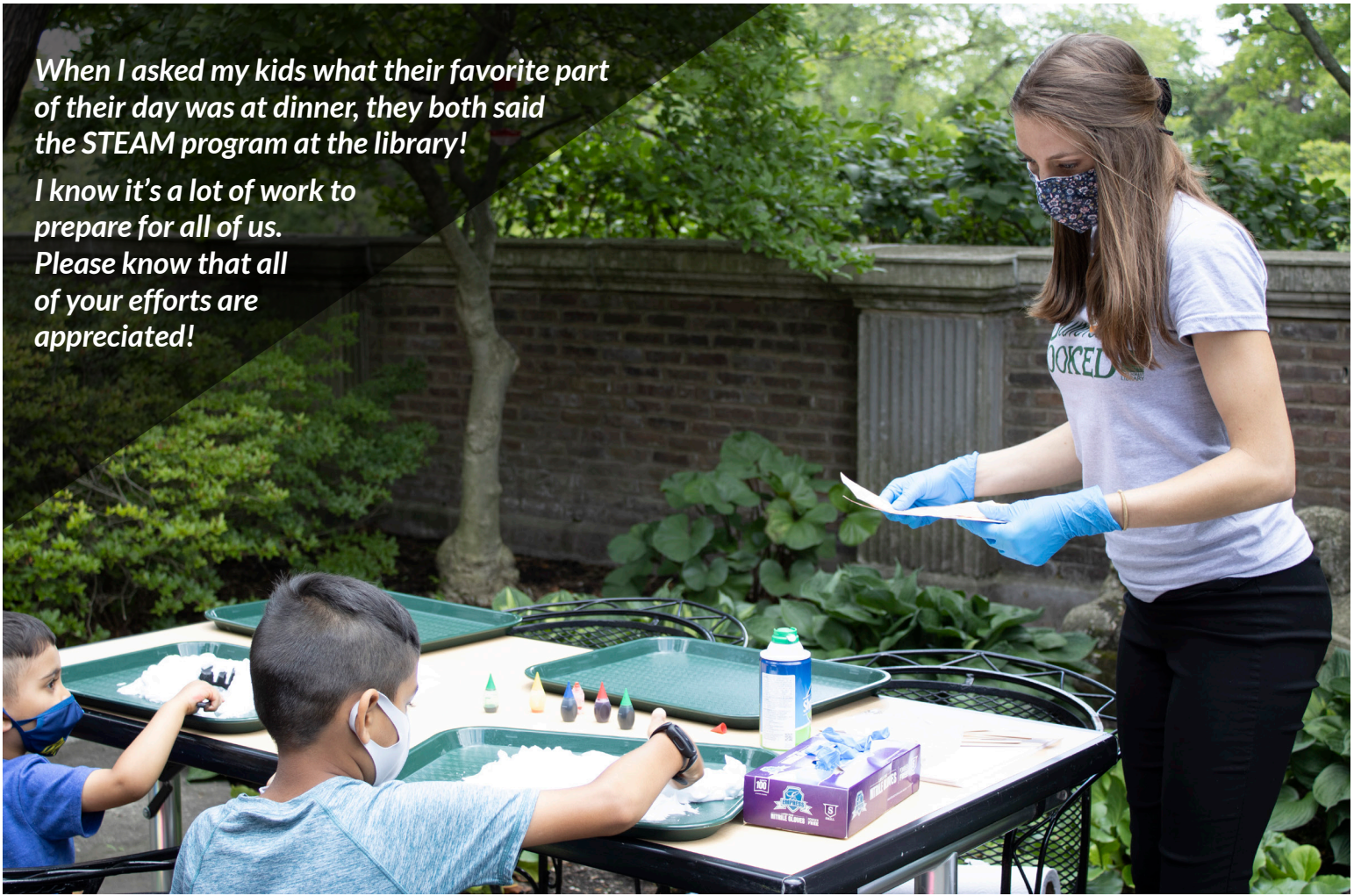
- Restored all operating hours, services, resources, and programming to pre-COVID status (noting there was some retrenching off and on during the reporting period);
- Provided over 930 programs and activities that engaged 44,093 Lake Forest residents;
- Launched 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, Lake Forest Authors Collection, and added new adult and youth Accessibility Collections with funding from The Buchanan Family Foundation;
- Held *Read Between the Ravines* and *Lake Forest Reads*, signature community-wide programs, and *After Hours*, author events with funding from The Dick Family Foundation;
- Provided Lake Forest residents with programming (virtual, hybrid, and in-person programming) that matched their comfort level and needs;
- Commenced assessment of programming using multi-field data coding and Microsoft Power BI;
- Completed an assessment of the print and audio collection for currency, relevancy, and condition and a diversity audit of the Teen Library collection;
- Tagged collection and launched RFID self-check and collection management services, providing the infrastructure for future RFID services;
- Responded to the Lake Forest community technological needs with adult and youth technology courses, one-on-one technology support sessions, Media Lab sessions, enhanced Wi-Fi and fiber internet;
- Delivered programs, resources, and services to support the local business community and individuals (adult and youth) seeking career and employment-securing skills
- Supported the work of the Building Committee to advance the dome restoration and repair project through the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness;
- Completed assessment of system infrastructure and is developing plans for the Library Board to evaluate and consider addressing these needs;
- Refreshed the foyer creating a casual flexible community gathering place;

- Introduced the Library Board to new technologies and options to support expanded service options;
- Partnered with numerous Lake Forest organizations and public and private schools to deliver programming and special events and sought feedback on these partnerships;
- Participated in City of Lake Forest sponsored collaborative events;
- Concluded FY2022 and FY2023 in sound financial position, with a surplus each year to address infrastructure and equipment needs;
- Continued to provide support to the Friends of Lake Forest Library and The Lake Forest Library Foundation;
- Enhanced the ability of Library Staff to fully support patron needs by migrating to Microsoft Office 365, migrating off on-site servers to cloud based systems, updating to a TEAMS based system, and investing in hybrid programming technology; and
- Completed benchmarking and market analysis to ensure Library remains competitive, an organizational structure study as part of cross training and succession planning, and posted three positions to add new skills and deeper technology and facilities support to enable the Library to better serve the Lake Forest community.

The Library Team is focused on delivering creative and innovative work to advance the Strategic Plan and the Library's important role in the Lake Forest community. As a result, the Library is a busy, exciting, and inviting place, focused on providing the highest level of service, resources, and programming. The Library's programming provides innovative options and traditional favorites, offering Lake Forest residents opportunities to gather, learn, discuss, and develop a sense of shared community. The Library Team looks forward to another productive, collaborative, and effective year of delivering outstanding resources, services, and programs to the Lake Forest community and advancing the goals of the Strategic Plan.

When I asked my kids what their favorite part of their day was at dinner, they both said the STEAM program at the library!

I know it's a lot of work to prepare for all of us. Please know that all of your efforts are appreciated!



Our mission: Inspiring lifelong learning, promoting the free and respectful exchange of ideas, and building community.



Lake Forest Library 2021-23 Strategic Plan

MAY 2022 PROGRESS REPORT



Goal 1

Enhance the user experience ●●●●●



Hybrid meeting of Afternoons with Judy Levin book discussion group



1000 Books Before Kindergarten



Accessibility Collections



Lake Forest Authors Collection

Goal summary

Ensure equitable access to information, collections, technology, programs, and community interaction in an inclusive environment. Support staff to evolve services, resources, and programs to best meet the needs of patrons.

Key takeaways

Enhancing the user experience is the driving force of the Library, encompassing all the other Strategic Plan goals as well as undergirding our mission to inspire lifelong learning, promote the free and respectful exchange of ideas, and build community. The work is ongoing, as the Library Team implements, evaluates, seeks patron feedback, and modifies services, resources, and programs accordingly.

Throughout the course of the current Strategic Plan, the Library Team created and updated collections, launched new resources and programs, and improved technology.

The continued and uncertain nature of the pandemic, supply chain issues, and building limitations have necessitated creativity and perseverance on the part of the Library Team. Library leadership ensured that the Library did not stand still, but continued to innovate and evolve for the good of patrons and the community. The planned addition of a Director of Patron Services will continue to move this work forward and address the development of a culture of assessment.

Action highlights

- ▶ The Library Team implemented RFID technology. Numerous challenges were overcome including supply chain delays, personnel changes at the vendor level, and retrofitting an older facility to support new technology.
- ▶ Operations and Facilities managed the installation of self-check stations in the Rotunda and the Children's Library. Self-check stations enable patrons to choose contactless service and improve flow by diverting some foot traffic, shortening lines at circulation desks, and reducing pressure to rush staff or patrons.
- ▶ Librarians adapted programming throughout the pandemic, with events being either in-person or virtual as necessitated by health protocols. The Library invested in Jabra camera and speaker technology to enable hybrid events, and patrons can now choose to attend in-person or virtually.
- ▶ Patrons have appreciated the Library's efforts to support their preferences by providing hybrid programming. As a result, the Library invested in Jabra videoconferencing systems to stream and record larger events including Board and Staff meetings. Judy Levin, who has led book club discussions at several North Shore libraries throughout the pandemic, shared that the Jabra technology at Lake Forest Library was the easiest to use and the highest quality.
- ▶ Adult Services joined with other libraries through Illinois Libraries Present to virtually host prominent national and international authors including Jasmine Guillory, Silvia Moreno-Garcia, and Nick Offerman.
- ▶ Youth Services conducted a diversity audit of the fiction authors represented in the Young Adult Collection. Teen volunteers from the Library's Young Adult Advisory Board and local schools researched author race, gender, orientation, and disability. The audit provides a baseline to support targeted collection development efforts.
- ▶ Youth Services and Communications developed and launched 1000 Books Before Kindergarten. This reading program fosters and supports early literacy skills in Lake Forest youth and currently has more than 130 families registered.
- ▶ Librarians created the Youth and Adult Accessibility Collections. Patrons can borrow items and kits designed to support all ages, abilities, and diverse learning and development needs. These collections help make the Library more inclusive and make patrons more aware of diversity and disability issues, laying a groundwork of understanding and support for the important work of creating a facility that is welcoming to all.
- ▶ Adult Services curated the Lake Forest Authors Collection, giving new prominence to books that are valued by the community.
- ▶ The Library added Explore More Illinois, which gives library card holders instant online access to free and discounted tickets to museums, science centers, zoos, theaters, and more. It is even more accessible than Museum Adventure Passes, which continue to be available at the Circulation Desk.

Status of Goal 1

- Complete/Ongoing
- On Track
- Up Next

Enhance the user experience

- Ensuring collections, information, technology, and programs serve diverse populations by promoting equitable access and creating an inclusive environment for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Facilitating the ability of diverse groups to meet and come together for information, networking, and shared experiences.
- Investigating and adopting technology solutions that enable library users to customize and manage their library experiences.
- Supporting and developing a culture of assessment through:
 - Developing tools and implementing processes that solicit, capture, measure, and incorporate patron feedback into planning and evaluation processes.
 - Developing and implementing a performance assessment tool and system of metrics for library programs, services, and resources.
 - Developing and disseminating educational staff resources on using performance assessment tools.
 - Regularly involving library staff in developing and responding to performance metrics.
 - Reporting annually to Library Board on assessment objectives and results.



T-shirt design class in the Media Lab

Goal summary

Evaluate and improve the usability of computer systems, Wi-Fi, digital collections, databases, and the Library website.

Key takeaways

This goal helps ensure that the Library Team has appropriate and effective technological tools to do their job, and that the Library provides the Lake Forest community with access to technology, services, and classes to improve their tech literacy.

All patrons benefit from the availability of technology at the Library. For some patrons, access to the printer, copier, and specialized Media Lab tools help them accomplish vital tasks. For other patrons, the ability to try new technologies and receive support from staff is a launchpad for them to discover new interests and skills.

Action highlights

- ▶ Operations managed the upgrade from cable to fiber internet, resulting in increased connectivity, upload/download speeds, and signal strength, range, and stability. Improved internet connectivity then enabled the Library to implement RFID and upgrade other Library technologies including staff phones and patron self-check services.
- ▶ Operations managed the installation of additional and upgraded wireless access points, providing patrons with improved Wi-Fi access throughout the building and courtyards.
- ▶ Librarians and the Media Lab continue to teach a wide variety of technology classes. Recent youth topics include STEAM storytimes, maker challenges, and coding classes for grades K–2 and 3–5. Recent adult topics include computer and software skills, video editing, logo design, website and podcast creation, and making custom t-shirts with iron-on vinyl.
- ▶ The Historical Lake Forester newspaper microfilm and digitized resources were updated to a more cost-effective vendor with an improved web interface. This database had 8,483 uses in the reporting period.
- ▶ Adult Services evaluated the Library's current database offerings and modified the package for FY2023 to better align with patron interests. The realignment enabled the Library to take advantage of special pricing through RAILS.
- ▶ Youth Services and Communications transitioned the Library's reading program software from READsquared to Beanstack, a more intuitive platform for patrons and staff which removes barriers to tracking reading online.
- ▶ The Media Lab, in large part due to our excellent staff, continues to grow in popularity as a resource for tech classes, personal projects, and community support. Whether helping rising star Kristel Bauer start her "Live Greatly" podcast, digitizing VHS tapes for the local post of the American Legion for archiving at the History Center, or providing one-on-one tech help, Media Lab staff receive frequent praise from patrons who appreciate their patient and dedicated help.
- ▶ Adult Services produced the Business eQuarterly, an email newsletter which boasts a high 75% open rate and features new business books, upcoming events, and database tutorials, and more.

Status of Goal 2

- Complete/Ongoing
- On Track
- Up Next

Ensure access to technology and related educational opportunities

- Evaluating and upgrading support for computer systems and wireless networks to keep pace with user demand and ensure adequate speed and bandwidth.
- Incorporating considerations about patron convenience and intuitive access when evaluating new and existing resources and platforms, including databases and website.
- Developing programs and classes that educate users on the role of technology in our everyday lives (e.g., responsible digital citizens/informed content consumers and creators).
- Evaluating and strategically investing in digital collections.
- Strengthening the Lake Forest business community by actively listening, soliciting ideas, and providing e-resources and services for entrepreneurs, small businesses, home office and remote workers, and job seekers.



Digitizing VHS tapes for the American Legion



Installing Wi-Fi access points



Converting the collection to RFID



New self-check stations

Goal 3

Improve Library spaces to ensure accessibility and desired functionality ● ● ● ● ●



New self-check stations and gates on the Main Level



Refreshed Foyer with Remisoff mural exhibit



Community Table with Julie Morrison staff

Goal summary

Continue work to deliver library services, resources, and programs in a fully accessible building with consideration of potential service gaps based on geographic locations. Continue work with The Lake Forest Library Foundation to develop an ongoing culture of philanthropic support for the Library.

Key takeaways

The challenges of operating the Library throughout the pandemic presented the Library Board and Staff with many unexpected lessons about Library spaces. The demands of social distancing and adjusted service protocols required moving furniture that was never intended to be moved, providing contact-free access to materials, and supporting community members to engage with their Library online.

These lessons will inform other projects, such as re-envisioning the Media Lab and delivering improved services to West Lake Forest.

Navigating constraints on Library spaces and services also informed and catalyzed new developments in the Capital Improvement Project (CIP). To move the CIP forward in the shifting pandemic environment, the Library Board established a Building Committee and approved the prioritization of work on the Dome and Rotunda and retention of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. WJE's proposed dome solution was granted a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission in May 2022.

Managing the CIP in phases has afforded the Library Board and Staff the opportunity to devote time and attention to improvements within the confines of building's current space and infrastructure that immediately enhance the patron experience and support the Library Team in their work. This care and attention is most noticeable in (i) the refresh of the historic Foyer and (ii) the installation of self-check stations, streamlined security gates, and Wi-Fi upgrades (as detailed in Goal 1).



Foyer display of sculptures and paintings by Margot McMahon



Action highlights

- ▶ The refresh and decluttering of the Foyer restored the space as an inspirational and tranquil entry.
- ▶ By providing tables and chairs, the Foyer became usable for community connections. At any point, the Foyer may be host to patrons working on devices or catching up with neighbors, food drives for Have a Heart for Kids, a craft and hobby supplies swap, and meet and greets with staff from the offices of elected officials including Senator Julie Morrison, as well as Foyerside Chats with the Library Director and Board President.
- ▶ The new Foyer arrangement provides space for flexible exhibits such as (i) the Nikolai Remisoff artist and mural exhibit and (ii) sculptures and paintings by acclaimed local artist Margot McMahon, which served to promote her upcoming event in an engaging way.
- ▶ Circulation moved the holds service from the Foyer to shelves by the Adult Reference Desk. Items are already checked out, providing patrons with convenient grab-and-go contactless service.
- ▶ Facilities worked with outside vendors to install Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization throughout the Library HVAC system, improving indoor air quality and the effectiveness of the Library's HEPA filtration.
- ▶ Facilities managed repairs that improve Library appearance and function including: sealing leaks in the Kasian Room glass roof; touching up wood in the Reference Room; painting and patching walls and doorways in the Rotunda and Reed Room; decluttering and organizing storage areas and recovering space for an adverse weather shelter.
- ▶ Administration and Communications advanced the philanthropic work of The Lake Forest Library Foundation by supporting website development, donor coordination, creation of endowment campaign materials, and gift processing.
- ▶ The Library Team supported the work of the Friends of Lake Forest Library to promote and run their book sales. Operations and Facilities designed a plan for the Friends which provides dock collection space, storage, and a safer method for moving boxed books out of the Library at sale time.
- ▶ For consideration of future replacement of the DVD2GO machine in the West Lake Forest train station, Administration provided the Library Board information on how small spaces enhanced with new technology such as swipe-in access and dispensers result in big service returns.

Status of Goal 3

- Complete/Ongoing
- On Track
- Up Next

Improve Library spaces to ensure accessibility and desired functionality

- Continuing work on the Capital Improvement Project with library stakeholders to deliver a fully accessible and welcoming facility with modern reliable infrastructure and systems that deliver 21st century library services, programs, and resources.
- Adhering to local, state, and national best practices for the health and safety of all who work in, use, or enter the building.
- Undertaking meaningful research to measure service usage to determine and develop plans to address "service gaps" based on geographic locations.
- Encouraging collaboration for communication, work, and study among all ages by providing the spaces, tools, and technology that empower patrons to work collaboratively.
- Fostering an environment of creativity, informal learning and exploration, and self-expression through the delivery of technology labs and creation spaces.
- Continuing to work with The Lake Forest Library Foundation to develop an ongoing culture of philanthropic support and an endowment for the Library.



Volunteering at the Friends Book Sale

Goal summary

Collaborate and share resources with other organizations. Gather community feedback to identify trends, determine needs, and realign services.

Key takeaways

Being a community connector is a two-way street: the Library must (i) be out in the community and (ii) invite the community into the Library. Every experience with the Library Team is an opportunity to nurture a story and relationship with Lake Foresters.

Being a community connector also means being a good neighbor. The Library actively participates in, promotes, and supports initiatives run by the City and other Lake Forest organizations.

Action highlights

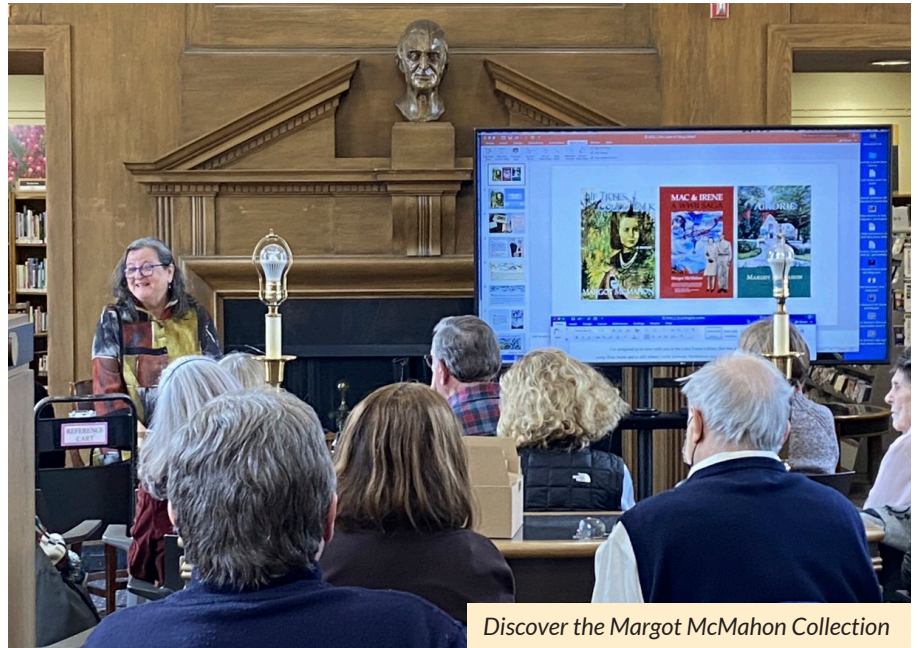
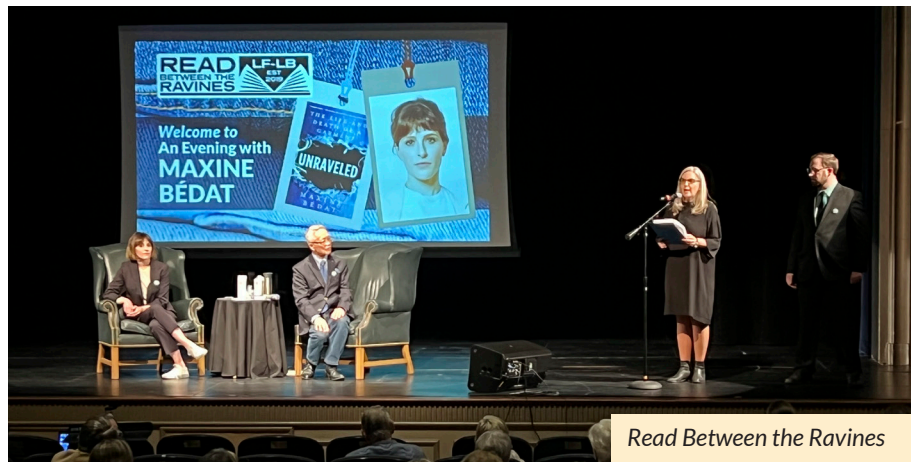
- ▶ The Library Team participated in the Lake Forest Day Parade, the West Side Saturday Market (where community members signed up for library cards, played Plinko to win book prizes, and completed a short survey), Chamber of Commerce events, and student orientation at Lake Forest College (where students learned about Library services and resources and were issued library cards). Members of the Library Board were present at community events such as Rotary meetings and the Friends Book Sale.
- ▶ The Library Team continued partnerships with Gorton, Lake Forest Parks & Rec, Elawa Farm, LF/LB Chamber of Commerce, Ragdale, Lake Forest Open Lands, Lake Bluff Public Library, Lake Forest College, The History Center, Dickinson Hall, Green Minds, Lake Forest Book Store, and many local schools.
- ▶ Collaborative programs that reached beyond the Library walls included Lake Forest Reads, Read Between the Ravines, and storytimes and StoryWalks® at area schools, parks, and the History Center.
- ▶ Adult Services hosted prominent local authors including Margot McMahon, Paul Bergmann, and Katherine Reay.
- ▶ Prizes for reading programs and Library contests are purchased from local businesses.
- ▶ The Library Team requested feedback from local partners about their experiences working with the Library. Staff at the History Center, Dickinson Hall, and Lake Forest College responded and expressed that they value collaborating and look forward to future cross-organization initiatives with the Library.
- ▶ Administration and Communications participated in quarterly Community Coalition meetings coordinated by the City of Lake Forest. These gatherings have inspired joint efforts such as Earth Month in April 2022 and the upcoming Year of Native Voices activities across the City in 2023.
- ▶ Communications included Library information in the Chamber of Commerce Welcome Boxes delivered to new Lake Forest residents, shared patron stories in the Library newsletter and on social media, and engaged community members through surveys on topics including new library card designs, West Side services, and the accessibility collections.
- ▶ Youth Services reinvigorated the Young Adult Advisory Board to serve as ambassadors who help with program planning and collection suggestions. Teens earn hours toward the nationally recognized President's Volunteer Service Award.

Status of Goal 4

- Complete/Ongoing
- On Track
- Up Next

Enhance awareness of the Library's role as a community connector

- Collaborating and partnering with the Friends of Lake Forest Library, community schools, organizations, groups, and governmental entities to further weave the Library's presence in the community.
- Building relationships with communications teams at community organizations to identify collaborative opportunities and quality assurance when Library messages are promoted on partner channels.
- Developing a small network of Library Ambassadors to share information on Library initiatives, programs, services, and resources.
- Developing a cross-department engagement team that (i) works to strengthen existing community relationships while pursuing new opportunities for community engagement, and (ii) updates Library administration and the Library Board on its efforts.
- Conducting periodic surveys of the community to gather data, identify trends, determine needs, and realign services as needed.
- Proactively soliciting feedback from community non-profit and civic organizations and underserved groups to determine how the Library can better meet their needs.





Library staff participating in City Hall Selfie Day, a worldwide celebration of local government service

Goal summary

Provide technology and education that develop Library staff and improve service delivery. Advance staffing initiatives including organizational structure, cross-training, and succession planning.

Key takeaways

A well-supported Library Team translates directly to a well-served Lake Forest community. The Library is fortunate to have employees who are motivated and enthusiastic about delivering high quality services, resources, and programs. Staff are encouraged to develop their interests, stay current on library trends, and advance their professional goals.

At times over the past several months, the pandemic and personal circumstances contributed to longer unanticipated staff absences. Although departments continued to provide uninterrupted quality service, the situation highlighted the importance of cross-training.

Action highlights

- ▶ The Library Team completed classes and training focused on making the Library more inclusive for patrons and staff including: Building Accessible Library Collections for Individuals with Disabilities, American Sign Language for Library Staff, and training in the Americans with Disabilities Act and unconscious bias in hiring.
- ▶ Youth Services is completing *Project READY: Equity and Access for Diverse Youth*, a series of modules about anti-racism work in library spaces.
- ▶ The Library Board and Staff reviewed *Serving Our Public 4.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries* to support continuous improvement.
- ▶ Three librarians attended the 2022 *Public Library Association Conference* and were inspired by ideas such as accessible StoryWalks® with Braille, inclusive youth programs that highlight sharing culture, and partnerships in STEM learning.
- ▶ The Library Team completed training on new technology including RFID, self-check machines, security gates, and CollectionHQ (a new tool for ordering, promoting, and rightsizing library collections).
- ▶ Operations completed a benchmarking analysis and adjusted salary ranges to retain and attract high-quality staff.
- ▶ Administration reinvigorated the Courtesy Committee (which plans monthly activities that support staff morale) and reinstated monthly All Staff Meetings.
- ▶ Operations managed the installation of a new phone system enabling calls and voicemail to be accessed seamlessly from any device through the Teams app.
- ▶ Administration contracted with Steve Bero to meet with staff, identify pain points, and assess the organizational structure.
- ▶ The Library Team increased cross-training. Examples include Shelves completing circulation tasks, Youth Services Specialists helping with events and processing new Exploration Kits, Finance working on document retention policies, and Facilities supporting tech needs.

Status of Goal 5

- Complete/Ongoing
- On Track
- Up Next

Invest in Library Employees

- Delivering training and support that develops a staff that appreciates and understands concierge-level service and reducing barriers to access.
- Supporting educational opportunities that develop library staff as they expand their roles and responsibilities, enabling the Library to continue to evolve new services and resources.
- Investigating and adopting technology solutions to automate and streamline workflows, with the goal of improving processes, service delivery, reducing costs, and redirecting staff time to higher level patron services.
- Striving for equity, diversity, and inclusion when hiring, promoting, and developing staff.
- Creating a cross-training initiative that strengthens basic Library functions and delivers an uninterrupted service model while encouraging professional growth.
- Engaging in an organizational management review to determine the best organizational management structure for the Library and determine implementation schedule.
- Creating a succession plan for Library administration.



Choosri helping a patron use the self-check station for the first time



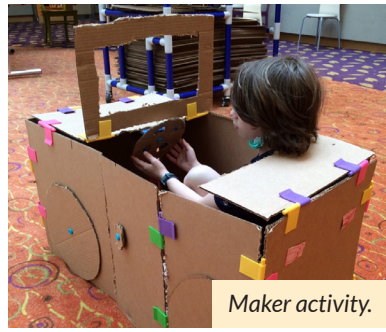
Kate making a homebound delivery



Sameer helping promote Takeout Tech



Preschool storytime.



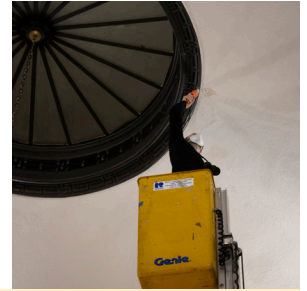
Maker activity.



McMahon artwork donation.



Dome and Rotunda work.

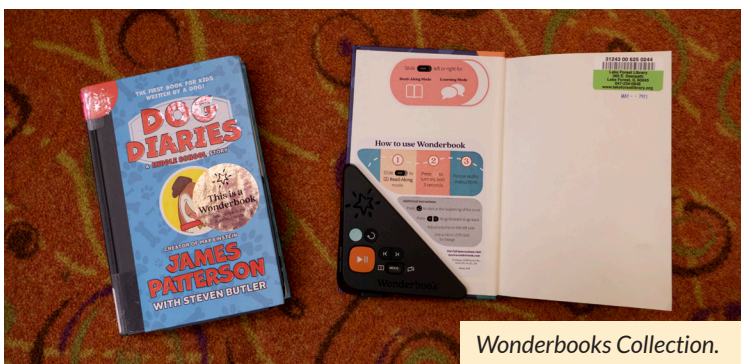


A selection of strategic projects anticipated in 2022

- ▶ Communications is developing an automated email series targeted to new library card holders.
- ▶ Adult Services is enhancing the community-wide presence and awareness of Lake Forest Reads by moving the author event to Gorton.
- ▶ Adult Services and Communications are compiling information on the Library website about accessibility-related resources provided by Lake Forest organizations.
- ▶ Librarians are using CollectionHQ tools to evaluate the equity, diversity, and inclusiveness of their collections and guide decisions about future purchases.
- ▶ Administration and Operations are hiring new positions that address current staff needs and support succession planning and assessment work.
- ▶ Administration and Operations are improving Library statistical data management and visualization systems.

Suggestions from the Library Team as considerations for the next Strategic Plan

- ▶ Many libraries are examining their operations through the lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Library Team brought up ideas such as hiring more racially and ethnically diverse presenters, planning events that discuss immigrant and minority experiences, and addressing societal pressure for or against book bans.
- ▶ Library patrons and staff would benefit greatly from improved functioning and reliability of the heat, air conditioning, and elevator. When the building is uncomfortably hot or cold, or the elevator is out of service, patrons are compelled to shorten their visits and have an unfavorably view of their time at the Library.
- ▶ Patrons continue to request meeting spaces.
- ▶ Based on interactions with and requests from patrons, the Library Team would like to provide reservable study rooms and meeting rooms, laptops and/or Wi-Fi hotspots to borrow, and additional makerspace services and technology offered in the Media Lab.
- ▶ A comprehensive review and plan of the Library's gardens, sculptures, and grounds to address environmental, aesthetic, and use matters.



Wonderbooks Collection.



Adult Accessibility Collection.