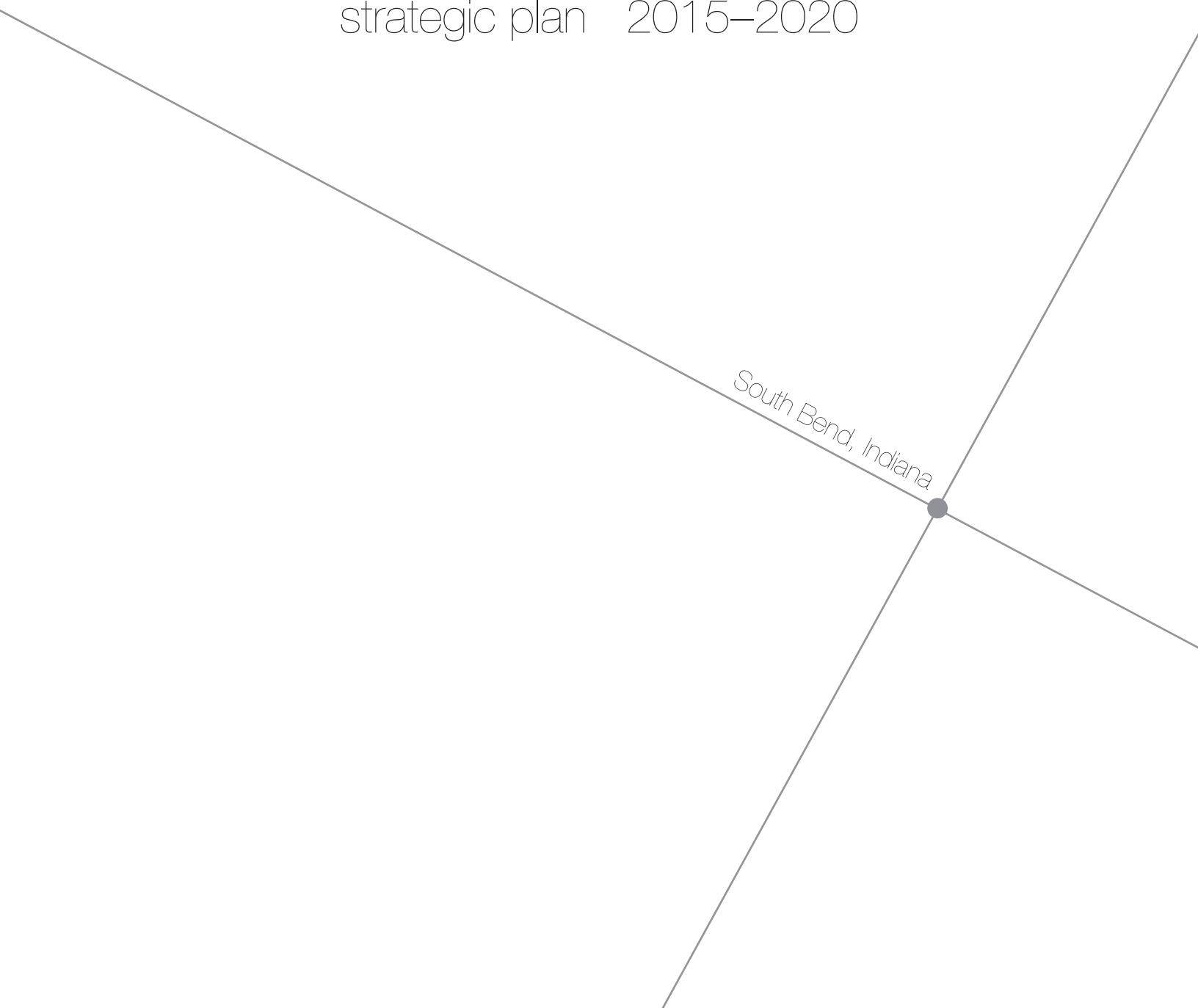


St. Joseph County Public Library

learn | discover | experience

strategic plan 2015–2020



*South Bend, Indiana*

“As a lifelong member of this community, I am excited by the **positive changes and potential** I see around me every day.”

## Introduction

**At SJCPL, it's vital for us to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of our community.** We read and enjoy films, music and the spoken word in so many ways. If you have a cell phone, tablet, computer or other device, you're never far from a good book, movie or game that can educate or entertain.

When you enter our spaces, you'll find each uniquely designed to help you discover what libraries today are about. In the language of author Roald Dahl, your library card is a golden ticket to myriad forms of entertainment, learning opportunities and experiences.

It's our plan to give you more ways than ever before to discover SJCPL. We'll be developing new programs, new forms of library cards and new ways to use the Library at one of our locations, around the community or anywhere you go. We'll also continue to seek new sources of funding to support essential services and be mindful of our budget limits; our continued success depends on it.

St. Joseph County has emerged from the recession. With new growth in housing and jobs, opportunities abound. The same is true of our Library. With the combination of forward thinking staff and an engaged community, we see enormous possibilities for meaningful service and positive community impact.

This plan lays out strategies and activities to help our community grow and thrive over the next five years. At the same time, we're leaving room to devise the new initiatives that will inevitably arise. In a rapidly changing culture, having the ability to be nimble about services is essential for any organization to flourish.

The plan represents our look at the future. Libraries are life changing. Our community is changing as well. At SJCPL, we'll bring you the best library we can create.



Debra Futa  
Director

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SJCPL Library Board 2015

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Mr. Melvin Holmes – Vice-President  
Mr. August Freda – Secretary  
Dr. Mark Green  
Ms. Carmen Maritza Robles  
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# Planning to Plan

To gather information for this planning period, SJCPL used a variety of survey instruments for the staff, public, Library Board and Friends of SJCPL. One hundred thirty-eight employees, or 67% of the staff, answered ten open-ended questions that provided over 100 pages of thoughtful responses. This information has been invaluable in crafting the plan.

In addition, over 600 people responded to the public survey, which sought information about hours, locations, library use and patron satisfaction.

SJCPL also commissioned Civic Technologies to complete an in-depth GIS study to help us understand the differences in the populations we serve. Their report with its charts, graphs and demographic information indicates where we do well and where we have opportunities to improve. One of our challenges will be to reach out to underserved areas with ways to raise awareness and promote library services.

To help identify service directions and projects for the future, a library team that included administration, managers and frontline employees spent two days at a facilitated planning retreat enthusiastically discussing the possibilities.

I

## Staff Survey

The Staff, Board and Friends sought to assess SJCPL's current and future role in the community. The resulting responses were a strong reminder that we have a savvy group of individuals who care deeply about the quality of life in our community along with their role in providing services to enhance it.

**Our employees believe SJCPL will continue to be a gathering place where people will search out real-time experiences with each other.** They also believe we can best serve our community by expanding and strengthening our relationships with other key community agencies and that our outreach efforts must expand. They understand SJCPL can be a physical and virtual meeting space for the community to exchange ideas. Our employees are excited about bringing experiences to the community in the form of hands-on activities, discussions, lectures and performances.

The majority of our employees are well aware that our digital footprint via eBooks and other media will continue to grow in popularity and will live alongside print materials. We're gaining new patrons through our digital platforms; others are returning to the public library because we can offer them digital items. In addition, our employees want to offer creative digital technology like that of Studio 304 and believe the character of our facilities will change as technology needs impact the look and feel of our buildings.

Our employees see our branches as having unique resources to serve patrons through programs and experiences tailored to their needs. They see teens, minorities, seniors and low-income patrons populations that could benefit from enhanced library services.

While the overall economic climate has improved, many SJCPL employees are aware we'll need to be more creative than ever about how we serve our patrons in these days of shrinking governmental fiscal resources.

II

## Public Survey

The public survey was aimed at community members who already use the library. We're encouraged to learn that nearly 85% say they use SJCPL at least once a month.

According to survey respondents, the number one reason people come to SJCPL is still to check out books or other materials. Our collection remains one of our most valuable assets. Patrons still use the library to read or browse and nearly one third of those surveyed bring their children.

We also wondered whether we're meeting the needs of our patrons. Ninety-four percent of respondents say they can get what they want when they use the library. People also feel safe in our library buildings, reassuring us that our continued efforts with security and building design have been successful.

Eighty percent say they can easily find information they're looking for on SJCPL's website. As we continue to update and manage web strategies, it's important to keep this figure in mind. Lowest on the findability portion of the website questions was summer reading sign-up. While 65% of those who responded say they can easily sign up for summer reading online, compared to the 80% responses on other parts of this question, there's room for improvement.

When we asked about staffing assistance, over 50% of our patrons responded they prefer to find library materials themselves, making us even more aware of the need for good signage, wayfinding and merchandising strategies.

We also need ways to effectively promote some of our lesser known services such as equipment checkouts, computer help appointments and genealogy assistance. Even some of our more widely known services such as storytimes, laptop checkouts, eBooks and meeting room bookings are only known to 60% of respondents.

On the other hand, eBooks are important to nearly 50% of those who responded. We believe this number will continue to climb along with reference database use and local history use.

Overall, survey respondents are very satisfied with services, materials and buildings.

III

## Civic Technologies Geographic Information Systems Study

The key finding of the Civic Technologies report is in identifying areas in our community where people are underserved. We see areas of opportunity based on market segments that will allow us to craft services to meet community needs. Much of our outreach effort will be based on serving populations who have difficulty getting to a library or aren't aware of what libraries can provide.

Just one example of a largely underserved group is college students. Our pilot project with Hesburgh Library as a partner offers registrations and holds pickup to students on campus. If the pilot is successful, we'll expand the project and explore other ways to connect with a college age demographic.

# Responding to our community & LINKING community needs to library services

## Connecting to the Online World

In a world driven by technology and digital access, **we can be a great leveler by providing tools and connections for online activities and skills.**

We help guide our patrons' digital experiences by providing a robust website that serves as our eleventh library location.

SJCPL offers high speed WiFi using your own device or one of ours. Our staff is adept at helping on many levels such as email, managing an online job application, downloading an e-book and including the creation of video, audio and visual content.

## Creating a Comfortable Place

While digital offerings continue to make their mark, **we still believe our community needs spaces to come together.**

In addition to meeting rooms at each location that accommodate a variety of participants, SJCPL also provides tables for group study, comfortable chairs for individual reading or dreaming and children's areas at each location.

Libraries are a place to put aside the concerns of work and home and simply hang out for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation. Our spaces are there for you to discover and enjoy.

## Creating Young Readers

Early literacy is a continuous process fostered in many ways. **Strong reading skills form the basis of learning in all subjects,** making it vitally important that children enter school prepared to read and write.

Reading continues to be the most fundamental skill that ensures success in education. SJCPL fills those needs with rich collections, children's audiobooks, storytimes and other programs and spaces that engage.

Author Neil Gaiman writes, "The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity."

## Reading for Pleasure

We read for pleasure and we daydream. **To read for imagination fosters new ideas** and those ideas foster the creativity we all need to stay engaged and active and contributing.

We'll offer recommendations and suggestions to help that journey. We'll offer attractive spaces with easier ways for you to find what you seek and to stumble upon great new reading you may not have known existed.

We'll offer opportunities for discussion and we'll reach out past library walls to bring reading into the community in new ways.

## Learning for a Lifetime

Libraries are still places people go for information. Books are just the beginning but along with paper, digital and audio books, SJCPL also has computers and iPads and a fast WiFi connection to find what you seek.

**SJCPL helps you navigate the world free of charge.**

Programs are only a part of the rich variety of library services. At SJCPL, you'll find live music, storytimes, movie showings, Science Alive, One Book and a host of other activities. As we move outside our walls and into the community, you'll find more ways than ever to engage with SJCPL.

## Financial Stewardship

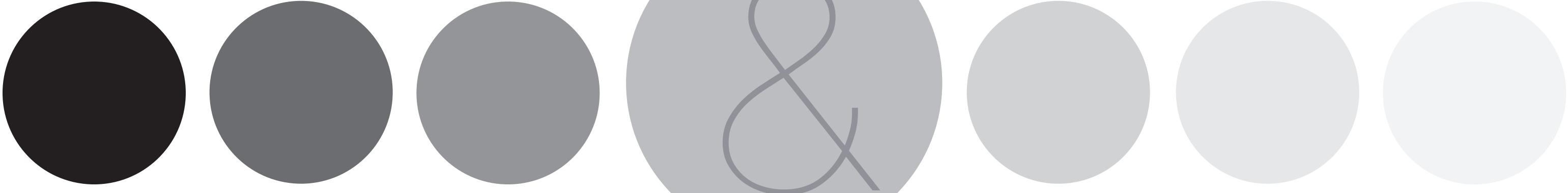
As with many other public entities in Indiana, effects of the Circuit Breaker law have been deep. SJCPL has seen an approximate 22% drop in property tax revenue since 2010 with no real means of relief. Over the past five years, SJCPL has lost nearly 11 million dollars in property taxes.

With a long tradition of being good stewards of public funds, SJCPL took a lead role in anticipating the change in funding and made early adaptations to continue offering robust services in a changing climate.

To continue to demonstrate excellent stewardship of Library resources we will:

- Provide the right level of staffing for the services we offer
- Assess current practices to save money and redirect those savings to strategic projects
- Seek innovative ways to offer services at lower cost, including more partnerships and self service opportunities
- Use pilot projects as a way to experiment with new services at minimal financial impact
- Maintain or add cost recovery or profit centers where income generating services are possible
- Support the Friends of the Library in its mission
- Seek other revenue sources including grants, community funding and development to offset some of the revenue shortfall
- Postpone a Main Library expansion in favor of improving functionality within the current Main Library footprint and throughout the downtown library campus

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GOALS

&

STRATEGIES

# Goal One (1)

## Grow and Sustain Readers

1.1

Develop lifelong readers

1.2

Strengthen early literacy for our community's children

1.3

Provide tools for community members to achieve their educational goals

1.4

Ensure collections development remains a key focus

1.5

Develop a merchandising program to actively promote collections

- Strengthen programs that promote reading for enjoyment
- Develop staff competencies in offering Readers' Services
- Engage in patron conversations that focus on individual reading interests
- Initiate author visits and events to grow a culture of readers
- Provide book discussion events throughout the community

Reading is essential for life success. SJCPL supports readers and adds value to the reading experience. In addition to One Book, One Michiana, we will seek other venues to support reading for pleasure and discovery. Staff training for reading services will be an essential part of this strategy.

- Provide a robust program of storytimes and lapsits for children from birth to five
- Create space at Main Library for preschool children to engage in learning activities
- Seek partnerships with other early literacy providers in the community

Children have more success in school if they enter ready to read, write and learn. Libraries and families can be strong partners in this effort through storytime activities, learning games and videos. In addition, we will pursue the creation of dedicated space for early learning activities at Main Library.

- Provide library space and collections for local Adult Education students
- Seek ways to expand library access for students
- Assist students with homework help using volunteer networks
- Collaborate with homeschooling networks to ensure access to library resources
- Offer a robust selection of online courses

St. Joseph County is home to universities, community colleges and other educational institutions. SJCPPL will work with schools to ensure students have viable library cards to access our resources. We provide dedicated library space at Main for adult education that has expanded through the years. With Main Library's remodeling, we will be able to create study rooms for group homework projects and tutoring.

- Analyze and evaluate Main and branch library collection use and reading patterns, using tools such as Collection HQ
- Develop browsable, engaging collections at each location
- Continually evaluate buying patterns and emerging trends as indicated by patron interest
- Maintain future funding for library materials at a robust and appropriate level

SJCPL's collections, both digital and paper, are one of its greatest resources. The collections should reflect the community and include the changing digital landscape and digital formats. We must actively and continually manage and evaluate the collections and ensure future funding to support healthy collection development.

- Develop pop-up and lucky day collections at each location
- Standardize display layouts for maximum value
- Enhance creative display methods for promotion

SJCPL will create a system wide strategy to help readers discover new titles, make browsing and wayfinding more effective and keep our facilities looking inviting.

# Goal Two (2)

## Gather, Experience, Connect

2.1

Re-imagine the Main Library to improve flexibility & responsiveness to the community

2.2

Effectively utilize the entire Main Library campus

2.3

Expand the library experience to include discovery and exploration for all ages

2.4

Develop programs and activities for families, children, teens and adults

2.5

Promote SJCPL's services, materials and programs to our community more effectively

- Improve functionality by grouping like activities and collections together
- Offer pre-school children a unique discovery space
- Create expanded and enhanced space for teen activities
- Offer dedicated quiet study and reading space
- Design areas for collaboration and small group learning
- Provide spaces for people to access state of the art technology

Libraries remain places that level the playing field for all walks of life. As the digital age advances, there is still the need to connect, to share experiences, and to have a third place beyond home and work in the community. As the largest facility in the SJCPL system, Main Library can be reformatted in a way that makes sense to today's visitor. Along with a newly refreshed commons area on first floor, Main Library also has the capacity to create additional space for children's and teen services and to provide an often-requested quiet study area.

- Seek a mutually beneficial partnership for 301 Michigan Street on the northeast corner of the campus
- Create viable library program space in 301 Michigan Street
- Explore and offer program options for 100 Library Plaza
- Leverage FOL and Main Library spaces to optimize Friends activities and fundraising

SJCPL will provide exposure to a variety of ideas, technology and participatory opportunities to engage our community. We believe libraries should be places of discovery. We will seek and offer new and different ways to create, learn, surprise and delight our community.

- Offer a range of pop-up programs at all locations
- Explore and provide a variety of experiences both in and outside the library
- Emphasize a nimble internal culture that allows for experimentation with a wide variety of activities

SJCPL offers a wide variety of programs that will be cross-promoted and planned in a way that makes the most of our resources. Coupled with a community education strategy, we will work to create a more unified program of offerings and partnerships along with exhibits that offer exposure to learning, entertainment or culture.

- Consolidate program strategies into a system wide structure
- Seek exhibits that reflect cultural and learning opportunities
- Rethink current library spaces on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in use
- Analyze hours open and adjust for the best possible balance between patron needs and budget constraints

SJCPL will develop nimble and responsive methods of promotion via communication platforms. The Library will also provide options for email communications to patrons. We will seek automated solutions that will enable patrons to personalize the way they use our resources.

# Goal Three (3)

## Guide the Digital Journey

3.1

Introduce community members to new technology and discovery tools

3.2

Improve patron access and understanding of technology

3.3

Build a digital collection of local materials that fits the needs and wants of the community

3.4

Create enhanced IT services and capacity

3.5

Expand digital access outside Library walls to shrink the digital divide

- Present programs for the community to learn new products, software and skills
- Evaluate and update Studio 304 offerings to anticipate trends and identify potential services
- Offer programs such as littleBits and Code School to facilitate hands-on learning
- Offer flexible and creative opportunities to introduce new technology at branches

SJCP can introduce community members to new technology. We will continually update Studio 304 and translate successful components into other areas of the system. We will also continually seek new tools that can provide traveling programs.

- Develop a staff well versed in using and implementing digital services
- Broaden the scope of job duties and knowledge for all frontline employees
- Promote SJCP by developing staff training for effective and professional presentation skills

SJCP's Local and Family History Department is the keeper of one of our most unique local resources. Many of their materials do not conform to standard library collection practices. Digitizing local resources is a way to bring these rare materials to a wide range of users. We will ensure the collection is protected and accessible and its continued growth is supported.

- Actively grow the collection of digitized local materials
- Expand access to materials of local interest
- Ensure digital systems have sufficient capacity to continue preservation efforts

We're committed to providing computers and devices that expose our patrons to new technology, while remaining excellent stewards of public funds. We will strive to balance the two needs as technology continues to change and ensure that every location has adequate devices to meet demand.

- Create a fast network that anticipates future bandwidth needs with specific regard to cloud computing and hosted services
- Customize the number of machines and devices available at each location to reflect patron and staff needs
- Implement asset management software to allow for better utilization of hardware and software holdings, in addition to enhanced reporting and analysis
- Refine the equipment rotation schedule to better adapt to budget changes

- Implement and analyze the LSTA grant project to expand Library access via WiFi
- Seek outside sources of funding to continue viable WiFi expansion in the community
- Enlarge WiFi access in neighborhoods surrounding SJCP library branches

Job searches and homework happen outside traditional library hours. SJCP's pilot project to bring WiFi Internet access to a high-density affordable housing area has the potential to be the beginning of widespread free WiFi access. We will use the analysis from grant funding to examine the viability of further expansion.

# Goal Four (4)

## Make it Easy to Use the Library

4.1

Remove barriers & enhance the Library's service culture to increase the number of active library card users

4.2

Open meeting rooms to a wide variety of interests and activities

4.3

Engage new audiences in using library resources community

4.4

Provide a rich array of digital offerings that offer a seamless & engaging experience

4.5

Deliver an extensive program of outreach

4.6

Ensure SJCP meets the needs of our diverse population

- Review and rewrite policies to ensure a seamless experience in getting and using library service
- Expand service to additional schools within SJCP's service area
- Offer a variety of card types to encourage and improve access
- Explore and implement new collaborations to expand service

SJCP serves approximately 65% of the residents in our service area. Additional card types such as digital cards, first library cards, student cards and others can offer customized ways to use the Library and create a more seamless experience, creating a service model that focuses on one stop customer service. SJCP will explore and pilot various card types along with expanding current limits on the numbers of holds and renewals to make use more convenient. We will actively seek collaborations with schools and local universities to serve a wider audience.

- Restructure current meeting room policies
- Ensure SJCP has sufficient staff to help patrons with meeting room needs, including reservations, setups and technical support
- Provide user-friendly reservations software
- Provide access to services such as video conferencing equipment
- Offer library card promotions to non-users
- Increase the number of unique users accessing digital materials
- Promote programs and services through new channels
- Recapture Friends members with a variety of promotions

We will employ a variety of promotional strategies to make non-users aware of our offerings and will seek to develop a broader base of repeat users. SJCP will also aid the Friends of the Library in attracting new members to support library programs.

SJCP's meeting rooms are currently available only to non-profit agencies that agree to open their meetings to the public. We plan to widen the scope of meeting room accessibility to many other activities including social gatherings, business meetings and conferences. The Library will explore and implement cost structures that keep facilities affordable while also being fiscally responsible.

- Explore, evaluate and implement new platforms and social media
- Develop and implement a library App for patron accounts
- Implement user experience testing and feedback to ensure product usability
- Develop staffing competencies to anticipate and meet the changing technology needs of patrons

Our fastest growing use segment is in the digital area. We are committed to building a better digital experience. SJCP will continue to seek and evaluate new ways to bring digital services to our community and to offer reader services such as patron-contributed reviews and curated lists.

- Develop partnerships designed to strengthen our community
- Plan and schedule offsite storytimes
- Promote library services to homebound residents
- Establish and coordinate a library presence at community and special events
- Ensure library staff is involved in community based projects and organizations

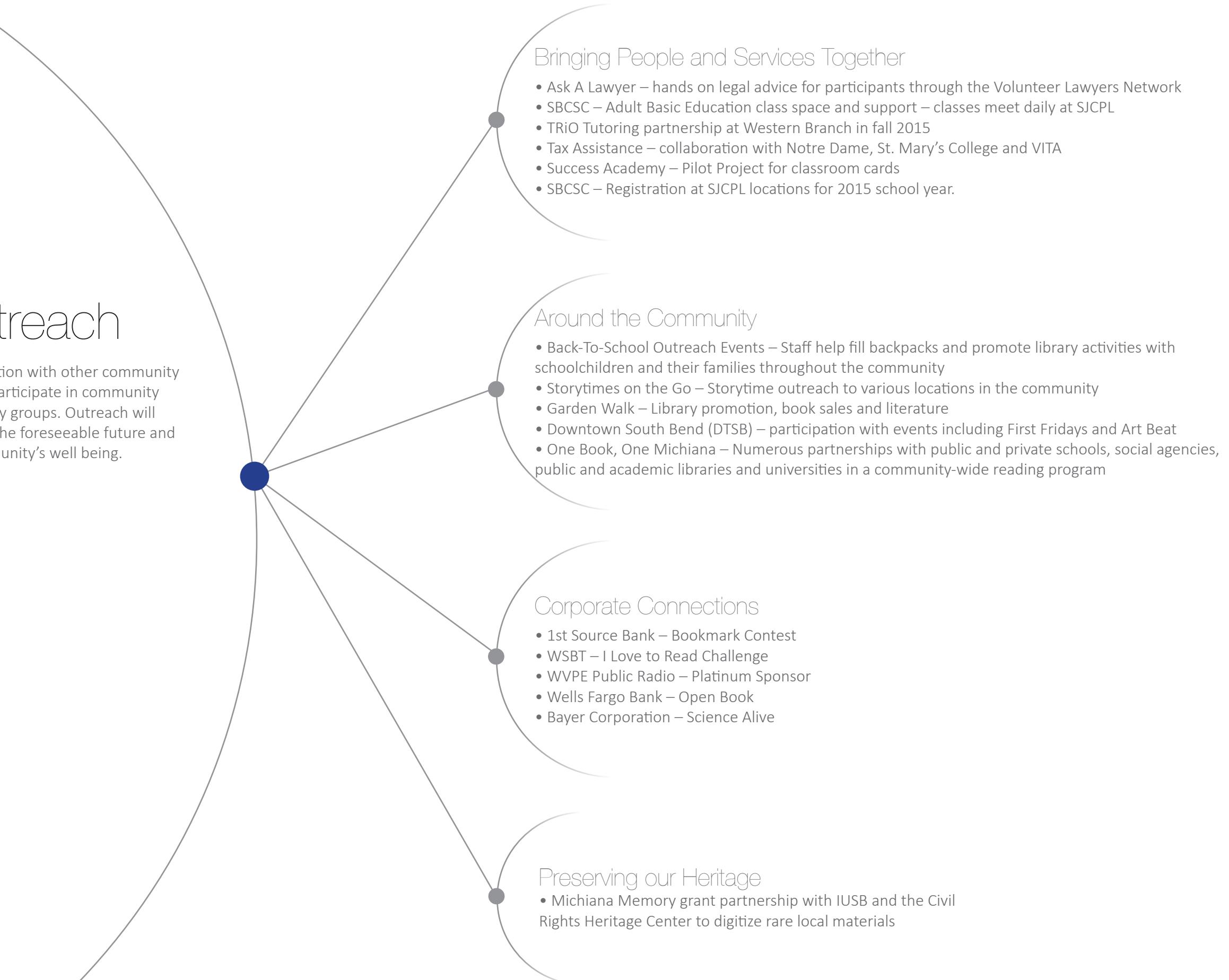
SJCP has already increased its outreach efforts but those efforts need to be coordinated and managed to achieve the most effective presence we can offer. As part of this effort, we will evaluate staffing and position needs to make this initiative more robust. Getting beyond library walls helps us understand our community in new ways and brings the library more in touch with residents.

- Make each location a cultural destination which honors the unique diversity of the surrounding area
- Tailor materials at each location to reflect that library's user base
- Provide exhibits and programs that showcase the rich heritage of the community
- Employ a diverse staff of employees who create a connection to the population served and provide training in ways to build understanding

Our community is stronger because of its diversity. SJCP is a place to celebrate what brings us together and what makes us unique.

# Partnerships & Outreach

SJCPL has a robust group of partnerships and collaboration with other community entities. In addition, SJCPL staff members individually participate in community outreach and serve on various local boards and advisory groups. Outreach will continue to drive a significant part of our activities for the foreseeable future and we'll actively seek new ways to contribute to the community's well being.



## Measuring Success

- Assess new service strategies using a combination of needs assessments, fiscal implications and relevance to the Strategic Plan goals.
- Devise outcome measures for selected strategies
- Prepare annual narrative reports based on the plan strategies and activities
- Develop a community dashboard to track progress on selected activities

To be successful, SJCPL must maintain a strong connection to the community, always seeking to address local issues. We will continue to develop innovative library services, nurturing the organizational flexibility that allows such services to thrive. SJCPL is committed to strengthening library access through technology and by removing barriers.

We see new roles for the library as a place and a presence in the lives of the people in our community.

Welcome to  
the future.

