Confronting the Future

Strategic Visions for the 21st Century Public Library

Dr. Roger Levien
Fellow, Office for Information Technology Policy
American Library Association
What we will cover

- Challenges facing all public libraries
  - View of the World
- Advantages of all public libraries
  - View of the Library
- Dimensions of choice
  - Strategic alternatives for public libraries
  - Common elements
- Choosing a Strategic Vision
  - A process for libraries
- Conclusion
  - If libraries are to continue to fulfill their valuable role in society, they must play an active role in shaping their future
Challenges facing all Public Libraries

View of the World
Four Challenges

1. Continued Advances in Digital Media and Technologies
   - Storage
   - Communication and Computation
   - Displays
   - Cloud of Services
   - Software
   - New Media Genres
   ➞ Media Ecosystem Disruptions
Four Challenges

2. Heightened Competition
   • In both finding and providing all media
   • Via the Internet / World Wide Web
   • From vast collections around the World

3. Demographic Transformation
   • Larger, aging population
   • More diverse ethnically and racially

4. Financial Constraints
Advantages of all Public Libraries

View of the Library
Six Competitive Advantages

- People
- Place
- Price
- Principles
- Pride
- Package
Dimensions of Choice

Strategic visions for public libraries
Dimensions of Choice

- Totally Physical (facilities and media)
- Totally Virtual (facilities and media)
- Individual Focus
- Community Focus
- Collection Library (physical or virtual)
- Creation Library
- Portal
- Archive
Four Dimensions of Choice

- Totally Physical (facilities and media)
- Individual Focus
- Collection Library (physical or virtual)
- Portal

- Totally Virtual (facilities and media)
- Community Focus
- Creation Library
- Archive

One Vision
Common Elements

- Librarian Competencies
- Collaboration and Consolidation
- Digitization
- Personalization and Social Networking
- Archiving and Cataloging
- Pricing
- Community Service
Summary: Choosing a Vision

1. Set mission and goals
2. Identify significant external trends and forces (global and local) – View of the World
3. Critically assess advantages relative to competition (global and local) – View of the Library
4. Determine the strategic imperatives
5. Develop alternative visions
6. Assess and decide: then communicate and implement
A Strategic Vision Setting Process
for library managers and boards

- Set Mission & Goals
- View of the World
  - Global/Local
- Determine Strategic Imperatives
- Develop Alternative Visions
  - Global/Local
- Assess & Decide
- Communicate
- Implement

View of the Library
- Global/Local
Conclusion

- Changes over next 30 years will be profound
  - As those over the past 30 years have been
- Successful change so far is encouraging
  - But challenges in future will be even more difficult
- Choices that have been described respond to these challenges, but success is not assured
- If libraries are to continue to fulfill their valuable role in society, they must play an active role in shaping their future
For further information or assistance:

Dr. Roger E. Levien
President, Strategy & Innovation Consulting
631 Long Ridge Road, Unit 10
Stamford, CT 06902
Roger.Levien@gmail.com

PDF copies of “Confronting the Future”
http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oitp/publications/policybriefs/confronting_the_futu.pdf
Subscribe to District Dispatch

Receive our the latest updates in the format of your choice.