Public Service Announcement
Immediate Release

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"Library Services to Benefit All"
Rapid City Public Library 5 Year Strategic Plan

Mayor Jim Shaw and the Rapid City Public Library Trustees are pleased to announce the adoption of the **Strategic Plan for the Rapid City Public Library for 2005 to 2010.**

In 2003, the Library Board began the planning process for the next 5 years by recruiting individuals representing many constituencies in Rapid City to serve on a Strategic Planning Committee. The goal of the committee was to develop a five year plan to be used as a guide for the library to fulfill its mission during the next five years. In developing the plan, the Committee focused on a number of important tasks:

- Analysis of the changing demographics of our community
- An extensive survey of public opinion about the library
- Comparison of the library's collections and services with other libraries in the region
- Development of a draft plan for public comment

The result of these activities is the completion of the **Strategic Plan for the Rapid City Library for 2005 - 2010**. Three key goals came forward from public input:

- Maintain the library as a community gathering place for all ages;

- Continue to develop intuitive, mobile, and user-friendly library services for all ages; and

- Increase public awareness of existing and evolving services.

Each year the plan will be reviewed for updates and a progress report will be given to the community. The completed plan is now available for viewing at the public service desks at the library, or on the library's web site at **www.rapidcitylibrary.org.**

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Rapid City Public Library
Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010
"A Benefit for All"

Introduction

Public libraries are democratic institutions. Open to all and encompassing an enormous range of ideas and perspectives, they help citizens engage in self-governance and find individual paths to the pursuit of happiness. In each new age they change to reflect the character and concerns of a new generation. They use new tools to fulfill old dreams.

At the Rapid City Public Library today, high-speed internet provides access to real time news. On-line databases give businesses and job-seekers resources to make the promise of economic opportunity a reality. Digital media, including CDs and video, enliven the imagination of a new generation. Meanwhile, books abide, providing the quiet intimacy between author and reader that has made libraries a sanctuary and a paradise to generations of children and adults.

Today, the library recognizes that patron satisfaction is dependent not just on the fulfillment of a task – answering a question, checking out a book – but also on the quality of the overall experience. The Library no longer simply provides access to books and information. Library staff and resources help patrons discover new ways of learning. They chart a course for patrons across a sea of information. In this way the experience of coming to the library transforms us. It broadens our vision of the world and enables us to see new possibilities.

As the Rapid City Public Library evolves within a changing world, it must look to the future. This Five-Year Strategic Plan articulates goals that will help the Library continue to fulfill its historic mission.

Background

Since 1881, when the Library Hall Building was constructed, Rapid City has provided a public gathering place and library services for education, economic development, recreation and life-long learning. Over the years, the services and facilities of the Library have expanded to keep pace with both the growth of the city and the needs of patrons. In 2002, in keeping with its last strategic plan, the Library completed a major expansion,

bringing the building up to a total of 49,000 square feet, and providing significant new space for children and young adults. Statistics show that the new addition to the Library has brought a dramatic increase in the use of the Library, particularly among youth.

In fact, demand is increasing for nearly all of the Library's services. In its new expanded facility, the Rapid City Public Library provides services to residents of both Rapid City and Pennington County (under a special contract), as well as others who live outside the county that pay a fee to obtain a library card. All of these patrons are looking for information and entertainment to help them thrive in the Information Age.

Planning Process

Planning is an ongoing process at the Rapid City Public Library. To ensure that its collections and services meet the needs of the people of Rapid City and Pennington County now and in the future, the Library constantly monitors trends in patron activity. Library professionals keep track of the release of new books, CDs, videos, and information sources to ensure that the shelves are stocked with the latest materials. In short, the Library's staff is trained to anticipate the needs of the community.

Periodically, however, the Library also reaches out to residents to develop a long-range vision of what the Library can and should be in our community. In 2003, the Library Board began this process anew by recruiting individuals representing many constituencies in Rapid City to serve on a Strategic Planning Committee.

This draft strategic plan represents the culmination of a nine-month community-wide planning process facilitated by library staff and led by the committee. During the fall and winter, the committee met four times to review the Library's existing action plan, assess current data and community demographics, and analyze recent library trends.

As the committee worked, it focused on a number of important tasks:
- analysis of the changing demographics of our community;
- an extensive survey of public opinion about the library;
- comparison of the library's collections and services with other libraries in the region, and
- development of a draft plan for public comment.

A draft survey format was reviewed and adopted along with a distribution plan developed to reach users and non-users from all income groups and geographic areas in the city and county. The surveys were distributed to the public in January and February 2004, and the public responded enthusiastically. From teens to adults, 943 people took the time to offer the Library their point of view. Library staff then compiled this data, and the Strategic Planning Committee synthesized and prioritized the information and ideas. The final survey data was adopted by the Library Board for use in the development of this draft Strategic Plan.

A Public Review of the plan will include press releases to media outlets, a stakeholders' meeting for public officials and the general public, display posters and comment cards in

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the library, posting of the plan on the website with a response form, copies available on all public service desks, and mailings to target groups.

Overall Goals

Generally, the public survey demonstrated widespread satisfaction with the Library's services and operations. Patrons were happy with the depth and breadth of the collection, the quality of service they receive from Library staff, and the facilities. The survey reflected the public's continuing desire to see the Library fulfill both its historic mission and meet the needs of the future. Overall, the Library's greatest weakness seemed to be in communications as many of those surveyed articulated a desire for services that are already offered, but are unknown to many members of the public. To address these concerns, the committee adopted three fundamental goals to:

- **Maintain the library as a community gathering place for all ages;**

- **Continue to develop intuitive, mobile, and user-friendly library services for all ages; and**

- **Increase public awareness of existing and evolving services.**

OUR FUTURE

Maintain the library as a community gathering place for all ages

Libraries have long served as a gathering place for the community. In a digital age, this function takes on even greater importance.

As many social commentators have observed, over the last half century Americans enjoy fewer opportunities to come together as a community.[i] Lifestyle changes have witnessed the rise of in-home entertainment and a significant decline in participation in community and social organizations.

Rapid City resists these changes to some extent. In our survey, for example, respondents rated visiting with friends above all other sources of entertainment. Outdoor recreation was a close second. Meanwhile, participation in community organizations, religious institutions, and social networks continues to be strong. But without question, the pressures of work and family often leave little time for community forums.

The Rapid City Public Library provides a physical gathering place where residents come face-to-face to participate in young children's or after-school programs, share ideas in small group study sessions, hear authors working in a variety of genres, use computers to access a world of information, browse the book collections, get help with homework or meet in one of the Library's meeting rooms.

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Residents clearly value these services. In our community survey, 38 percent of respondents reported that they use the library a few times a month, and 21 percent visit the library weekly. The national library use average is 44% of patrons using library services once per month (ALA PLA Statistical Report 2002). Nevertheless, the survey also made it clear that with some improvements the Library could become a more attractive destination and gathering place for the community.

Today's libraries are not the quiet study halls of years past. With increased usage, children's programming, and computer use, come levels of noise that are beyond what some people expect. Many patrons, however, still desire a quiet place where they can read and think. Six percent of the comments received in the survey reflected concern about noise in the library and behavioral issues of teens. Library staff works to monitor both the noise level and behavioral issues of library patrons, and responds when incidents occur. Engaging in conversations with youth about their needs for library services, offering after-school programming, and ensuring that staff and school officials communicate all help to diffuse potential conflicts or issues. When necessary, however, Library policy allows for suspension from the Library for repeated and documented infractions of library behavior.

Planning Goals, in priority order:

a) Create quiet zones for research and study;
- Complete design schematic for Meeting Room B
- Funding sources - 2005
- RFP for 1st floor plan - 2005
- Funding recommendations - 2006

b) Provide library materials in popular formats (DVDs, computer resources, etc.);
- Maintain funding according to standards. - 2006 Budget
- Assessment and evaluation of collection according to policy using new integrated library system - 2006

c) Provide mobile coffee shop services;
- Develop a pilot project - 2005

d) Provide comfortable furnishings that encourage relaxation and quiet recreational reading;
- Incorporate into Quiet Zone's Plan - 2005 - 06

e) Provide signs with user-friendly language;
- Assess and continue implementation of Black Hills Ad Federation recommendations - 2005
- RFP Marketing Plan - 2005
- Funding as needed - 2006

f) Develop a central point of access for city historical archives by working with other community agencies;

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- Partnership with Journal Museum Flood Display for the recording of oral histories - 2005
- Funding - 2005 - 06
- Community wide invitation to discuss archival resources of city history - 2005
- RFP for research assessment, planning, and funding sources - 2006

g) Continue to inquire from library non-users about services they desire
- Include process in Marketing Plan - 2005

Continue to develop intuitive, mobile and user-friendly library services for all ages

Library patrons still appreciate and expect high-quality library service. Most survey respondents indicated that they were pleased with the quality of service they receive at the Rapid City Public Library. But the survey also indicated that many people prefer self-service when it speeds transactions or allows them access to the library's resources from home or other more convenient locations. Increasingly the expect "always there," services.[ii]

The Library recognizes this trend. While patrons can still interact with library staff in the building, they can also reserve materials online, use the self checkout machines, call ahead to pick up or return books at the drive-up windows, and have their questions answered by phone, by e-mail, or by interactive chat.

As digital information becomes increasingly important to our economy, more and more patrons will access the on-line world from work or home. The Library's survey found that two-thirds of respondents have Internet access and most these people are connected by a high-speed cable modem or DSL. Among the survey respondents, the internet is now the most important source of information which means Librarians play an increasingly important role in helping people to negotiate this ocean of information.

The survey also found evidence of what some have called "the digital divide." One-third of respondents, for example, do not have Internet access at home or at their workplace. Many of these respondents rely on the Library to access the Internet. As a consequence, ten percent of survey respondents expressed a desire for more terminals in the Library. And other patrons expressed a need for help learning to access the online world.

Planning Goals, in priority order:

a) Increase self-service and self check-in of materials
- Fines payment
- Card registration
- Easier system for patrons to request books and movies
  - Implementation and research of new integrated library system for self-service applications - 2005

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b) Increase the number of patron computer workstations in the Youth and Reference areas in 2005;
- 2005 Budget

c) Provide library services in neighborhood locations through the use of kiosks, storefronts, or shared facilities with other city services;
- Assessment and research of community needs, including other library examples - 2007

d) Provide internet access in reading and study areas;
- Incorporate into Quiet Zone Plan - 2005 - 06

e) Expand the hours of service at drive-through windows;
- Public input survey on hours of operation - 2005

f) Provide materials return boxes at remote locations on the east side and west side of town;
- Pilot project - 2004

g) Expand availability of reference and reader's advisory services to 24 hours per day/ 7 days per week;
- Assess public need and interest. Initiate statewide collaborative task force with State Library and other libraries to research staff support and cost benefit - 2006

h) Teach patrons throughout the community how to use library services;
- Target non-users and develop mechanisms to reach as an audience 2005

i) Work with other agencies to teach patrons of all ages how to find resources to improve their education and job skills.
- Foster key contacts with agencies to develop information literacy presentations
  a. education community - 2005
  b. business community - 2006
  c. health community - 2007
  d. cultural community - 2008

<u>Increase public awareness of existing and evolving library services</u>

To meet the changing needs of the people of Rapid City, the Library is constantly updating or evolving its services. These changes reflect broad social trends as well as opportunities created by new technologies. With each innovation, however, the Library must find a way to let patrons know that these new services exist.

With online-services meeting a growing range of traditional library needs, library patrons are increasingly drawn to the Library itself for less traditional reasons. Of those surveyed, for example, 37 percent reported participating in a library-sponsored program

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such as storytelling, author visits, or classes. Those programs received an average rating between two and three, indicating some room for improvement.

To survey respondents, the Library is still the number one place to get print books, and the public places a high value on the children's collection (early childhood and elementary reading level). Although the Library offers music CDs and videos, patrons rely on other outlets in the community for these materials. Similarly, special collections (genealogy, local history, business young adult, Spanish, etc.) received lower ratings than the general collections for the majority of survey respondents. But these results should be considered carefully.

As with all good libraries, the collection maintained by the Rapid City Public Library is composed of a variety of materials, each appealing to different, yet overlapping groups of patrons. To certain groups of people particular collections are extremely important: large-print books to the elderly and sight-impaired, historical collections to genealogists, music collections to youth and young adults. As the Library's collection evolves, staff will need to carefully balance the needs of these different constituencies.

The survey showed, however, that often the public is simply unaware of services or collections the Library already provides. Most people, for example, do not know about the library's homebound services. Survey respondents also asked for CD and video collections, homework help, and other services already provided by the Library. These responses make it clear that despite an active public communications program that includes a comprehensive web site, a monthly newsletter, brochures and in-library bulletin boards, the Library needs to communicate with the community more effectively.

The Library is already improving its communications with the public. In 2003, the Black Hills Ad Federation helped the Library redesign its logo and graphics system and developed a series of effective public service announcements designed to increase the public's awareness of existing library services and collections. Funding, however, needs to be allocated for a marketing consultant to develop a fluid plan that evolves as the public's knowledge of services increases. The plan also must include the ability to measure effective marketing approaches. Over the next five years, the Library will work to continue these improvements.

Planning Goals, in priority order:

a) Preserve historical documents such as local newspapers or out of print documents in electronic form;
- Initiate task force in collaboration with State Library and other libraries for a statewide newspaper database to share costs and access - 2005

b) Provide library materials to homebound patrons;
- Achieve a total of 120 patrons enrolled in homebound service - 2005
- Obtain and implement usage of library vehicle for homebound delivery service - 2006

- Evaluate and set participation goals based on community interest - 2006-2007

c) Offer Spanish and Lakota language instruction for staff;
- Spanish - Maintain a staff contact.
- Lakota - Maintain a staff contact.
- Provide staff training on cultural awareness of Lakota cultures - 2005
- Provide staff training on cultural awareness of Hispanic - 2006

d) Select popular materials that reflect community interest;
- Maintain funding according to standards of population served
- Assess use of the collection using new integrated library system 2006
- Enhance purchasing procedures to be patron initiated - 2007

e) Enable patrons to record personal perspectives of local historical information;
- Pilot a project in collaboration with Journey Museum Flood Display 2005

f) Market public library services to students at local higher education institutions;
- Assess distance education usage. Research to determine role and services to provide in regards to distance education - 2007

g) Assist patron in choosing new authors and materials to enjoy.
- Develop marketing strategy for RA services - 2005
- Enhance online RA resources to allow for web access by patrons 24/7 - 2006

Conclusion:

Increasingly, the way we collect, store, and manipulate information drives the process of change in our society. Two clicks of the mouse answer a question, an email from someone half a continent away speeds decision-making and puts us in motion. Even our machines – from automobiles to refrigerators – have become data collectors, self-correcting for changes in road conditions or ambient temperatures. We are an information-driven society. In this new era, the goal of the Rapid City Public Library is to meet these expectations and to be a leader among libraries.

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[i] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
[ii] Library Futures, Jan. 2004.