

Cook
Public Library
2012 – 2016 Strategic Plan

Adopted by the Library Board:
May 17, 2012

Approved by the City Council:
May 24, 2012

*Prepared by:
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THE PLANNING PROCESS:

The Cook Public Library completed a comprehensive strategic planning process between January and April 2012. This process was made possible through financial support from the Arrowhead Library System. Composition of the Planning Team included representatives from the library board, city officials, Friends of the Library, library staff, and concerned citizens.

A community-based process was utilized, which centered on answering the questions: 1) *What are the pressing needs in our community?* and, 2) *What is the library's role in helping to address those needs?* Major steps included conducting a focus group with community leaders, reviewing community demographic data and library statistics, discussing organizational values and mission, identifying service priorities, and developing detailed action plans for the first year of implementation. In addition, preliminary indicators were established to track progress toward achieving the library's new goals. The resulting strategic plan is intended to guide the library for the next five years, with action plans to be revised annually.

WHAT WE FOUND:

Cook is located on the Highway 53 corridor and is the western gateway to Lake Vermillion. Although it is a small city (population 574), it boasts a large number and variety of businesses and services for a town of its size. Both the municipal government and community organizations are also actively engaged in local improvement projects. Cook has made significant advancements with new infrastructure, and the arrival of a fiber optic connection is expected later this year. The efforts of volunteer organizations are also evident, such as the new recreation center, emerging arts group, and chamber of commerce activities, just to name a few.

The Cook community, which includes the surrounding townships, has experienced a slight decline in population over the past decade. The local population is also aging, with children now being outnumbered by senior citizens. Although the median income is significantly lower than the state average, a high proportion of adult residents have completed post-secondary degrees. Another recent change is that Cook and Orr students began attending school together this year, and will move to the new Northwoods School campus in the fall.

Following the recent retirement of a long-time librarian, the Cook library is now under new staff leadership. Based on observation, the library is a busy place with public access computers in especially high demand. During the planning process however, it was determined that existing library statistics may not provide an accurate picture of library utilization patterns. As a result, data collection methods have been analyzed and modified, allowing the library to establish new baseline measures and better track trends going forward.

In Cook's community focus group, local leaders identified supporting and maintaining local businesses as a top priority. Activity that draws people into town has the potential to encourage them to conduct other business here as well. The library is an important asset in this regard, and will contribute increasingly with the addition of a variety of arts/cultural/educational programming as part of its new action plan. Another top priority expressed by the community was encouraging early literacy and providing constructive activities for children and teens. This will also be a new focus of the library, with a specific goal dedicated to the younger generation. Finally, there was also interest in reaching out to work cooperatively with the community of Orr. This spirit of cooperation will be applied by the library as it seeks opportunities for partnership with other entities both within and beyond the immediate community.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

❖ Welcoming

Our friendly, helpful staff provides a welcoming environment where people are treated with respect and dignity.

❖ Inclusive

Our library instills a sense of pride and ownership in people from all sectors of the service area.

❖ Intellectual Freedom

Our library supports creative thinking, is open to new ideas, and respects intellectual freedom.

❖ Community Focused

Our library maintains local history materials and provides collections and services that reflect the needs of the community.

❖ Enhances Learning

Our library fosters curiosity, cultivates literacy, and celebrates a love of learning.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Cook Public Library supports a vibrant community by offering resources and programs that entertain all ages, connect people with technology, and help children develop a lifelong interest in reading and learning.

LIBRARY GOALS (In order of priority):

1. People of all ages enrich their leisure time, broaden their world view, and stimulate their creativity.
2. People of all ages have access to the full range of information technology, and develop the skill necessary to use and evaluate digital resources.
3. Children of all ages develop the building blocks of literacy and engage in constructive activities that foster lifelong learning.

PROGRESS INDICATORS (Year 1):

Goal 1 (Stimulate Imagination)

- ✓ Number of programs held and number of participants.
- ✓ Surveys of program participants regarding whether participation enriched their leisure time, expanded their world view, or stimulated their creativity (and/or Legacy evaluations).

Goal 2 (Connect to the Online World)

- ✓ Track usage to establish baseline for each type of digital device available in the library (desktop computers, laptops, iPads, e-readers).
- ✓ Number of hours completed by staff and volunteers in technology-related continuing education.

Goal 3 (Create Young Readers)

- ✓ Number of children's programs held and number of participants.
- ✓ Surveys of Summer Reading Program participants at completion (e.g. What did you read this summer that you really enjoyed?).
- ✓ Number of new titles added to juvenile collection.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

<i>Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Present strategic plan to Library Board for adoption. Present adopted plan to City Council for approval.	May - June 2012
2. Communicate the new plan to other stakeholders and the public.	June – July 2012
3. Review strategic plan progress as a regular agenda item at staff meetings; make mid-course corrections and update action plan.	Monthly
4. Discuss strategic plan progress as regular agenda item at Library Board meetings.	Alternating Months
5. Compile progress indicator data for annual review.	Annually 2013 - 2016 (September)
6. Board/staff annual 'retreat' to review implementation successes and challenges (including indicator data), review goals, revise strategies, and project budget needs.	Annually 2013 - 2015 (October)
7. Staff develop action plans for the next year.	Annually 2013 - 2015 (November)
8. Full round of strategic planning.	Fall 2016 (New plan in place by January 1, 2017)

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Year 1 Action Plans

Appendix B – Community Focus Group Summary

Appendix C – Library SWOT Analysis

Appendix A:

YEAR 1 Action Plans July 1, 2012 – December 31, 2013

GOAL # 1: People of all ages enrich their leisure time, broaden their world view, and stimulate their creativity.

Strategy A: Programming		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Legacy Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approach Northwoods Friends of the Arts (NWFA) about partnership in bringing these arts/cultural programs to the community. ▪ Select, promote, and host 3 events, as available through ALS. ▪ Select, promote, and host 6 events, as available through ALS. 	Steve Steve (NWFA) Steve (NWFA)	July 31, 2012 December 31, 2012 December 31, 2013
2. Holiday Open House / Author Visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approach Cook Chamber of Commerce about adding this as an annual part of Cook's Country Christmas. ▪ Secure local author to participate in 2012; promote and host holiday open house and author visit, including book sales. ▪ Secure local author to participate in 2013; promote and host second annual open house/author visit. 	Theresa Steve (Chamber) Steve (Chamber)	August 31, 2012 December 15, 2012 December 15, 2013
3. Talk with Dawn Heisel to explore possibility of Cook's participation in One Book One Community for spring 2012.	Steve (Friends of the Library)	November 1, 2012
4. Adult Summer Reading Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruit a volunteer to coordinate this program (Rebecca Patton?). ▪ Develop, promote, and conduct a summer reading program for adults. 	Steve Volunteer	July 1, 2012 August 31, 2012

Strategy B: Community Involvement		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Public Relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit monthly column featuring new materials, upcoming events, and other library news to Cook News Herald & Timberjay newspapers. ▪ Fill in missing information and include monthly column on City's Library webpage. ▪ Research installation of blue Library directional sign on Highway 53. 	Steve Steve Theresa	Beginning July 2012 (Monthly) Beginning July 2012 (Monthly) July 1, 2012
2. Displays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revamp display of new materials for adults, making it more prominent. ▪ Add separate new materials displays in children's and young adult areas. 	Steve (William & Paula) "	August 31, 2012 August 31, 2012

3. Outreach to Book Clubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet and discuss ways that the Library and book clubs can support and coordinate with each other (e.g. soliciting book reviews). 	Volunteer Board Member-TBD (Steve)	October 15, 2012
4. Phase-In an Expanded Role for Friends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send mailing to all Friends members inviting them to a meeting. Host meeting to share Library's new strategic plan, explain priorities and potential opportunities for expanded Friends roles (e.g. hosting programs). 	Steve & Mo Steve & Mo	July 31, 2012 August 15, 2012
5. Hours of Operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze new baseline library statistics (e.g. utilization, patron geography, volume) to evaluate need for increased hours. 	Steve (Theresa, Library Board)	December 31, 2013

<u>Strategy C: Collection Development</u>		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Weed the entire collection.	Steve (William)	September 1, 2012
2. Update the collection development policy, especially as it relates to films.	Library Board Committee (Steve)	September 1, 2012
3. Request double rotations of ALS audio book and DVD rotating collections.	Steve	February 28, 2013
4. Write an article encouraging donations of music CDs to the Library.	Steve	May 31, 2013
5. Complete Full Cataloging of the Collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paperback fiction. Puzzles. 	Steve Steve	December 1, 2012 June 1, 2013
6. Evaluate addition of limited number of information-based magazine subscriptions, and catalog any additions.	Steve	August 31, 2013

GOAL # 2: People of all ages have access to the full range of information technology, and develop the skill necessary to use and evaluate digital resources.

Strategy D: Technology Education & Training		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Staff Participation in Technology-Related Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply for scholarship for Librarian to attend Minnesota Library Association (MLA) annual conference. ▪ Attend MLA annual conference. ▪ Participate in COMPASS meetings and ALS technology training events, as offered. ▪ Share new technology and procedures with staff and volunteers. ▪ Write procedures for technology tools for staff. 	Steve Steve Steve Steve (Staff & Volunteers) Steve	July 31, 2012 & 2013 October 31, 2012 & 2013 Quarterly 2012 & 2013 Beginning July 2012 (Monthly) April 15, 2013
2. Software Tutorials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create link to Learning Express. ▪ Promote Learning Express tutorials for patrons requesting software instruction. 	Steve Steve	November 30, 2012 January 31, 2013
3. Develop written procedures for patrons and promote in monthly column a “Tech Procedure of the Month” covering topics such as how to use the automated catalog, renew materials, place online reserves, request items from outside the system, downloading audio and ebooks, databases available, and community information links on the City’s webpage	Steve	Beginning July 2012 (Monthly)
4. Group-Based Technology Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore partnership with Community Education to offer group training on technology topics. ▪ If partnership is established, co-sponsor 1 training event and evaluate results. 	Steve (Northwoods School) Steve (Northwoods School)	December 31, 2012 December 31, 2013
5. Add signage directing patrons to the City’s webpage for links to community information and resources.	Steve	July 15, 2012

Strategy E: Hardware, Software & Connection		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Purchase combination of laptop computers, iPads, and e-reader devices for use in the Library.	Steve (Library Board)	October 1, 2012
2. Develop technology plan, including equipment replacement schedule.	Steve	December 31, 2013
3. Professional Space Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure grants from ALS and other sources. ▪ Obtain professional space assessment and develop plan for redesign that includes “technology lab” and children’s technology space. 	Steve Steve (Library Space Consultant)	July 1, 2013 December 31, 2013
4. Coordinate library connection to fiber optic project.	Theresa & Steve	December 31, 2012

GOAL # 3: Children of all ages develop the building blocks of literacy and engage in constructive activities that foster lifelong learning.

Strategy F: Children's Programming		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Children's Summer Reading Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and promote Summer Reading Program targeted toward children ages 0-12. ▪ Conduct program with weekly story time and craft projects. ▪ Host KidStuff events (1 – 2012; 2 – 2013). 	Volunteer Coordinator– Kristi (Volunteer Assistant – Carrie) Kristi (Carrie) Kristi (Carrie)	June 1, 2012 & 2013 August 31, 2012 & 2013 August 31, 2012 & 2013
2. Teen Summer Reading Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruit a volunteer to coordinate teen program. ▪ Add YA/teen component to Summer Reading Program. 	Steve Volunteer (TBD)	March 1, 2013 August 31, 2013
3. Reading Dog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schedule a Reading Dog visit at least monthly during the summer. ▪ Connect with Northwoods School Title I staff to promote referrals. ▪ Host Reading Dog visits and evaluate project for continuation. 	Steve Steve Steve	May 1, 2013 May 30, 2013 August 31, 2013
4. Children's Art Display: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruit adult to coordinate creation of children's art for display in the Library's outside display case (e.g. art teacher, peer helper coordinator, NWFA member, Joani Bergstrom?). ▪ Obtain seasonal children's art and rotate display 4 times/year. 	Steve Steve (Volunteer Art Coordinator)	September 30, 2012 October 2012 & January, April, July, October 2013

Strategy G: Collection Development		
ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Young Adult Collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Combine all YA media. ▪ Weed YA materials. ▪ Add targeted "demand" items (e.g. Manga) to YA section. ▪ Add modern "meat and potatoes" materials to YA section. 	Steve Steve Steve Steve	August 31, 2012 August 31, 2012 August 31, 2012 August 31, 2012
2. Children's Collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Combine all children's media. ▪ Reclassify children's section. ▪ Add modern materials to update children's section. 	Steve Steve Steve	June 1, 2013 June 1, 2013 December 31, 2013

Strategy H: Getting Books Into Children's Hands

ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Imagination Library: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Contact United Way to obtain Imagination Library promotional materials.▪ Display and promote this opportunity to families with children up to age 5.	Steve All Staff & Volunteers	August 2, 2012 Beginning September 2012

Appendix B:

Community Focus Group Summary

February 2012

Community Focus Groups – Summary of Responses

Cook Public Library

2-8-12

A total of 10 community leaders participated in the focus group. Representation included financial services, local media, education, forestry, healthcare, and elected officials. In addition, participants indicated active volunteerism in a wide range of community organizations and events.

ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY VISION

Participants first imagined a time in the future when the community has achieved its full potential and everyone is proud to call it home. They then answered the question: *What does that success look like, and for whom?*

Who	Future Result We Want to See
Children & Teens	Have constructive activities available on which to spend their time.
Young Adults	Have gainful employment here in the Cook community.
Adult Learners	Have access to advanced courses locally, especially in support of skills needed by local businesses (e.g. information technology).
Small Business Owners	Local businesses are patronized by community members and have the supports they need to grow and survive.
All Community Members (Especially those with limited transportation)	A full range of retail services available within walking distance.
All Community Members	The beauty of the community has been maintained and enhanced (green space, natural environment, well-maintained structures).
All Community Members	New housing development has attracted new families and led to population growth.
All Community Members	The former school building is being used productively (e.g. high tech business).
All Community Members	The new school is utilized as a community resource and has continued its connection to Cook; enrollment has strengthened.
All Community Members	Have recreational facilities (racket sports, swimming, bowling, etc.).
All Community Members	Cook and Orr have the feeling of a single community with a common purpose (e.g. economic zone).

STATE OF THE COMMUNITY TODAY

Considering the community's current situation, participants were asked to identify: 1) conditions that could help the community move toward the vision outlined above (strengths & opportunities), and 2) conditions that might impede progress toward that vision (weaknesses & threats).

Strengths/Opportunities

- + People who care.
- + Good workforce / good work ethic.
- + Young people want to come back.
- + Proud, moral, and friendly people.
- + Active volunteer organizations.
- + Community events (Timber Days, Farmer's Market).
- + Active arts group.
- + Chamber of Commerce is getting active.
- + Major fiber optic network to connect Cook – ultra fast connection.
- + New water and sewer infrastructure.
- + Strong financial services (Credit Union and two banks).
- + Many and variety of businesses and services for a small town.
- + Government offices with good jobs (DNR, Forest Service, County Land Department).
- + Hospital, clinic, and dental clinic.
- + Brand new school with the most advanced technology in the state.
- + Excellent library in which the community takes pride; can get whatever you need.
- + International airport which has had recent improvements.
- + Many church choices.
- + Comet Theater.
- + Youth/community recreation center to be completed soon.
- + Clean, profitable city liquor store.
- + Outdoor recreation opportunities (lake, trails, etc.).

Weaknesses/Threats

- Not attracting new residents and families are small.
- Lots of real estate that is unsold (34 houses for sale in town).
- Small tax base in the town proper to pay for all services.
- School is no longer located within the city.
- Lack of jobs.
- Loss of major employers such as Potlatch has resulted in population loss / people have relocated to find other work.
- Not enough loyalty to local businesses; competition from big box retailers.
- Gaps in retail services.
- Nursing home is at-risk financially.
- No longer have a local police department / consistent presence.
- Loss of children to other school districts.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Given where we are today, and where we want to go, participants responded to the question:
What needs to be done to make progress toward the vision?

- Economic development to diversify industries and encourage the creation of nontraditional small businesses.
- Identify what are the emerging industries that would be a fit with our community.

- Offer marketable skills courses at the high school level based on current and emerging industries.
- Market our community's assets to encourage people to live here.
- Joint promotion of Cook and Orr as a tourist destination.

LIBRARY PRIORITIES

Finally, participants were asked to vote on library priorities by answering: *What roles can the Library focus on to make the greatest contribution toward addressing community needs?*

Library "Service Responses"	Number of Votes
Build Successful Enterprises: Business & Nonprofit Support	7
Create Young Readers: Early Literacy	7
Know Your Community: Community Resources & Services	7
Be an Informed Citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs	5
Make Career Choices: Job & Career Development	4
Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information: Information Fluency	4
Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access	3
Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical & Virtual Spaces	3
Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing & Listening for Pleasure	3
Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices	3
Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning	2
Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness	2
Succeed in School: Homework Help	1
Express Creativity: Create and Share Content	1
Discover Your Roots: Genealogy & Local History	1
Learn to Read & Write: Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy	1
Get Facts Fast: Ready Reference	0
Welcome to the United States: Services for New Immigrants	0

Appendix C:

Library SWOT Analysis

March 2012

SWOT ANALYSIS
Cook Public Library
March 2012

Library staff, volunteers, and other Planning Team members completed a traditional SWOT analysis, with the following results.

STRENGTHS: *What does the library do best?*

- Nice setting – welcoming atmosphere.
- Ease of use.
- It's open, it's here, we have a library.
- Serves Cook and area by being open.
- Expanded area of users.
- Personal service
- Excellent services to “readers”.
- Those working in the library are friendly and helpful.
- Very capable staff.
- Friendly, smiling technically savvy librarian.
- Friendly staff and history of good relations with the community.
- Heavy usage and support in community.
- Friends of the Library support.
- Serves as a resource center – public information/interests.
- Resource center for local information.
- Provide community with information.
- Offers computer use.
- Access to computers with Internet and Office programs.
- Provide Internet access via WiFi and computers.
- Provide access to books, etc.
- Orders material as needed through interlibrary loan.
- Finding books we don't have for patrons.
- Association with ALS.
- Flexible rules.
- Wealth of local history.

WEAKNESSES: *What do you think the library could improve?*

- Physical redesign.
- Flow of materials / set up.
- Organization.
- Organization of books and media.
- Utilization of space for equipment, displays, staff materials, storage.
- Old “junk” (magazines, paperbacks, etc.).
- Clean house.
- Inventory/collection of materials.
- Improve quality of collection.
- Based on usage, more open hours might be in order.
- Open more hours/days?
- Better usage of electronic resources offered through ALS.
- Use/explain technology to patrons.
- Tech support.
- Technology.
- Support services.

- Programs for kids – last year Mt. Iron Library’s summer program was stellar.
- Public relations about available resources.
- Need to find ways to reach “non-readers”.
- Circulation statistics are lower than actual due to uncatalogued materials (magazines, paperbacks).

OPPORTUNITIES: *What needs do you see in the community that could be opportunities for the library to make a difference?*

- Encourage more use of the library.
- Citizen involvement.
- Community involvement can be enhanced by hosting education and entertainment events at the library.
- Promote library with programs.
- Entice area residents to town by making the library a “must-see” place every week. If they’re in town, they’ll shop local!
- Become active in Summer Reading Program – bring families to town.
- After school activities for kids.
- Young readers’ programs.
- Educational programs for youth and adults.
- To provide educational programs to adults and children.
- Provide educational/cultural programs.
- Partner with local businesses on library programming.
- Class offerings – business development/education, various IT subjects, etc.
- Helping people learn to use computers, iPads, iPhones, etc.
- Using Internet to apply for jobs.
- Computer stations for the public.
- Physical redesign.
- Preserve local authors’ books and other area historical material.
- A wide spread of books detailed for different cultures.
- Share services with high school library.

THREATS: *What outside forces do you feel could negatively affect the library?*

- Those who feel there is no need for the library.
- People who perceive it as not necessary.
- Community members who believe the library is a financial drain on the town.
- We can’t ignore or fight advances in e-reading; embrace/encourage new technology – get ahead of it.
- Declining popularity of paper books.
- Increasing use of electronic devices.
- Digitization of books – declining need for physical books; more people getting comfortable with tech devices, and younger generation prefers technology. How do we keep our community involved in the physical building?
- Balance the value of having a vibrant local library with the price of creating one. Don’t let cost become the sole criteria.
- Population decline.
- Limited revenue sources.
- Economy.
- The national and local economy.
- Funding difficulties.
- Threats to LGA and other government funding.

- Much City revenue is dependent on tourism – high fuel prices could impact businesses and city.
- Big box stores in neighboring communities draw citizens there due to very low prices – bad for Cook.
- Selections and varieties could be updated; wider selection for different audiences (e.g. more available locally rather than having to request from another library).
- Create a plan to recruit and train new volunteers.