

Lake Forest Library 2021–2023 Strategic Plan

The Library is a vibrant and responsive learning center that provides high quality services, deep collections, outstanding educational and cultural programs, and the latest tools and technology for school and life success. While the Library’s primary service population is the residents and businesses of Lake Forest, the Library welcomes and serves residents and non-residents alike in its role to encourage life-long learning, meaningful conversations and engagement, equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness.

With its outstanding resources, services, and programs, the Library seeks to create a safe, inviting, and fully-accessible environment where users can seek accurate and balanced information to improve their skills, explore a new passion, and learn more about the world.



The Library is your connection to knowledge and discovery.

This 2021–2023 Strategic Plan builds on the important work and goals in the 2017–2020 Strategic Plan. While there are many documented achievements and successes under that Plan, some important initiatives are still ongoing. Building on those open projects and guided by feedback from library users, best practices, and responsible stewardship of the Library and community’s resources, the Library Board and staff developed new objectives to guide the Library’s work through 2023, the anticipated completion date of the Library Capital Improvement Project. Those objectives will guide our work across five primary goals.

Goal 1: Enhance the user experience.

Since its founding in 1898, Lake Forest Library has enriched the lives of its patrons by continually innovating to meet the changing needs of library users and the community as a whole. To continue that long tradition of innovation and to meet the increasingly individualized expectations of personalized and inclusive library service, the Library will deliver concierge level customer service that reduces barriers to access by:

- 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.



Library spaces and experiences designed and customized for all ages, interests, and needs.

Goal 2: Ensure access to technology and related educational opportunities.

The Library strives to meet and exceed the information, resource, and technology needs of its users. To do so, the Library will enhance user access to onsite and remote resources, the

underlying technology, and educational programming around emerging technology and digital learning opportunities by:

- 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.



The Library is a hub for equitable access and education about emerging technologies.

Goal 3: Improve Library spaces to ensure accessibility and desired functionality.

To be a 21st century institution that serves individuals of all ages and interests, requires the improvement of the Library's physical spaces to better serve community needs for exploration,

collaboration, and creation. These improvements will recognize the important role of the Library in preserving the past, serving the present, and shaping the future. The Library will deliver this improved space by:

- 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.

Goal 4: Enhance awareness of the Library’s role as a community connector.

The Library currently fosters a culture of community collaboration and resource sharing. To ensure community awareness of its services, resources, programs, and collaborative spirit, the Library will develop a more robust communications and community outreach effort by:

- 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.



Building community and connecting Lake Forest.

Goal 5: Invest in Library Employees.

The Library values its staff and wants to develop and retain engaged employees that understand their important role in advancing the Library’s mission. As such the Library views staff development as a critical investment underlying the Library’s ability to successfully deliver quality resources, programs, and concierge-level service by:

- 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.

