



Bexley Public Library

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION  
AND PRIORITIES  
2015-2020**

## PRIMARY PERSONNEL

### Bexley Public Library Board of Trustees – 2015

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### Library Administration

Rachel G. Rubin, Library Director  
Jack Winkel, Fiscal Officer  
David Fausnaugh, Support Services Director  
Ken Flower, Director of Advancement & Community Relations  
Kristin Kenily Shuey, Executive Assistant

### Strategic Planning Task Force

Jennifer Breitigan, Circulation Team Leader  
Jason Bumbico, Digital Content Librarian  
Stephanie Bond, Circulation Assistant  
Heather Irvin-Hauser, Library Associate  
Jeffrey Laser, Library Associate  
Cindy Lindsay, Adult Services Librarian  
Sue Shipe-Giles, Adult Services Librarian  
Mandy Simon, Collection Development Coordinator  
Victoria Windsor, Youth Services Librarian

## MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

### Mission

The mission of Bexley Public Library is to enlighten, engage, and inspire our community of lifelong learners.

### Vision

The library is the heart of a curious, compassionate, and well-informed community.

### Tagline

Where Curiosity Meets Discovery

### Values

#### ACCESS

We affirm the rights of patrons to free and equitable access to library materials and services. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and the open exchange of ideas.

#### INNOVATION

We are committed to continuous learning, evolution, and adaptation so that we can anticipate the needs and exceed the expectations of our patrons. We strive to be a leader in the development and delivery of creative, bold, and high quality library services.

#### LIFELONG LEARNING

We engage patrons of all ages by providing opportunities for discovery, enrichment, inspiration, and growth.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that creating strong and supportive connections with our patrons and community partners is vital. We are actively engaged in the life of our community and embrace our role as a partner and ally.

#### SERVICE

Service is at the core of everything we do. We are committed to providing courteous and knowledgeable service to our patrons and to each other in a warm, welcoming, and accessible environment.

#### STEWARDSHIP

We take seriously our responsibility as stewards of public funds. We are committed to their ethical and sustainable use.

## LIBRARY PURPOSE

Public libraries are unique. They are one of the few institutions open to all members of their communities, regardless of age, socio-economic status, background, or education. American libraries and librarians remain dedicated to the principles of privacy and intellectual freedom and to the belief that the freedom to read and access information is essential to our democracy. Even as they continue to provide critical support for lifelong learning and literacy for youth and adults, they also fulfill a more elusive purpose: to be a third place - a space that is neither work nor home, for self-actualization, for discovery, for relaxation; to be alone or to be with others; a space that ignites curiosity and imagination; a place for communities to come together. Libraries and librarians remain equalizing pillars of our society, ensuring access to these fundamental experiences and opportunities. As with all public libraries, the activities in which Bexley Public Library engages must change in order to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. To these fundamental principles and to these essential roles, however, we remain firmly committed.

## LIBRARY SERVICE AREA & AUDIENCE

Bexley Public Library is a School District Public Library. The boundaries of the school district align with the boundaries of the city, therefore the Library's legal service area is the City of Bexley. Because the Library receives revenue from the State of Ohio's Public Library Fund, the Library is legally required to provide services to all residents of Franklin County. In solidarity with other libraries in the State of Ohio, in service to our citizenry, and in pursuit of our mission, a Bexley Public Library card is available to anyone who lives in the state.

A focus on meeting the needs of residents and institutions in the City of Bexley is our primary, but not only, priority. The Library also has a long history of providing outreach services to several nearby institutions outside of Bexley city limits, including but not limited to: Kensington Place, the Wexner Heritage Village, Summit's Trace Healthcare Center, the Jewish Community Center, and St. Catharine School. We will continue to prioritize outreach and inreach to these institutions as long as they do not also receive designated outreach services from another public library system.

In addition, we feel strongly that it is our duty to serve those who use our services, no matter their mailing address. We are here for those who need us, and we are proud to be open to all.

## LIBRARY HISTORY

Formed in 1924, Bexley Public Library was originally located in Bexley High School. The library first opened to the public on March 3, 1925. In November 1927, Bexley voters approved a bond issue to yield \$68,000 for building and equipping a new library, to be built at 2411 E. Main St. The new library was dedicated on October 8, 1929.

In November 1945, Bexley voters approved a \$60,000 bond issue for an addition to the library. For reasons probably related to the difficulties of starting construction projects just after World War II, those funds were not immediately expended, and an additional bond issue yielding \$50,000 was passed in 1948. The new addition was finally completed in 1950, but was entirely removed during the expansion and renovation project completed 42 years later.

Another expansion and renovation project was completed in 1968, adding much more space to the library, including the current Browsing Room and Auditorium. The last expansion of Bexley Public Library was completed in 1992 at a cost of 4.4 million dollars. The library building is currently 42,000 square feet.

The library has had five library directors since it opened at 2411 E. Main Street. Sarah H. Bilby from 1927 to 1956; Mary T. Zimmerman from 1956 to 1973; Ruth Philips from 1973 to 1981; and Robert M. Stafford from 1981 to 2009. Rachel G. Rubin became library director in 2010.

In 2009, a 1.5 mill operating levy was approved by Bexley residents. The levy supplemented the revenue stream from the state of Ohio called the Public Library Fund (PLF), which declined sharply that same year. Compounded by continuous decreases in the PLF since 2001, income received from the state in 2011 was on par with the income received in 1997. Funding from the state has continued to decline, and in 2013, a 2.8 mill operating levy was approved with a 74% passage rate. The uncertain future of funding for public libraries is one of the driving forces behind the need to plan responsibly for the library's future.

In August of 2010 a tactical Transition Plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees. The objectives of that plan carried the library through the end of 2011. The 2012-2013 Strategic Priorities that followed set the direction for the 24 months beginning in January of 2012. The revised Strategic Priorities established here will guide the direction of the library from 2015-2020.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Bexley was founded in 1908 and is currently home to approximately 13,000 residents. Bexley's excellent schools, rich cultural heritage, and deep sense of community pride are among its many strengths. In addition to the Bexley City Schools, the Columbus School for Girls, St. Charles Preparatory School, Capital University, and Trinity Lutheran Seminary are located within Bexley's borders. A city with thriving religious institutions, Bexley is also home to several churches and synagogues. These and other institutions within Bexley, as well as surrounding neighborhoods such as Eastmoor and Berwick, are important influences on the life of the community and on the services, programs, and resources provided by Bexley Public Library.

Blending the old and the new and surrounded by the City of Columbus, Bexley is a balance of the traditional and the modern, the urban and suburban.

### **Fast Facts about Bexley<sup>1</sup> (2014):**

- 📖 Population of Bexley: 13,336
- 📖 11,704 BPL library cards in the Bexley School District (87% penetration)
- 📖 Median household income: \$87,553
- 📖 88% of residents are white; 6.2% are black; 2.8% are two or more races; 2.1% are of Hispanic origin; and 1.7% are Asian
- 📖 Median age: 35.3
- 📖 Largest age group: 15-24; Fastest growing age group: 65-74
- 📖 38% of households have children under the age of 18

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<sup>1</sup> Data gathered from OrangeBoy, Inc. and from the database "Business Decision"

## THE PROCESS

### STEP 1: INFORMATION GATHERING

In early 2014, the Library began work with OrangeBoy, Inc., a Columbus-based firm that specializes in data-driven analysis of community demographics and user behavior. OrangeBoy analyzed local demographics; library usage; conducted focus group interviews with library staff, community members, and the library board; and administered a survey of all library users (patrons) and non-users with email addresses in the library's database. There were 1,319 usable responses.

#### OrangeBoy, Inc. Survey and Focus Group Findings of Note<sup>2</sup>:

- 88% of respondents self-reported to have **used the library** in the past 12 months
- The primary ways that respondents utilized library services were to **borrow print materials** for adults (42%), **DVDs** (16%), and **print materials for children** (11%)
- Respondents were most satisfied with the **maintenance of library facilities** (80%<sup>3</sup>) and **customer service** (79%).
- The number one reason lapsed patrons have not used the library in 12 months is because they **use another library system**
- Only 50% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the library's **website**
- 35% of respondents indicated that increased **access to print materials** would encourage additional library use; 29% of respondents indicated that increased **access to downloadable materials** and to **audiovisual materials** would encourage additional use.
- When asked about the most important services that the library provides, being a **good community partner** was tied in importance with providing access to **print collections** (64%), followed by **learning and discovery opportunities for children** (57%); access to **online resources** (53%) and access to **computers, Internet, and wi-fi** (50%).
- 54% of respondents believe it is important for the library to provide **services to seniors**

### STEP 2: STAFF BRAINSTORMING

On October 13, 2014, library staff gathered for Staff Development Day. The findings from OrangeBoy's data collection were used as a springboard for brainstorming about the library's future in four areas: (1) customer service, (2) work environment, (3) programs and services, and (4) future trends. The brainstorming groups generated hundreds of ideas that were categorized into the following areas:

- External competitors
- Internal strengths
- Customer service
- Technology
- The role of the library in the community
- Defining the library's target audience(s)
- Focusing programs, services, and collections
- Facilities
- Staffing, training, and work environment

<sup>2</sup> Of the 1,287 survey respondents, 51% were age 55 or older

<sup>3</sup> Indicates percentage of respondents who indicated a "4" or "5" on a 5 point scale

### **STEP 3: STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE**

From December of 2014 through April of 2015, nine staff members met with the library director on a bi-weekly basis to revise the library's mission, vision, and values; identify the library's target audiences and critical roles; and set a new direction by identifying broad goals and key action items that align with patron feedback, staff brainstorming, and the Library's mission. In addition to staff and patron input, they also considered best practices, trends, and research.

A draft set of goals, objectives, and action items emerged from their ability to synthesize, extrapolate, and imagine a vibrant, aspirational, and attainable future for Bexley Public Library. The draft plan was circulated to all staff in late March for feedback and revision.

### **STEP 4: BOARD RETREAT**

A draft was submitted for review and discussion at the April 16, 2015 Board Meeting. The final document was approved at the June 18, 2015 Board Meeting.

## STRATEGIC THINKING FRAMEWORK

“Planning has always been about *analysis*- about breaking down a goal or set of intentions into steps, formalizing those steps so that they can be implemented almost automatically, and articulating the anticipated consequences or results of each step . . .

Strategic thinking, in contrast, is about *synthesis*. It involves intuition and creativity . . . Such strategies often cannot be developed on schedule and immaculately conceived. They must be free to appear at any time and at any place in the organization, typically through messy processes of informal learning that must necessarily be carried out by people at various levels who are deeply involved with the specific issues at hand.” (p. 108)

-From “The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning” by Henry Mintzberg<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of these strategic priorities is two-fold:

1. To direct the intentional, responsible, and efficient allocation of library resources
2. To establish a framework that inspires strategic thinking and guides successful planning and implementation

For these reasons, the areas of focus and goals detailed here are considered “strategic direction & priorities” and not a “strategic plan” as such. These priority areas set a clear direction for the organization while supporting flexible and agile implementation strategies. For this reason, only current priority objectives and action items are listed; these represent some, but not all of what the Library will accomplish in the course of the next five years. This flexible framework allows the Library to anticipate and respond to the community’s changing political, economic, educational, socio-cultural, and technological needs.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2015-2020

Guided by patron feedback and staff input, organizational priorities were established in the following five areas:

1. **An Outstanding Experience**
2. **The Untethered Library**
3. **Discovery, Exploration, & Learning**
4. **Collaboration, Connection, & Community**
5. **A Healthy Organization**

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<sup>4</sup> Mintzberg, H. (1994) The rise and fall of strategic planning. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(1), 107-114.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS: AN OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCE

**Goal: Patrons who interact with the Library and Library staff at our facility, online, or in the community have a consistently outstanding experience and want to return.**

### Strategy: Staff

**Objective: Provide staff with the training, support, and feedback needed to deliver consistently an outstanding service experience.**

- 📖 Define measurable standards for outstanding service
- 📖 Develop and implement a comprehensive, effective, and scalable in-house training program for new and existing staff
- 📖 Augment opportunities for cross-training and interdepartmental communication
- 📖 Establish a system of accountability and feedback

### Strategy: Facilities

**Objective: Improve and maintain the library's physical plant such that it enhances the library's reputation as a warm, welcoming, and accessible facility where patrons want to be.**

- 📖 Identify and address short-term design improvements in order to:
  - encourage the use of the library as a community center and gathering space
  - maximize ease of use and enjoyment
  - facilitate patron access to library resources and staff
- 📖 Identify and address critical infrastructure upgrades to maintain energy efficiency, comfort, and safety
- 📖 Create a long-range vision and plan for the library facility and grounds that:
  - addresses known impediments to the service experience
  - is energy efficient and environmentally friendly
  - enables future-oriented, responsive, flexible design and infrastructure that supports and enriches library programs and services while maintaining the building's unique architectural identity
  - supports the variety of ways in which our patrons utilize our physical space to gather, find solitude, relax, and learn

### **Strategy: Technology**

**Objective: Maximize convenience, seamlessness, usability, and accessibility of web-based services across platforms for both patrons and staff.**

- 📖 Identify and deploy new technologies that improve the ability of library staff to provide convenient, timely, and effective services and programs
- 📖 Identify and deploy new technologies that improve the ability of patrons to access and utilize the library's resources

### **Strategy: Marketing and Community Relations**

**Objective: Present a holistic brand identity that enhances the patron service experience through marketing, promotion, advocacy and communications.**

- 📖 Develop a comprehensive brand identity that is recognizable across media and that:
  - is consistent with the library's mission, vision, and values
  - enhances the image of the library as a community asset
- 📖 Develop brand and communications guidelines for use by all library staff

### **Strategy: Administration**

**Objective: Ensure that the patron experience is maintained as a primary driver for decision-making.**

- 📖 Establish a regular cycle of formally soliciting feedback from active patrons and potential patrons (non-users)
- 📖 Consider community feedback for incorporation into departmental action plans on an ongoing basis
- 📖 Ensure that library public service policies and procedures serve to support the quality and equity of the patron experience

## STRATEGIC FOCUS: THE UNTETHERED LIBRARY

**Goal 1: Create opportunities to connect with patrons wherever they are.**

**Goal 2: Enable library staff to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness regardless of location.**

### Strategy: Outreach & Public Services

**Objective: Improve our ability to connect in person with patrons for whom access to the library may not be convenient or possible.**

- 📖 Identify currently underserved geographic locations and audiences that may benefit from increased access to library services
- 📖 Establish and implement a plan for location-flexible services

**Objective: Capitalize on existing community hot-spots to provide timely access to relevant library services.**

- 📖 Identify key locations and events at which community members gather that are appropriate and desirable opportunities for the library to offer services
- 📖 Select creative approaches to library service models that would enable and enhance our ability to provide location-flexible services
- 📖 Establish and implement a plan for location-flexible services

### Strategy: Technology

**Objective: Support library staff with hardware and software that facilitates the provision of library services and improves staff efficiency and reach by leveraging mobile technologies.**

- 📖 Identify opportunities where mobile or remote technologies would assist library staff wherever they work
- 📖 Identify and deploy select technologies to reduce friction, improve efficiency, and extend the library's capacity to provide high-levels of service regardless of location

## STRATEGIC FOCUS: DISCOVERY, EXPLORATION & LEARNING

**Goal: Support a curious, well-informed, and compassionate community through programs and services that emphasize discovery, exploration, and learning.**

### Strategy: Public Services

**Objective: Prioritize programs and services that emphasize discovery, exploration, and learning for patrons of all ages.**

- 📖 Focus program offerings in the following areas:
  1. Arts and Culture
  2. Books, Reading, and Storytelling
  3. Civics and Current Events
  4. Genealogy and Local History
  5. Global and Cross Cultural Awareness
  6. Life Skills, Financial Literacy, Health Literacy
  7. STEM
  8. Early Literacy
  9. Technology Training and Access

**Objective: Prioritize programs and services for youth 0-17.**

- 📖 Offer interactive, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based programs and services that forge positive connections with curiosity, creativity, discovery, and learning
- 📖 Support the education of all youth in the City of Bexley by providing:
  - services to teachers;
  - outreach to schools within the City of Bexley;
  - resources and programs for students and homeschoolers; and
  - related learning opportunities for parents.
  - Establish and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with the librarians at the Bexley City Schools, Columbus School for Girls, and St. Charles Preparatory School.
- 📖 Differentiate and enhance library services to teens

**Objective: Increase emphasis on programs and services for creative agers (seniors).**

- 📖 Expand and enhance programs and services for creative agers both through outreach and in-house offerings

### Strategy: Collections

**Objective: Offer a relevant, accessible, and substantive collection of materials in physical and digital formats that reflects the library's commitment to intellectual freedom and to meeting the reading, viewing, and listening needs and interests of our patrons.**

- 📖 Establish collection goals and maintenance procedures for all areas of the collection

- 📖 On an ongoing basis, review new formats, tools, and products that may enhance the library's collections and strengthen the library's relevance for our community

### **Strategy: Technology**

**Objective: Enhance the delivery of and expand access to library programs and services through technology.**

- 📖 Work with Public Services staff to identify programs and services that could be made more effective or delivered more efficiently with additional technological resources; Prioritize and implement selected improvements

### **Strategy: Community Relations**

**Objective: Ensure that library programs and related communications are in alignment with the library's mission, relevant to the community, and are an effective and appropriate use of library resources.**

- 📖 Develop a program evaluation system that defines measureable program outputs and outcomes, collects patron feedback, and uses feedback and data to direct program planning.
- 📖 Establish metrics for success for library programming

## STRATEGIC FOCUS: COLLABORATION, CONNECTION, & COMMUNITY

**Goal 1: Position the Library as a key community partner and a center of civic and community life.**

**Goal 2: Actively create and sustain supportive connections and relationships with our patrons, each other, and other community institutions.**

### Strategy: Staff

#### Objective: Embrace opportunities to highlight local.

- 📖 Capitalize on the expertise of local individuals as well as public, private, and nonprofit partners to deliver library programs
- 📖 Create and sustain mutually advantageous partnerships with relevant institutions and organizations to strengthen community programs, events, and projects that benefit the community and advance the mission of the library
- 📖 Create library traditions with the development of signature programs and events
- 📖 Connect the community with local history through the Local History Digitization Project and related programming

#### Objective: Focus on people.

- 📖 Connect with our patrons as individuals to better ensure responsive, customized service that best meets their needs
- 📖 Find opportunities to connect with colleagues within and across departments to improve communication and workflows, and enhance collaboration

### Strategy: Volunteers

#### Objective: Provide meaningful opportunities for residents to contribute to the library and the community through volunteerism.

- 📖 Identify additional areas of activity for adult and teen volunteers to support the work of the library
- 📖 Collaborate with the Friends of Bexley Public Library and other organizations that utilize volunteers to effectively encourage volunteerism that benefits the community

### Strategy: Administration

#### Objective: Actively support collaboration and relationship building both internally and externally.

- 📖 Support library staff participation on relevant community boards, committees, and projects
- 📖 Provide library-wide opportunities for staff to communicate, collaborate, and connect

## Strategy: Community Relations

**Objective: Communicate frequently, transparently, and effectively with members of the Bexley Public Library community.**

- 📖 Utilize print and other media to appropriately share information, and market library resources and programs.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS: HEALTHY ORGANIZATION

**Goal: Operate an efficient, fiscally responsible organization with a supported, committed staff and a positive organizational culture grounded in the library's mission, vision, and values.**

### Strategy: Staff

**Objective: Ensure that all staff have the tools they need to provide the highest level of service to patrons and to each other.**

- 📖 Invest in library employees by providing access to relevant, high quality professional development opportunities.
- 📖 Establish and implement a standardized, comprehensive in-house orientation and training program for all new and existing staff.
- 📖 Direct resources toward staff-driven programs that contribute to a united, engaged, positive, and supportive organizational culture.

### Strategy: Administration

**Objective: Establish internal processes that support a healthy, effective, and efficient work environment.**

- 📖 Encourage open channels of communication between staff, management, and administration
- 📖 Review and revise policies and procedures as needed to maintain a fair and equitable workplace
- 📖 Review and revise the library's performance management system to ensure that it is an effective feedback mechanism and is aligned with current expectations for performance
- 📖 Establish a fair and equitable system to reward high performance
- 📖 Formalize programs that support the health and well-being of library staff members
- 📖 Engage in effective recruitment and retention strategies to further develop a diverse, talented, service-oriented, inclusive, and innovative staff

**Objective: Sustain an efficient, effective, high-performance organization.**

- 📖 Define and monitor metrics for success for critical functions

## Strategy: Advancement

**Objective: Establish a comprehensive fund development system to fortify the library's stability and sustainability.**

- 📖 Develop and implement a multi-faceted fund development plan.
- 📖 Lay the groundwork for a potential capital campaign to renovate the library in 2020.

**Objective: Seek alternative funding sources whenever appropriate.**

- 📖 Work closely with the Friends of Bexley Public Library to support their ability to provide meaningful financial contributions.
- 📖 Actively pursue grant and other funding sources locally and nationally to support library programs and services.

## Strategy: Finance

**Objective: Serve as a responsible and responsive steward of public funds.**

- 📖 Ensure the responsible, ethical, and sustainable use of public funds
- 📖 Continuously monitor the financial outlook and maintain long-range financial projections to responsibly extend the library's levy income for as long as possible
- 📖 Ensure that the financial resources are available to fulfill the library's levy commitments
- 📖 Communicate financial information with patrons and stakeholders
- 📖 Establish a succession plan and internal redundancies for finance processes and positions
- 📖 Investigate and capitalize on opportunities for cost sharing or cost reductions through shared services, rebates, and organizational efficiencies