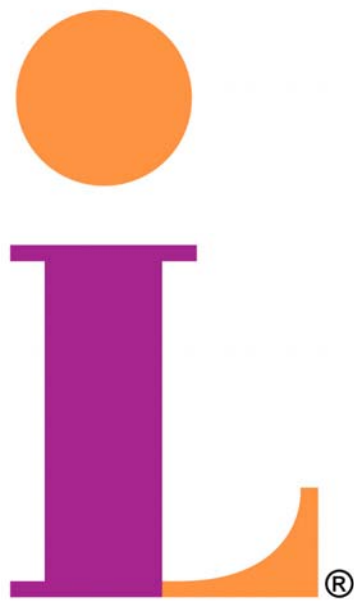


# For the People, By the People:

Engaging Our Community  
in Literacy and Learning



**Carnegie  
Library of  
Pittsburgh**

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2007 - 2011

ALLEGHENY REGIONAL  
ASSET DISTRICT

October 2006



**Carnegie  
Library of  
Pittsburgh**

**Mission**

To Engage our Community in Literacy and Learning

**Vision Statement**

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh will inspire in the citizens of our region respect and responsibility for life-long learning, citizenship, and civic participation.



## **Introduction**

For more than 110 years, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has fulfilled Andrew Carnegie's vision of advancing knowledge and understanding for all people. Today, well over two million people of all ages visit Carnegie Library annually to access its wide array of information services through reference expertise, print collections, electronic resources and engaging programs, both within our facilities and beyond physical walls. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) has risen to the challenge of meeting the ever-changing information needs of the Pittsburgh region, pioneering online services, expanding media collections, and innovating programs that promote literacy and learning.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's impact in our region was recently characterized as a "sizzling chapter." These are indeed exciting times as inviting new facilities have increased the number of customers who use library resources, enhanced circulation of materials, and helped raise awareness about the important role libraries play in the economic and civic structures of our communities. Where our most recent strategic plan focused on meeting our customers' needs and resulted in innovative system-wide change, this next plan poises us to evolve our approach from not only serving the community but helping to build it.

### ***For the People, By the People***

As a public trust created "for the people," Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh embraces our role in providing open and free access to information that inspires people to engage in life-long learning whether for pleasure or serious research. Yet "by the people" reminds us that Andrew Carnegie's vision of a "free" library was one in which the people contributed toward the continuous maintenance of their libraries. While financial contributions are essential to ensure that information resources remain available for future public use, a true engagement of interest, participation and responsibility by our citizenry is equally significant for our success.

The plan that follows articulates the foundation for achieving our vision. Building on CLP's core strengths of information access, collections, and children and youth services, we address the relationship we expect to have with our customers through the physical presence of our neighborhood libraries, virtual services, funding and other responsibilities, and as centers of community life. We also examine the tools that are necessary to help us deliver library services and foster our relationships in the

community. These include staffing, programming, partnerships and collaborations, marketing and communication, and technology. Strategic priorities and specific initiatives affecting each of these areas have been set to guide our activities for the next five years to engage the Pittsburgh region in literacy and learning. Staff and trustees will develop departmental action items and tactics to achieve these initiatives.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is confident that through community engagement we can build upon our traditions and successes, connecting our strong legacy to a robust future.

## Strategic Direction

### Central Priorities

- Information Access
- Service Points/ Facilities
- Funding and Advocacy

### Primary Catalysts

- Staffing
- Responsibility (to and by our customers)
- Technology & Technical

## Goals

**Information Access:** Make information and resources more accessible to library users of all ages in a variety of ways in order to enrich individual knowledge, promote literacy and learning, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

**Service Points/Facilities:** Enhance quality of library facilities and other service points, both virtual and remote, that are strategically positioned to best serve the community.

**Funding and Advocacy:** Ensure the availability of current funding resources while building greater capacity for consistent and reliable funding for core operations and capital improvements.

**Staffing:** Value and support efficient internal operations and a well-trained and informed workforce.

**Responsibility:** Develop comprehensive policies and procedures to guide what we do for and require from library users.

**Technology and Technical Services:** Utilize technology to deliver the business goals of the library to create efficient and effective operations and provide innovative services to library users.

## **Core Strengths**

Strong societies throughout history have had an educated and informed citizenry -- one willing to make a commitment to be engaged in its neighborhoods and the larger world to foster positive change. As the largest public library system in Western Pennsylvania, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has a leadership role in our region as the designated District Library Center and Statewide Resource Center. We are committed to offering the best in library service to the region through our unique and authoritative collections as well as trained staff to help meet the needs of other libraries within our service areas and also globally. The library services below have been identified as Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's core strengths. These serve as the foundation of our role to enrich individual knowledge, promote literacy and learning, and improve the quality of life in our region.

## **Information Access**

Information from libraries comes in many forms: recommending a good book to a child, answering a senior's health-related question, providing the essential book for a teen's study, or cultivating imagination with a novel or movie about a faraway place. Maybe it is locating a website on a favorite topic, providing instruction in unfamiliar technologies, reading a story aloud, bringing generations together, or conversing with a neighbor. The creation of an informed citizenry and a literate population depend on the free, equitable access to information and resources in their myriad forms and formats. Providing this access is at the core of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's mission. Librarians and library staff inspire thought and understanding on subjects both deep and mundane by providing customers of all ages the resources available online, in print, in audio-visual formats, and in local organizations. Our trained staff is at the core of helping customers access balanced collections and up-to-date technology on their paths toward lifelong learning. In this digital age, we also take seriously our responsibility to provide access to the world of knowledge beyond the physical walls of our facilities.

### **GOAL: Information Access**

*Initiative: Create and implement a systematic referral network of individuals, organizations, and resources, both external and internal, to respond to customer requests that we are no longer able to provide in-house or are otherwise not available at every location.*

*Initiative: Conduct evaluation of special services offered by CLP to validate, alter or eliminate continuation of service. Two special services will be evaluated each year to be completed by 2009.*

*Initiative: Develop protocols for appropriate service levels for reference and readers' advisory based on location size, staff and collection.*

## Collection/Preservation

As the custodians of library materials for the citizens of the Pittsburgh region, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh must actively manage its collection to ensure optimal accessibility for the future. CLP must carefully allocate its resources to provide and maintain current, relevant and useful information in a wide variety of formats (print, audio-visual, technical reports, government documents and patents, and electronic media). As an institution with a century of history, we must preserve and safeguard our rich historic collections.

### **GOAL: Information Access**

*Initiative: Prepare and implement multi-year plan to address backlog of reference materials that are currently inaccessible through the catalog.*

*Initiative: Determine preservation needs to ensure future access to CLP's historical collection, establish priorities to reformat materials or provide conservation work.*

## Children and Youth Services

Where are the youth of today? At the library! Throughout its long history, CLP has provided specialized services to children, youth and families. Today, 70% of City of Pittsburgh residents between the ages of 13 and 36 hold a CLP library card. CLP offers youth-focused materials on diverse reading levels and in a variety of formats, presents educational and engaging programs, offers access to technology and encourages children, teens and their families to use libraries as a place to explore and grow. In doing so we aim to assist children and teens in their development and support parents, teachers and other adults working with children. Our success in this area is valued by the community and the library staff alike, and ensures that services to children and youth will remain a top priority for ongoing development and might also serve as a model approach to enhance other areas of service.

### **GOAL: Information Access**

*Initiative: Sustain CLP's expertise in library services to children and teens by continuing to provide excellent collections, specialized staff, and innovative programming.*

*Initiative: Enhance library's role as an informational resource in support of parents, teachers and schools, and adults who work with children and teens.*

## **Our Relationship With Our Customers**

### **Our Neighborhood Libraries**

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the area's most visited regional asset, with more than two million people visiting our libraries annually. Carnegie Library is comprised of 19 library facilities situated throughout the City of Pittsburgh, including the Main Library in Oakland and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Each of the neighborhood libraries is intimately connected with the community it serves. CLP's recent economic impact study demonstrated the importance of our neighborhood libraries as a valued and valuable commodity: a library represents a higher investment in a community; it is an economic generator; and it is a symbol of stability.

To cultivate this neighborhood-centric library system, CLP has embarked on a system-wide renewal program. The renewal plan builds on CLP's historical strengths while addressing the rapidly changing needs of the information age and community demographics. Six branches and the first floor of the Main Library have been renovated or relocated to date. Because each community is engaged in the planning and design process, the newly renovated libraries reflect community needs and are having measurable impact on their neighborhoods.

As they did a century ago, library buildings continue to function as cornerstones of society – providing gathering places and promoting lifelong literacy and learning. Today's challenge is to adapt 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings to 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements. Technological infrastructure, accessibility for the handicapped, security systems and climate control are not luxuries but expectations. All of these considerations are part of a rational, system-wide evaluation process to determine a schedule of renovation to create facilities targeted for efficient and appropriate use while considering functionality, comfort, space and productivity.

As we continue with our neighborhood library revitalization program, we employ green building techniques whenever possible to ensure that the most efficient operating technologies are utilized. These changes at all locations enable us to staff libraries at optimal levels and operate cost effectively.

#### **GOAL: Service Points/Facilities**

*Initiative: Conduct rightsizing plan to evaluate number and location of library, administrative, shipping, and storage facilities.*

*Initiative: Complete neighborhood library revitalization program to renovate/relocate all eligible CLP facilities based on rightsizing plan.*

*Initiative: Evaluate Main Library's ability to meet contemporary library service needs.*

## Virtual Library

With the proliferation of new technologies, it is now possible to access library resources at any time of day or night from any place using any type of communications-enabled electronic device. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh customers already are able to access a wide range of online resources and services. In 2005, almost 5 million visits were made to CLP's website from outside of our libraries. These experiences need to be convenient, intuitive, well organized, and immediate. Our virtual circulation services include applying for a library card, checking due dates, renewing materials, requesting materials from Carnegie Library or other libraries, and receiving notifications when materials are ready for pick-up or overdue. Our virtual collections include eBooks, full text newspapers and journals, eAudio, streaming music and spoken word, and images of our vast photography collection. Virtual resources also consist of recommended lists of websites ranging from homework assistance or starting a business to subject and/or age-oriented reading lists, tutorials, commercial databases, and various ways to communicate online with library staff. As these services and collections expand, Carnegie Library will improve how we organize and promote them so that our customers can use our *Virtual Place Experience* anytime, anywhere.

### **GOAL: Service Points/Facilities**

*Initiative: Enhance library tools to access and disseminate information virtually, anytime, anywhere.*

## A Social Contract with Citizens

When Andrew Carnegie initially funded the construction of CLP's Main Library and other libraries, he did not endow their operations. The library was to be created as a public trust that was *for* the people but would be funded *by* the people. Carnegie Library is at a critical point of establishing a two-way social contract with our customers that addresses both fiscal and social responsibility.

With the words "Free to the People" etched in stone above the entrance to CLP's Main Library, customers might easily forget that the library costs a substantial amount of money to operate. As one of the few organizations where no fee is charged for admission, the library does not see any direct increase in revenues tied to increased use. The library also has no fixed source of funding for capital maintenance needs.

For core operational funding, CLP is the largest recipient of the Allegheny Regional Asset District sales tax revenues, and the stability of CLP's funding depends largely on how well the economy performs in terms of consumer sales. Ironically, it is often in economically slower times that more people turn to the library for their information needs. Additional operational funding comes from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and City of Pittsburgh tax revenues. In order to fund much needed capital renovations of

our century-old system, we recently launched our first-ever capital campaign, *Libraries for Life*.

Current sources of public support must not be eroded, and new alternatives must be explored especially through increased private fundraising and building our limited endowment to address both operating and capital needs. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh must continue to operate as a responsible financial steward of the public and private funding it receives maximizing return on investment and justifying consumer support for the tax based revenue and private donations on which it depends. CLP must be accountable to its funding sources and regularly communicate about our responsible use of library resources.

**GOAL: Funding and Advocacy**

*Initiative: Strengthen relationships with major operational public funding sources, including the Allegheny Regional Asset District, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County, and City of Pittsburgh, to ensure they are informed, confident supporters of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh operations and facilities.*

*Initiative: Complete goal of raising \$55 million for capital campaign by 2008 in order to continue neighborhood library revitalization program.*

*Initiative: Increase annual giving to reach 10% of total annual operating budget revenues by 2010.*

*Initiative: Steward the growth of Carnegie Library's endowment.*

Beyond contributions to fund library operations, we rely on our customers to be responsible users of the services and facilities that are provided. An ongoing two-way relationship with our customers enables the library to provide needed resources and requires customers to use these resources appropriately. To protect our ability to provide free access to information for all, the library must balance its commitment to good customer service with effective policies and procedures. We must guide and enforce customer borrowing privileges and behaviors in library spaces across the system. In doing so, both provider and recipient can mutually expect and receive the best library service.

**GOAL: Responsibility**

*Initiative: Update lending/borrowing policies and consistently apply them to ensure that all customers receive a standard level of service across the system and are subject to the same rules and regulations.*

## **Our Role as Community Resource Center**

Carnegie Library's facilities have evolved into community resource centers that serve as gathering and meeting places for adults and children. Each library provides specialized programs for children ranging from early literacy experiences for parents and young children to homework assistance. CLP's facilities also serve as venues where seniors or teens may spend enriching time with their peers. Each library is an important community anchor that provides universal access to literature, culture, art, music, history, business, and technology including access to the Internet. No wonder the library has become that "third place" next to home and work where people turn to read quietly among other browsers, share in conversation with a neighbor over coffee, enjoy a library storytime, or learn from a business program.

Andrew Carnegie envisioned his libraries as centers of community life. Where libraries were once known for quiet, individualized activity, today's libraries attract large numbers of daycares, school groups, and other civic and community-based organizations. Perhaps the most remarkable validation for the library's role as a community resource is the number and variety of community groups that use the facilities. In 2005, 4,500 different groups with almost 70,000 in attendance participated in programs held across all library locations; and more than 3,000 groups with 35,000 in attendance held meetings or events in our meeting rooms. As library spaces are improved with each renovated facility, demand for use of the space has grown. CLP must address this demand by balancing equal access concerns with library priorities about the most productive use of space as a resource that promotes civic engagement on issues important to the community.

### **GOAL: Responsibility**

*Initiative: Review current practices and policies that focus on individual and/or group use of library space as well as current behavior policy. Develop and implement consistent policies that address the goal of providing equal access to the library's facilities and services.*

## **How We Engage Our Customers:**

### **Staff Expertise**

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh employs a staff of professional librarians and paraprofessionals knowledgeable about our collections and resources that are available in various formats. Many are subject specialists with extensive expertise in a specific area while others are generalists able to assist customers with various reference and readers advisory needs. CLP's experienced staff helps customers navigate the often intricate information pathways, in person, over the phone, and via the Internet. With the overwhelming volume of information available, they also provide invaluable assistance

in prioritizing, quantifying, and evaluating information. From the customer services staff that helps customers check out their materials and manage their accounts, to the shipping staff that transports more than three million items annually throughout the county, CLP staff in its entirety has a commitment to customer service rarely seen in any public service or private retail organization. CLP staff is the keystone to the success of this effective and efficient library operation. Their value to the organization will be supported through the creation of responsive human resources programs, procedures, training and development, and active performance management.

### **GOAL: Staffing**

*Initiative: Build an internal human resource function to provide more focused and responsive human resources system to support effective library operations.*

*Initiative: Build and sustain the highest quality and caliber of staff that is reflective of the community we serve through targeted recruitment and retention strategies.*

*Initiative: Develop ongoing and structured training and development programs for staff at all levels.*

*Initiative: Create a succession plan to address both pending retirements and decrease in number of individuals entering the library profession to ensure that skill sets and knowledge are effectively transferred and maintained.*

### **Programming**

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh frequently engages the community through a variety of program offerings. Library programming has traditionally come in many shapes and sizes such as storytimes geared to children of different ages, business programs, health and wellness series, book talks, computer classes, chess clubs, and music programs. One might argue that the library could offer a program on any topic in the name of lifelong learning; however, limited resources warrant a closer look at the types of programs the library offers, particularly with regard to adult programming. While customers have indicated a desire for more programs, their attendance at existing adult programs has been unpredictable. Whether better marketing of programs is needed or topical programs of wider interest could be offered, CLP needs to ensure that the time and resources used in sponsoring programs aligned with our priorities are generating the appropriate level of interest and audience support. All program offerings should be used as a vehicle for promoting the Library's resources and value.

**GOAL: Responsibility**

*Initiative: Develop and implement guidelines for general programming priorities for children, teens and adults.*

**Partnerships/Collaborations**

CLP's involvement in the community has always been widespread. From neighborhood library storytimes and the BLAST (Bringing Libraries and Schools Together) partnership with the Pittsburgh Public Schools to VITA volunteers providing tax assistance, participation in community development organizations and Summer Reading Extravaganza sponsorship, opportunities abound for creative partnerships. However CLP must ensure that it is fulfilling its mission when we decide to host a particular program or participate in another organization's event or pursue a joint grant funding opportunity. To do so, CLP has launched a systemwide community engagement process to better understand our relationships with the communities we serve, define priorities and maximize partnership opportunities. CLP will be proactive in seeking out meaningful partnerships to establish relationships with other organizations that address our core strengths in some way and positively impact the service levels of all parties. Partnerships could focus on children's services, programming and outreach opportunities, collections/preservation, technology, staff training, or marketing and development initiatives. New partnerships will be key as we build a systematic referral network of individuals and organizations to respond to customer requests that we are no longer able to satisfy in-house.

**GOAL: Responsibility**

*Initiative: Implement the recommendations of the Community Engagement process systemwide to better understand and articulate our relationships with the communities served, define priorities and maximize partnership opportunities.*

**Marketing/Communication**

The success of Carnegie Library largely depends on how well-informed our community is about the library's services and programs. Effective communication and marketing of the library's resources are crucial to the library's vitality. CLP's economic impact study completed in 2006 has been one positive step toward communicating the tremendous benefit, both economic and social, that Carnegie Library brings to the region. The more

residents know about the role of the library and the value it brings, the greater the library's visibility will be as a community stakeholder. As visibility increases, the library will have greater opportunities for increased hours of operations, increased usage of resources and increased funding for critical projects. Communications to both internal and external audiences will promote library programs, services and mission and will result in satisfied and better educated customers, increased use of core services, well-informed and empowered CLP employees, increased governmental and public funding, and increased private donations.

**GOAL: Funding and Advocacy; Staffing**

*Initiative: Develop and implement an external marketing and communications plan that results in increased use and financial support of library operations.*

*Initiative: Develop a grass-roots communications plan that incorporates individuals and community groups in serving as advocates for the library and engages the community in actively supporting library initiatives.*

*Initiative: Develop more timely, thorough and direct internal communications to ensure well-informed and empowered employees.*

**Technology**

Technology drives everything the library does to improve services to our customers as well as our own internal operations. Customers use computers in the library to access the catalog, CLP's website, the Internet, email, databases, inter-library loan services, and library account management services. Many use the library's electronic resources from their home or work computers and increasingly from personal handheld communication devices. The ease with which the public can access information or reserve materials electronically from any library in Allegheny County has created a well-used and seamless operation. Our renovated locations are being equipped with wireless technology so that customers can use their personal laptops when they visit rather than waiting in the queue to access a public computer. As the use of personal communication devices grows, more people are accessing downloadable audio and video formats from the library.

Technology has been used to develop dynamic signage within some of our libraries to promote library services and programs and publicize other information. Streaming video capabilities have been added to our website to enhance information access. Internally, the library has significantly improved its own data management capabilities with new business intelligence software giving us greater ability to make informed decisions based on good data. Given the scope and pace of technological change in recent years, it is hard to predict what innovations might be next; however, Carnegie Library will utilize

proven technology to provide innovative and useful services to library users and create more efficient and effective library operations. Technology initiatives will focus on customer service enhancements to improve ease of access to library services, especially account management services, catalog functionality, CLP web site improvements, and cost-saving initiatives.

**GOAL: Technology and Technical Services**

*Initiative: Evaluate appropriateness of new technologies to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness of library tools to access information.*

*Initiative: Work with eiNetwork to expand the functionality of technologies to streamline customer service.*

*Initiative: Increase usability and relevance of CLP web site through efficient content management, search functionality, and design.*

*Initiative: Continuously evaluate new technologies and software that will enable CLP to reduce operating costs or achieve greater efficiencies.*