Think Again.

A Multi-year Transformation Plan

Providence Public Library
STRATEGIC PLAN

same mission, new world

The Providence Public Library Board of Trustees authorized the hiring of consultant Bob Burakoff of Burakoff Associates to begin the Strategic Planning work. The Library team consisted of:

Board Chairman Robert Taylor

Executive Director Jack Martin

Trustee Elizabeth Debs

Assistant Director Kay Ellen Bullard

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Literacy and Learning at the Library

For 15 years, the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI) based at PPL, has consistently achieved national recognition as a free program offering English as a Second Language, citizenship preparation, workforce development, digital literacy and adult literacy services at public libraries throughout Rhode Island. A hallmark of RIFLI is its ability to adapt and evolve, developing new programs to meet the needs of the community.

Teen Tech Squad Pilot

Members of PPL's newly piloted "Teen Tech Squad" were trained in digital photography, videography, and audio recording — all leading to the conceptualization and creation of their neighborhood profile as an open-source digital exhibition.
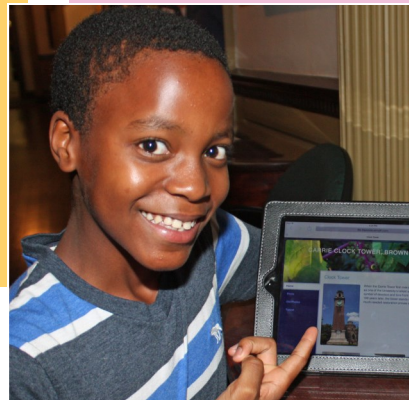
Whale Guitar Debut *(played by jazz vocalist Michelle Cruz)*

Having worked with the designers The Whale Guitar for more than a year as they and friends used the Library's Nicholson Whaling Collection for inspiration to create their one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted electric guitar, PPL was thrilled to host The Whale Guitar Exhibit as well as an opening reception and closing performance featuring the guitar, the artists/musicians, and their supporters.

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Jack Martin, Executive Director & Robert Taylor, Library Board of Trustees Chairman

Same Mission, New World

Adaptation is a constant for all libraries. The past decade has particularly challenged public libraries everywhere to *rethink* -- both how to stay abreast of community needs, and how to stay relevant as a valued, cornerstone learning institution. The technology revolution has transformed reality for libraries, dictating both how they function, as well as actual library services. However, it has not altered the necessity for a vibrant public library at the center of its community.

Securing Our Place

With this strategic plan, Providence Public Library (PPL) seeks to stay true to its mission as a premiere free, personal learning place for all Rhode Islanders, while also transforming to reflect not only where libraries are today, but more critically where *we want to be* over the next decade.

With this plan, we envision transforming PPL into a major educational, cultural and community resource for the people of Providence and Rhode Island. Our library will be a learning place where users of all ages can come for lasting experiences; where learners will have opportunities to connect and work with like-minded people, as well as access information and technology that enable them to achieve their goals in a nurturing, creative environment. We will be a learning place that continually adapts and innovates to meet our community's changing needs.

We will strive to be the best free public library we can in the digital age by becoming the city's number one collaborator, growing as a vibrant network of staff, volunteers and partners, launching high-impact programming, and increasing library use and engagement through intensive outreach and relationship-building. We will expand our digital presence to support and extend our programs, manage our collections to maximize their use, and broaden our financial base to ensure long-term sustainability.
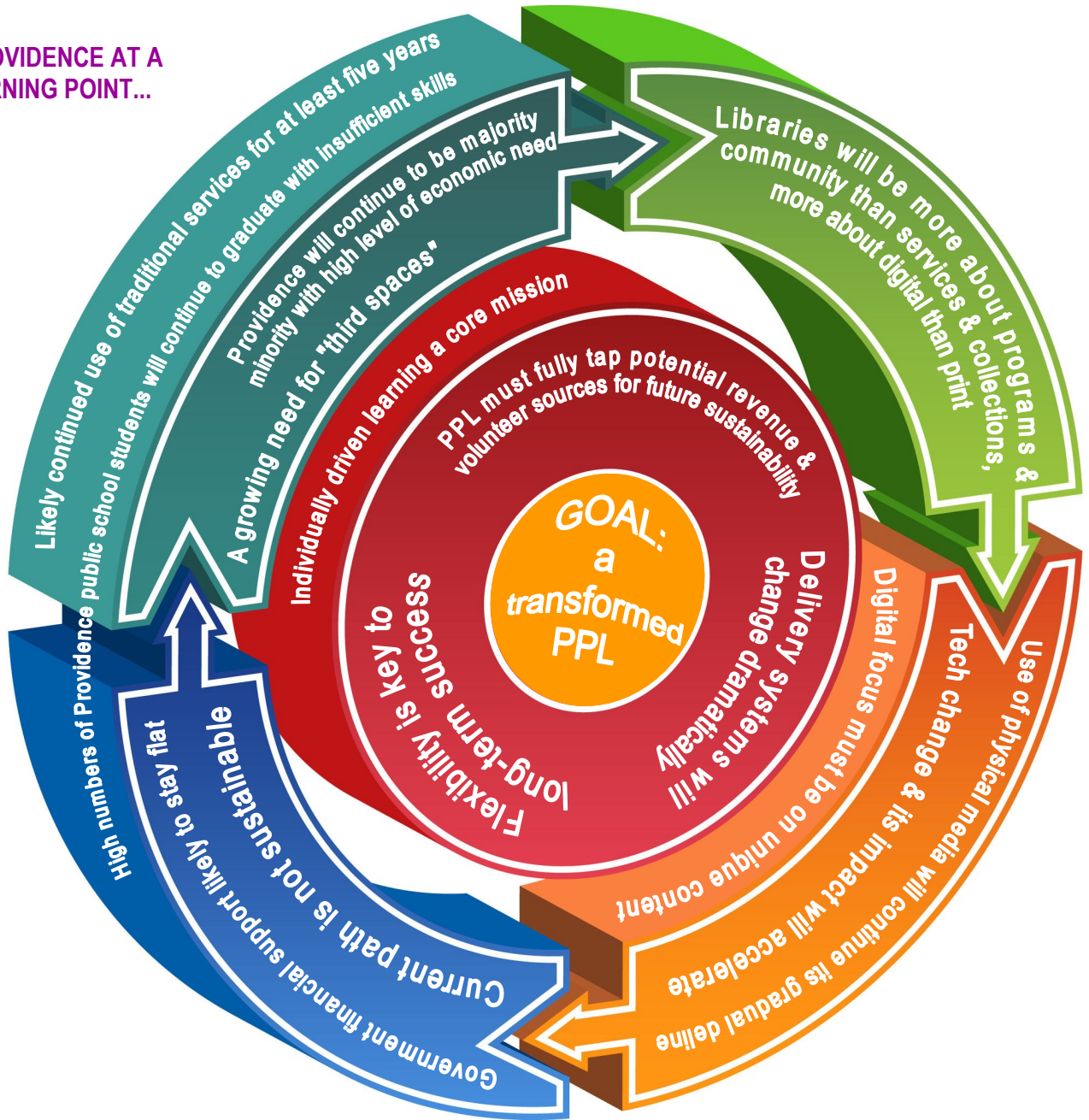
Jack Martin
Executive Director

Robert Taylor
Board Chair

We began the process with certain underlying assumptions.

Think Again.
CASE FOR TRANSFORMATION

...YIELDS OPPORTUNITIES

Programs

By focusing our resources on high impact programs and potentially larger audiences, we maximize our resources. The number and variety of potential programming partners also maximizes resources and increases potential attendance. We continue to collect scant information on who uses the Library and why. Emphasis on high impact programs (which increase frequency of contact with participants) will allow us to gather more demographic info and measure that impact more effectively, which should in turn lead to increased grants and donations.

Facility

Having made improvements to the historic 1900 spaces in 2013, we have the opportunity to refurbish and rethink the public spaces as part of the sprinkler installation project required by end of 2017.

Staff

After several years of fiscal challenges, the Library is re-emerging with stabilized budgets, positive PR, and the ability to begin planning for high level, long-term change. Future staff will be hired in close alignment with the Strategic Plan.

Finances

The event rental enterprise has proven essential to our fiscal health and provides us with a template for moving forward with other revenue generating enterprises, also essential to our continued fiscal stability.

Book circulation has decreased, while e-book continues to rise. Borrowing of our more unique items remains steady. Roughly 40 percent of our cataloged titles have had no circulation in seven years. This means some can be discarded for space reallocation; others can be formally accessioned, eventually into Special Collections, resulting in a remaining

Usage

general collection that "earns" its shelving through more frequent use. AV and CD delivery methods are proliferating, greatly reducing the need for AV budgets beyond consortium (OSL) purchases. Also, in person general reference continues its slow decline, allowing us time to transition to additional online services and specialized reference services related to our Special Collections.

Access

Although parking continues to be a challenge, the Library has ready access from Downcity by foot, bus and car. Partnerships with local parking vendors will continue to prove fruitful.

PROVIDENCE AT A TURNING POINT

The Community: Key Strengths and Challenges

Majority Minority – Minorities account for more than 50 percent of the population citywide. Although Hispanics are by far the largest minority, there are also Black Americans, Africans, Asians, Russians and other ethnicities.

Array of arts organizations – The city has a national reputation as arts-friendly; there are a variety of arts organizations serving literally all ages.

Multiple colleges, universities and satellite campuses within a small city radius. Brown University, Rhode Island College, Providence College, Rhode Island School of Design and Johnson & Wales University have main campuses in Providence. The University of Rhode Island, Roger Williams University and Community College of Rhode Island have satellite campuses located in the city.

Economically challenged – The city continues to face economic challenges, including the specter of bankruptcy. Rhode Island continues to rank near or at the top of unemployment rates. The high school graduation rate continues averages 71 percent. Some schools are achieving far above this, but others are far below.

POPULATION
(2010 Census and American Community Survey)

Total population = 178,042/Providence & 1.05M/Rhode Island
Median resident age = 28.7/Providence & 39.4/Rhode Island

	City	State		City	State
Below poverty level	47,500	123,396	Minority population	111,132	248,883
High School grad	23,900	199,935	Non minority	66,910	803,686
Less than High School	27,232	115,798	Foreign born	50,159	136,356
BA or higher	50,728	329,699			
Graduation rate 2013	71%	80%			
Median household			Unemployment		
Income (2012)	$33,989	$54,554	(Sept. 2014)	9.7%	7.6%
Per capita income	$21,215	$30,005			

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CASE FOR TRANSFORMATION

PROVIDENCE AT A TURNING POINT

The Library Partnership Landscape

IMMEDIATE Neighborhood:

Trinity Repertory Theater
Trinity Rep/Brown MFA Theater
Black Box Theatre
AS220 - Gallery, Studios/workshops
Dunkin' Donuts Center
Convention Center & Tourism Bureau
University of Rhode Island, Providence
Roger Williams University Satellite Campus
Rhode Island Department of Education offices
Restaurants
Providence Place Mall
Movie Theaters mainstream
Apartment complexes/Condos

DOWNCITY:

Johnson & Wales downtown campus and Library
Providence Performing Arts Center
Veterans Auditorium
Restaurants
Movie Theaters, independent
Rhode Island School of Design Library
City Government — including Arts & Culture/Tourism
State Government
Bookstores
Coffee Shops
Condos
Hotels
Charter High Schools

DOWNCITY' S EDGE / within 1 Mile:

Movie Theaters, independent
Brown University campus & libraries
Rhode Island School of Design campus
and Art Museum
Rhode Island Historical Society and Library
Providence College
Providence Children's Museum

REST OF CITY:

Rhode Island College
9 Providence Community Library Branches
Johnson & Wales University Harborside
Campus and Museum
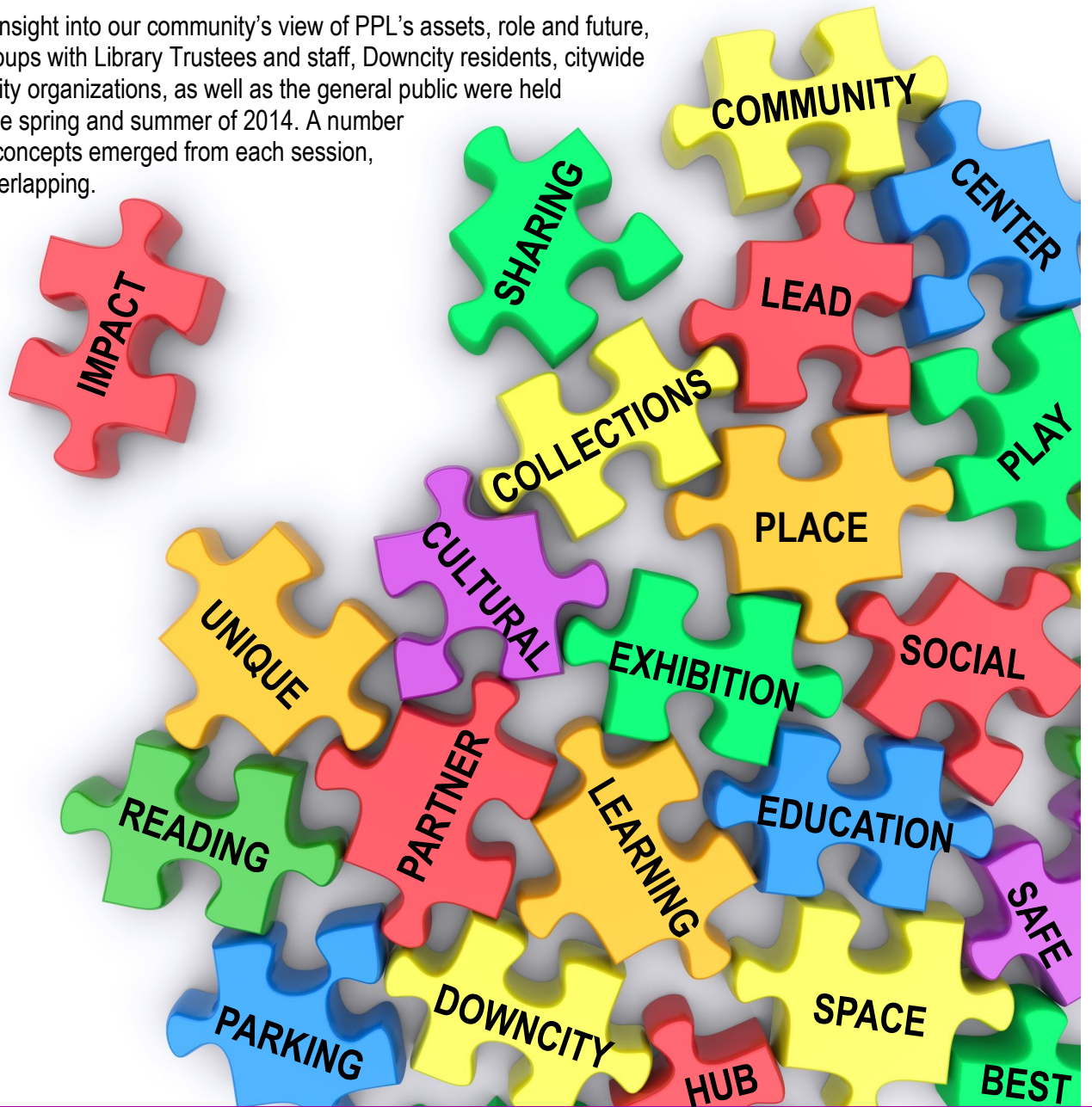Roger Williams Park and Natural History Museum

The Cultural Corridor

The City has embarked on an initiative called "OUR TOWN / Washington Street Cultural Corridor Planning." In simple terms, it envisions an arts and culture corridor the length of Washington Street. One end is at Kennedy Plaza, anchored by Burnside park and City Hall and the other is anchored by Providence Public Library, Trinity Repertory Theater, and AS220. If the three anchor organizations could form a campus within the corridor vision, it could provide cross promotional and program initiatives. The Library has representation on the committee working on the initiative and is hopeful it will yield quantifiable results in the future. A document in the Appendices gives the initial outline of the initiative.

Think Again.

COMMUNITY VISION

To gain insight into our community's view of PPL's assets, role and future, focus groups with Library Trustees and staff, Downcity residents, citywide community organizations, as well as the general public were held during the spring and summer of 2014. A number of main concepts emerged from each session, many overlapping.

IMPACT
SHARING
COMMUNITY
CENTER
LEAD
COLLECTIONS
PLAY
PLACE
CULTURAL
UNIQUE
EXHIBITION
SOCIAL
PARTNER
LEARNING
EDUCATION
READING
SAFE
PARKING
DOWNCITY
SPACE
HUB
BEST

Think Again.
TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

1. DEVELOP NEW LEARNING INITIATIVES FOR MAXIMUM USER VALUE AND IMPACT
PPL is likely to have greater positive impacts on its users through interactive, transformative programs/services than through the passive lending/borrowing services it's offered traditionally. In addition to offering high-quality learning experiences, these programs must attract more users to be truly high-impact. PPL's program portfolio should include many offerings that draw upon its unique collections. Finally, the public's needs will change at an accelerating rate. PPL has to stay out in front of those changes to be credible as a knowledge resource.

2. GROW PPL AS A *NETWORK*
This work is too ambitious for a single organization's staff, resources, creativity or reach. Up to the present, PPL has focused internally on building its menu of activities. This focus needs to shift towards strong, external relations with other Providence, Rhode Island, and national organizations. The network model will reach much more deeply into Providence / Rhode Island's institutions and communities than 'going it alone.'

3. INCREASE USE AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OUTREACH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
Use is a big piece of PPL's mission impact and a major metric for funders. Also, people attract more people. There's a science for acquiring and retaining users.

4. STAFF IS PPL'S CORE RESOURCE; VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THEM AND EXTEND THEIR REACH
To be effective, staff need to be recognized for their work and receive the full support of PPL. The conditions of their work here must be fair and encourage professional growth. One of the most important ways for staff to grow and for PPL to increase its impact is through the use of volunteers. By tapping volunteers, staff increase both the horsepower and skills available to them.

5. BECOME A PLACE THAT REPRESENTS TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION
One of PPL's biggest draws will be the in-person interaction it offers as a 'third space.' Above all, the new PPL will be a place where interesting people learn and do interesting things, and this should be reflected in its appearance.

6. ENHANCE DIGITAL LIBRARY AS ADJUNCT TO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
PPL online should be an indispensable part of the PPL experience, not a separate entity in a different market. Un-limited worldwide competition exists for content/tools unrelated to PPL or Rhode Island.

7. BROADEN AND DEEPEN SUPPORT BASE
This plan will require a quantum leap in PPL's ability to raise revenue.

Think Again.

OUTCOMES

1. DEVELOP NEW LEARNING INITIATIVES FOR MAXIMUM USER VALUE AND IMPACT

OUTCOMES

A. Provide education that connects users, collections, technology, and partners, and that has measurable value and impact.
- Make high-engagement, high-impact programs PPL's highest priority and the focus of constant R&D, entrepreneurship and investment
- Host fewer, but more PPL-relevant and better-attended one-off events
- Connect these new programs to the library's unique physical resources
- Provide individual technology that's ample and current, plus some "gee-whiz" gadgetry
- Staff will tap partners for program design and oversight, and volunteers for program delivery
- Pay special attention to programming that helps targeted populations succeed
- Encourage multiple low-cost experiments, then phase out the ones that don't work and invest more in the ones that do

B. Provide resources for incubation of creative and innovative start-ups, nonprofits, and other entrepreneurial enterprises
Create an in-house incubator for program R&D (PPL's and other non-profits')

C. Reinvigorate Collections to encourage wider, more varied usage.
Gradually reprioritize emphasis from physical to digital and from general collections to unique collections that more directly connect to programs and services

2. GROW PPL AS A *NETWORK*

OUTCOMES

A. Become Providence's best collaborator
- Staff will mobilize volunteers, partners and sponsors across org. boundaries to create working teams and other resources for specific projects
- Motivate team members with reciprocal benefits, growth and fun
- Managing external partners, people and other resources will be a major staff activity
- Harness PPL's internal research expertise in service to the network
- Use unpaid media to create positive, high-profile brand recognition required for PPL's revenue, outreach, partnering and volunteer strategies
- Create an advisory board of partner organizations

3. INCREASE USE AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OUTREACH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

OUTCOMES

A. Focus resources on these 5 key audiences in the first 3-5 years: young children, teens, the art & design community, those needing workforce development, and Downcity residents, but not to the exclusion of others. Progressing through this 10-year strategy, we will continue to identify key audiences.

- Segmentation is the key to bringing in & engaging more users
- Build interest through programming…build engagement through people
- Acknowledge shifting community demographics and connect with diverse communities.
- Develop PPL's capacity for low-cost, high-touch outreach
- Create sub-identities that attract specific segments
- Smart, responsible collection and use of user data is required for all of the above

4. STAFF IS PPL'S CORE RESOURCE; VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THEM AND EXTEND THEIR REACH

OUTCOMES

A. Volunteer partners will play a major role in designing and delivering program content

- Partner with educational institutions to identify carefully selected, trained and supervised volunteers to help on program delivery
- A high-quality volunteer experience becomes an important secondary outcome for PPL
- Oversight and higher-level expertise provided by staff (a teach-the-teachers model)
- Transfer of competencies: PPL taps volunteer subject matter experts

B. Staff roles will shift to support our broadened educational goals

- PPL staff form the framework of the organization
- Build roles, jobs, compensation, benefits and training to support a healthy, happy, productive staff
- Staff role shifts from content expertise to include coach, collaborator, and connector
- Hire bright, friendly, info- and tech-savvy generalists as program developers and guides

5. BECOME A PLACE THAT REPRESENTS TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

OUTCOMES

A. Soft renovations to represent new directions without major construction costs

- Repurpose 150 Empire for program and revenue generation
- 1st priority: develop a critical mass of activity to avoid "first-at-the-party" syndrome
- Balance segment neighborhoods with public places where all users go
- Reconfigure the interior, piece by piece, to support specific uses
- Begin the shift from the Library as a book repository to a place for hands-on learning and creation

B. Plan for Major renovations in 2-3 years that fully incorporate new directions

- Identify spaces that will require big, up-front investment and "hard renovation"
- Build flexibility into the floor plan when possible
- Inside and outside design should reflect aspects of the new PPL's identity: learning, transformation, creativity, innovation, smart people, interesting activity, sense of humor, urban aesthetic, etc.
- Continue the shift from the library as a book repository to the place of high impact, measureable learning and creation.

6. ENHANCE DIGITAL LIBRARY AS ADJUNCT TO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES

A. Expand "home grown" digital resources for both content and as platform for building programmatic communities

- Increase investment and build out PPL online; focus it on PPL, its users, local public.
- Most important: increasing reach, use, interactivity & other functionality of PPL's program offerings
- Create community through online marketing; maintain it through social media
- Avoid building content or tools unrelated to PPL, its users, or local content
- Use common design, content, and people to integrate PPL online with the 150 Empire experience

B. Continue our commitment to providing no cost access to the Internet & online resources.

- Combine information/reference online access with computer lab access, to create a single Information commons service point

7. BROADEN AND DEEPEN SUPPORT BASE

OUTCOMES

A. Establish multiple revenue streams resulting in stable, predictable annual funding

- Create a menu of giving opportunities, and match different kinds of funders with different PPL uses
- Build a staff development function and strategy that draw on a wide range of fundraising models--with particular focus on major gifts, younger high-net-worth individuals, and corporate sponsorships
- Train all PPL staff to understand the link between revenue, new services & free services and to recognize revenue opportunities
- Enhance PPL boards to increase their effectiveness in fundraising
- Build governmental relationships
- Identify new revenue-generating activities
- Tap national and international funding opportunities
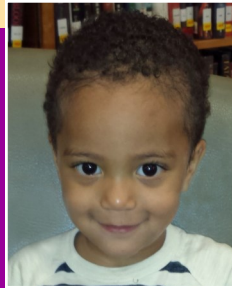
Think Again.
IMPLEMENTATION FY15 - FY17

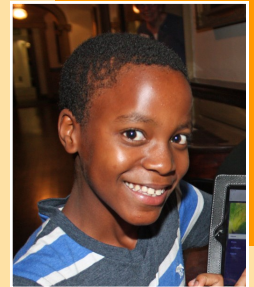|	EXPENDITURE DESCRIPTION	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
INSTITUTION	Development Director & Plan (Foundation Budget)	Half year	Annual	Annual
	Grant Writer	Half year	Annual	Annual
	Exhibition, Program & Collection Support	Half year	Annual	Annual
	Salaries Study & Increase	Half year	Annual	Annual
	Some Additional Library Open Hours		Est. 45 hrs	Est. 55 hrs
	Digitization Projects		Base amt	Base amt
	Volunteer Program			Begins
	Collections Management Support			Begins
	Director of Strategic Initiatives			Begins
	Staff Professional Development/Training			Base amt
	Pension Implementation			Begins
	Master Plan		One time	
	Soft Exhibition Space Expansion	One time		
	Soft Exterior Work	One time		
	150 Empire Soft Renovation		One time	
	Rebranding/Soft Web/Graphics	Partial	Partial	
TEENS & HIGH SCHOOL	Teen Specialist FT	Half year	Annual	Annual
	Connect Program(s) to Core/STEM		Begins	Annual
	Technology Garage and Support	Annual	Annual	Annual
	Pop up teen Space/Revitalize Room	One time		
	Expansion of Tech Garage, Stage 1 – Soft Reno	One time		
DOWN CITY	Major High Impact Learning Ventures And Smaller, Frequent Gatherings with both Social and Learning Components	Begins	Annual	Annual
ART & DESIGN	Exhibition Designer & Equipment	Begins	Annual	Annual
	Continue/Expand Special Collections Print Type Annual Events	Begins	Annual	Annual
	Materials		Begins	Annual
	Establish Updike Center			Begins
YOUNG CHILD	Early Education Specialist Into Operating Budget			Begins
ADULT LIT	Literacy Director Into Operating Budget			Begins
	Introduce Digital Badging			Begins
CAPITAL	Special Collections HVAC			One time
	Sprinklers — Mandatory			One time
	Roof — Mandatory			

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