

## Ripon Public Library

### Review of the 2008-2011 Long-Range Plan

**Introduction:** The basic idea behind this three-year plan is that the Ripon Public Library maintain and improve its ability to carry out its mission, which is to provide materials to service the informational, recreational, and educational needs of the community. But, in doing so, it should develop in a way that takes into account the changing nature of the times and, also, it should be more active and more visible as a community citizen and contributor to the building of our community.

*The Ripon Public Library strove to maintain the achieved goals of the previous long-range plan, especially those relating to the Wisconsin Public Library Standards. At the time the 2008-2011 plan was written, the library placed among the “moderate” level in one category, the “enhanced” level in six categories, and the “excellent” level in one category. The Standards were revised in August 2010. The library currently places among the “moderate” level in five categories, the “enhanced” level in two categories, and the “excellent” level in two categories.*

**Keeping up with the times:** One of the major challenges to libraries in these times is the individualization of access to information and intellectual recreation. The computer and the Internet allow individuals unprecedented personal access to information and entertainment in the privacy of their home. While this access seems infinite, it is actually limited by the person’s ability to manipulate the system and the sources of information that it can actually tap. It is also socially isolating. Libraries, on the other hand, have both a far better understanding of how to get maximum value from new technological systems and have access to far wider sources of information. The challenge, then, is both to insure that libraries are technologically equipped to meet expectations of the electronic age and to make people aware of the ways in which a public library can supplement their own individual access to information. Over the next three years the Library will enhance its ability to do both by carrying out the following plan.

1. *Technology Plan:* During the first year of this plan the Library staff will prepare an information technology plan that will be implemented and reviewed over the second and third years with the goal of insuring that the technological systems and access to information sources available both to the Library staff and to the public will meet existing expectations of an informed public. *Library staff created a spreadsheet of all computer-related equipment owned by the library, which includes the purchase date, warranty information, and basic information about the equipment. Since drastic technological advances in computer software and hardware are not currently occurring, equipment is being replaced as it fails rather than being replaced proactively.*
  - a. The plan will also provide for means of instruction in making maximum use of information technology. *Library staff have experimented with providing instruction in technology, such how to use the Internet, and have not yet developed an ideal model. Classes were taught in 2008 and individual instruction was offered in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The classes did not work well due to the varying levels of competency of attendees. Individual sessions were not focused enough in the beginning. Once the new Adult Services Librarian is acclimated, individual instruction will be offered on select topics, such as creating an email account.*
2. The Library’s *marketing plan* must include provisions for making the public aware of the Library’s resources in this regard. After a technology plan has been developed and implemented over the following two years, the Library will strive to publicize these changes during the third year. *The library publicized its general services, including*

*computer and database availability, in a 2009 flyer included in the water bills of Ripon residents. The library regularly sends press releases to local news organizations. The library also participates annually in Ripon College's freshmen orientation program, publicizing its services as well as volunteer opportunities.*

3. Any plans for *remodeling the Library* should include provisions for space for public access to its information technology. *The creation of the new Storytime room did not include such provisions because it did not fit the mission of that project. The design for the new young adult area on the main floor includes room for additional seating and outlets for patrons to plug in laptops or other electronic devices.*

**The Library as a community citizen:** The Library is a major part of the community infrastructure and also receives municipal financial support. Therefore, it is both inherent in its mission as well as in its obligations that the Library serve as community citizen by acting as a community center, by taking active roles in dealing with community challenges, and by cooperating with other municipal and community organizations. While our Library already has a good reputation among some people in this regard, over the past three years it has broadened its activities in this area and made them far more visible.

1. *Cooperation with other community organizations:* During the first year of this plan, members of the Library staff and Board members will identify community organizations with which mutually advantageous partnering arrangements might be made. By the second year it will organize meetings with these groups to discuss partnering opportunities. By the third year it will develop plans to carry out as many of these opportunities as resources will allow. *Cooperation with other community organizations has not been as organized as stated in the long-range plan. Instead, cooperation has happened organically as opportunities have arisen. The library has been partnering with the Ripon Historical Society for a number of years, having digitized the Pedrick Papers and currently hosting its obituary index. For the past two years, Ripon Medical Center has promoted the library's resources as part of its "Lighten Your Load" program and the library has set up a special display for the duration of the program. The library has partnered with the Chamber of Commerce annually for the Dickens of a Christmas event and is currently working on a "Shop Local" project which would also promote the city's resources. The library partners with the Ripon College Office of Community Engagement on events throughout the year and also attracts volunteers through the office.*
  - a. The Library board will review its current meeting room policies to determine if any changes could be made to make Library meeting facilities more available to community organizations. Any changes would be carried out during the second year of the plan and reviewed for effectiveness during the third year of the plan. *The library reviewed the meeting room policy in early 2009 and decided to discontinue charging for-profit businesses for use of the Silver Creek and Nash Rooms in order to encourage use of the rooms. Anecdotally, room use has increased greatly since this change, both by businesses and by non-profit organizations.*
2. *Cooperation with other libraries:* During the first year of this plan the Library staff will institute semi-annual meetings of representatives from the school district and Ripon College Libraries to discuss ways in which they can coordinate efforts and avoid possible duplication. After the initial meetings, the Library staff and board will determine how best to proceed in the second and third years of the plan based on the responses of the other libraries. *Turnover at all of the organizations, including the Ripon Public Library,*

*has made it more difficult build momentum on cooperative efforts. Director Bongers met with Ripon College librarians a few times in 2009 and 2010 to discuss resource sharing. At this time, there do not appear to be many opportunities to coordinate efforts due to the different missions of the organizations. The Director, Adult and Children's librarians have met and communicated with Ripon Area School District librarians many times over the past three years. There have been many program collaborations. The most recent was to begin a book club for teens in Spring 2011, with the public library facilitating and the school library hosting.*

3. *Center for assistance to residents for whom English is a second language:* One of this community's more serious challenges is to meet the needs of its growing body of residents for whom English is a second language and assist them in their efforts to integrate into this community. While many in our community are willing to offer assistance there is no community organization that is acting as a central point to coordinate these efforts or to supply these new residents with information. Over the next three years the Library Board and Staff will explore ways that the Library can serve as such a central point. To start this process, the Library Board and the Library staff will do the following:
  - a. During the first year of this plan Library staff/board will use existing contacts with members of our community to create a focus group of residents for whom English is a second language who will provide advice on how the Library can better serve these members of our community. During the second year of the plan the Library will strive to implement the recommendations of the focus group. During the third year of the plan the Library will review the actions taken and determine how to proceed. *In May 2009, Director Bongers attended Family Night at Murray Park, an outreach event for Hispanic students and their families. Attendance was poor and little feedback on library services was received. It was suggested by one of the moderators that a notebook for comments about library services be placed in the Spanish collection. This was done, but no comments were received. Additions to the youth and adult Spanish collections have been made by staff over the past three years.*

**Enhancing library facilities, services, and visibility:** For the plans noted above to be successful it will be necessary to reexamine the Library's existing physical facilities, staff size and allocation, and marketing and outreach practices. During the next three years the library will carry out the following planning in this regard.

1. *Library expansion:* Since the provisions of this plan as well as normal growth of Library collection and services could lead to an eventual expansion of the Library, as soon as this plan is approved the Library Board will make provisions to allow for the establishment of communications with the City Manager and City Council to coordinate ideas for the use of the former Smucker property adjacent to the Library. *In early 2009, the library worked with architectural firm Angus Young to develop a design for a library expansion that would add approximately 5,000 square feet to the main floor. The library board presented the findings to the Common Council in late 2009 and requested that a parcel of land to the west of the library, measuring approximately 100 feet west of the library's lot line, be reserved for future library expansion. The Council did not take any action at the time.*
2. *Remodeling of the existing building:* During the first year of this plan the Library staff will develop an outline plan for remodeling the existing facility that might better support

the services provided by the library. This could include rationalization of workspaces, such as combining mending, binding, and withdrawing of books in the same space. During the second year of the plan the board will explore the feasibility of the outline plan for remodeling. During the third year of the plan the board will decide whether to proceed with any of the suggestions and, if so, either consider them as part of the next long-range plan and begin drafting it or begin to carry them out. *It became apparent almost immediately after developing the long-range plan that there was a need for a dedicated storytime room. Storytimes had been held in the Nash Room, and it was not convenient for the Children's Librarian nor the best use of the room. A design was developed in 2009 and construction took place in 2010, with use of the room commencing in September 2010. A design has also been developed for a young adult area on the main floor. Four grants have unsuccessfully been applied for and the project is on hold indefinitely.*

3. *Marketing and outreach plan:* If financial resources become available, the Library should consider hiring a part-time person to deal with marketing and outreach as well as serve at the desk. The main purposes of this position would be to coordinate all marketing efforts and press releases, as well as handle outreach programs such as homebound delivery. It would free up the time of the Adult and Children's Services Librarians, who currently handle all of the marketing and press releases for their programs, to be able to focus on other professional tasks such as technology instruction and investigate new initiatives for the library. If such a person is hired, he or she would take the lead in developing a marketing plan for the Library. *After more discussion with the Adult and Children's Librarians, it was agreed that it would be less time consuming for them to continue to do their own marketing and outreach rather than to hire someone for those purposes. Instead, it was suggested that a part-time clerk be hired to relieve some of the Librarians' desk time. The board agreed and in 2009 a part-time clerk was hired for ten hours per week. This has proven to be very beneficial, allowing more programs to be planned, including a two-day Halloween Extravaganza in 2010 that received wonderful feedback from participants.* In the meantime, during the first year of this plan the Library staff will complete the following initial steps in creating a marketing plan:
  - a. The existing website will be analyzed and remodeled for greater effectiveness. *The website was completely redesigned in 2009, with assistance from Winnefox.*
  - b. A new logo will be developed to be coordinated with the logo being used in our community's marketing plan. *A new logo was designed by Winnefox staff and adopted by the library board in 2009.*

At the end of the first year the board will determine how to proceed with the marketing plan during the second and third years, based on the financial resources available at that time.

*Adopted by the Ripon Public Library Board of Trustees on June 24, 2008*