



**NC
RL** NORTH CENTRAL
REGIONAL LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2021




IDENTITY: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

On November 8, 1960, rural residents of our five-county service area voted to create a regional library system. For the previous two years, the Columbia River Regional Library Demonstration Project had been operating bookmobiles in the area – providing access to books and building support for public library service.

On January 19, 1961, the first board meeting of our newly formed Inter-County Rural Library District was held, and the first item on the agenda was adopting a name. The Chelan County library district had been using the name North Central Regional Library, and as the new group would be taking over its headquarters, keeping the name made sense.

Fifty-eight years later, one thing has become abundantly clear: our name is confusing. From newspaper articles dating back as far as the 1970s to current partnerships with other organizations – we are almost always referred to incorrectly. While the word “Regional” gets moved around or sometimes even forgotten, “North Central Washington” always sneaks its way in.



NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL LIBRARY

We understand. The phrase “North Central Washington” means something to people. NCW is a unique place, with a unique identity – and we’re proud to call it home to our 30 libraries, 2 bookmobiles, and mail order service.

Our new name embraces this place that we all have in common and reflects our commitment to serve you. Right here. Just as we always have.

NCW LIBRARIES

This change will take time. Please be patient with us as we slowly roll out our new name in our physical and digital spaces.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD



Dana Schmidt,
Board Chair
2017-2018

Andrew Carnegie famously said, “A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people.” We wholeheartedly agree.

We are proud that the 30 public libraries and two bookmobiles we operate in North Central Washington are connecting our diverse populations with vital resources and opportunities. They are bringing people together to create strong and resilient communities.

It is our desire that every person who enters our libraries feels welcome, and every person engaging with us online is able to easily navigate the myriad of resources we offer.



Gail Huntley,
Board Chair 2019

We feel privileged to have worked alongside the individuals whose practical and visionary insights shaped this plan. We know it will provide us with an invaluable guide over the next three years.

Dana Schmidt Gail Huntley

Cheers,
Dana & Gail

Working on the strategic plan required us all to cast aside assumptions and doubts, stretch our imaginations, and think about how we want our patrons to experience their library.

DENISE SOROM, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Barbara Walters
Director

Our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan is firmly rooted in the idea that libraries play a vital role in our communities. They provide free access to education, information, and a wealth of resources in a safe environment. Libraries are a lifeline – not a luxury – for many people.

Over the next three years, your library system will strive to fulfill this promise. This plan will guide our decision making. It will focus our work and keep us energized as we expand our offerings, build partnerships, and find ways to serve more people than ever before.

It is critical work, and it will continue long after this plan ends. Our long-term goal, which we are beginning here, is nothing less than to be a library system that evolves alongside you. We want to continue listening so that we can become ever more attuned to the needs of our patrons, our communities, and our world at large.

I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who helped make this plan a reality. From elected officials and community leaders, to staff members and residents, this is our common vision. Let's turn it into reality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Walters".

Warm Regards,
Barbara

BOARD MEMBERS

GAIL HUNTLEY, CHAIR ————— GRANT COUNTY
KATHLEEN ALLSTOT ————— GRANT COUNTY
JIM BRUCKER ————— OKANOGAN COUNTY
ALEC MCKAY ————— DOUGLAS COUNTY

DENISE SOROM ————— CHELAN COUNTY
JIM MITCHELL ————— CHELAN COUNTY
KATHERINE MEADE ————— FERRY COUNTY

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

Together with our new mission and vision, our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan provides a framework for the future of our library system. And there is a lot to look forward to.

The five strategic directions, ten objectives, and twenty-five goals we have adopted comprise an ambitious plan that will keep us motivated and focused over the next three years. We will be strengthening our core services, building community partnerships, and aligning our resources to provide more than we ever have before.

IDENTITY / MISSION

Long Term

VISION / DIRECTIONS

Medium Term

OBJECTIVES / GOALS

Short Term

This strategic plan gives us a roadmap for delivering services to all of the unique communities in NCW.

KATHLEEN ALLSTOT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TEAM PROCESS

We began our strategic planning process in late 2016 by looking outward. We developed a survey that we distributed at our libraries and online, and our librarians held one-on-one interviews with 158 community leaders, partners, and stakeholders. We surveyed and interviewed members of our staff, and sent all of the data we gathered to be analyzed by 501 Consultants.

Planning was put on hold during a change of leadership, and we resumed our work in the spring of 2018. We formed a strategic planning team to review the community data we had gathered, research state and national trends in public library service, and begin developing a framework for our plan. Our Board of Trustees used this information to draft new mission and vision statements. In November, nearly 200 staff members gathered to provide feedback and generate ideas – which were then refined by the strategic planning team, the administrative team, and at least one representative from every department.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

- Barbara Walters, *Executive Director*
- Angela Morris, *Director of Public Service*
- Kim Neher, *Project Manager*
- Aaron Payne, *Senior Graphic Designer*
- Courtney Tiffany, *Wenatchee Branch Manager*
- Daniel Klayton, *Tonasket Librarian*
- Emily Patterson, *Curlew Librarian*
- Suzy Nieto, *Entiat Librarian*
- Luke Ellington, *Bookmobile Outreach Manager*
- Dana Schmidt, *Former Board Member*
- Denise Sorom, *Board Member*
- Gail Huntley, *Board Member*

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

- Brianna More, *Human Resources Manager*
- Chad Roseburg, *Associate Director of IT*
- Matt Neumann, *IT & Systems Manager*
- Abby Osborn, *Children's Services Manager*
- Jessica Lynch, *Teen Services Manager*
- Amanda Brack, *Adult Services Manager*
- Erin Fischer, *Staff Development Coordinator*
- Sarah Fletcher, *Library Systems Manager*
- Betsey Stahler, *Collection Development Manager*
- Anni Ponder, *Bilingual Outreach*
- Heather Inczauskis, *STEM Outreach Coordinator*
- Aaron Loeffelbein, *Branch Group Manager*
- ...and ALL NCRL STAFF!

READINGS

- » 501 Consultants. *NCRL Survey Report*. March 30, 2018.
- » Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*. Washington, D.C., The Aspen Institute, October 2014.
- » Center for the Future of Libraries. *Trends*. American Library Association, www.ala.org/tools/future/trends. Accessed August 2018.
- » Lance, Keith Curry. "America's Star Libraries." *Library Journal*, vol. 142, no. 20, 2017, pp. 34.
- » United for Libraries. *A Library Board's Practical Guide to Strategic Planning*. Bryn Mawr, PA, United for Libraries: A division of the American Library Association, March 2016.

MISSION

The foundation for everything that we do.

Connecting the
people of North
Central Washington
to vital resources
and opportunities
that foster individual
growth and strengthen
communities.



Cashmere Library's Beer & Bots event, held at Milepost 111 Brewery in Cashmere.



Snake education program at the Winthrop Library with a U.S. Forest Service snake expert.

VISION

The future we can achieve, together.

You Trust Us

We are a trusted resource for every member of our diverse communities. We provide you with exceptional customer service from an unbiased perspective and always respect your right to privacy and intellectual freedom.

You Learn With Us

When you need information, we can help you find it. Whether you're teaching your child to read, learning a new language, developing a new skill, or updating your resume, our robust collections and compelling programs make lifelong learning fun.

You Grow With Us

We keep you connected to our changing world and your own curiosity. We listen and respond to your wants and needs with dependable and evolving services, entertaining and thought-provoking content, culturally enriching activities, and access to new technologies.

We Build Community Together

We celebrate the diversity of North Central Washington, bringing together people of all backgrounds and from all walks of life. Our welcoming and comfortable facilities provide a place for you to gather and exchange ideas – and we are just as likely to meet you out in the community as in one of our libraries. We work alongside you to build partnerships, facilitate connections, and contribute to your community's sense of identity and civic vitality.



Community discussion with author and musician Dar Williams at the NCRL Distribution Center.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

To achieve our vision, we will...

- EMBRACE INNOVATION & CURIOSITY ————— 1
- ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE ————— 2
- ACTIVELY LISTEN & RESPOND ————— 3
- CULTIVATE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ————— 4
- STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH ————— 5

These strategic directions take our mission and vision statements on a transformative journey. They provide clear priorities for the work we have ahead of us.

GAIL HUNTLEY, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EMBRACE INNOVATION & CURIOSITY

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Spark curiosity and bridge the digital divide by ensuring access to broadband internet and current technologies.

Current State

- Broadband usage in our service area is only 47.7% (compared with 65.2% in Washington State), and some of our most rural communities lack the infrastructure to expand affordable access.
- In our five counties, 15.8% of people are living below the poverty line and 62% of children attending public school qualify for free or reduced lunch due to low family income.
- People with lower incomes are less likely to have access to technologies that allow them to fully participate in modern society — whether they need to apply for a job, learn a new skill, or connect with a loved one.

GOALS

- » Partner with local governments and other organizations that are interested in expanding rural broadband access through statewide programs and initiatives. **2019-2021**
- » Offer a core set of technologies and devices at our libraries for public use. **2020-2021**
- » Provide access to Microsoft Office and other software on our public access computers. **2020-2021**

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Help our users navigate the world by providing programs, services, and collections that inspire creativity, encourage innovation, and build literacy skills.

Current State

- In our five counties, 19.8% of people over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent (as compared with 9.2% in Washington State and 12.7% nationally).
- 1 in 6 adults in the United States have low literacy skills and nearly one in three have weak numeracy skills. Nationally, low literacy costs the U.S. \$225 billion or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.
- In a national study, 74% of adults reported pursuing personal learning in the last year, with 81% of them learning in physical places like schools, community centers, and libraries. A large majority of these adults said learning helped them feel more capable and well-rounded, opened up new perspectives about their lives, or made them feel more connected to their local community.

GOALS

- » Develop individualized plans that outline how each of our libraries will enhance their offerings in four areas: community partnerships, access to resources, programs, and services. **2020**

¹ Broadband usage is defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as 25 Mbps or faster.

² Microsoft. Microsoft Airband: An update on connecting rural America. news.microsoft.com/rural-broadband/. 2018.

³ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁴ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State, 2017-2018 Washington Public School Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility Report.

⁵ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁶ OECD, Time for the U.S. to Reskill?: What the Survey of Adult Skills Says. doi.org/10.1787/9789264204904-en. 2013.

⁷ National Council for Adult Learning, Adult Education Facts That Demand Priority Attention. www.ncalamerica.org/publications.html. 2015

⁸ Pew Research Center, Lifelong Learning and Technology. March 2016.

ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Provide access to experiences and materials by developing evolving, welcoming, and easy-to-navigate spaces and service models.

Current State

- Our 30 libraries and 2 bookmobiles had over one million visits in 2018, but some of the spaces we occupy have accessibility issues or otherwise don't meet the needs of staff and the public.
- 53% of interviewed stakeholders mentioned infrastructure when asked about pressing issues facing our library system, and 37% prioritized building updates and more physical space when asked what might increase use of the library in their community.
- With over 10,000 users and 29,000 sessions per month, our online public access catalog receives more visitors than some of our public libraries, but staff and library patrons have reported that it can be difficult to navigate and use.

GOALS

- » Conduct thorough facility condition assessments to determine whether our library spaces meet community and staff needs. **2019-2020**
- » Evaluate our integrated library system and online public access catalog from both staff and patron perspectives. **2019**
- » Define, explore, and engage a culture of service excellence. **2020-2021**

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Develop a cohesive and professional presence in our communities.

Current State

- 66% of interviewed stakeholders believe that marketing and community engagement will increase use of the library in their community. The need to increase public awareness of library services was specifically mentioned 50 times.
- We offer library card holders free access to 26 online resources, including Rosetta Stone, Consumer Reports, and The New York Times. However, only a small fraction of people in our service area regularly use them, and 51% of respondents to our public survey indicated that they were not aware we provided these resources.
- With 30 public library locations over five counties, we have a broad reach. However, our librarians consistently report that people don't realize that their library is part of a larger system, or that their library card provides access to the full scope of physical and digital resources we provide.

GOALS

- » Address gaps in public awareness by developing a comprehensive communications plan that provides direction for public relations, brand strategy, and marketing efforts. **2019-2020**
- » Help people find connection and value in our entire library system through an initial rebranding rollout. **2019-2020**

⁹ NCRL Annual Use Report, Library Visits. 1,067,488 visits in 2018.

¹⁰ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Stakeholder Interviews. March 30, 2018.

¹¹ NCRL Annual Use Report, Google Analytics: OPAC. 124,609 users and 348,926 sessions in 2018.

¹² 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Stakeholder Interviews. March 30, 2018.

¹³ NCRL Annual Use Report: Online Resources. 2018.

¹⁴ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Public Survey. March 30, 2018.

ACTIVELY LISTEN & RESPOND

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Better understand and respond to the changing needs and desires of our diverse communities—including non-users and underserved populations—by soliciting feedback and analyzing available data.

Current State

- At 14,497 square miles, our library system serves an area that is roughly the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut combined. This region includes agricultural and farming communities, tourist destinations, towns of all sizes, and some of the most remote places in Washington State.
- With 1,965 responses to our public survey, we heard from less than 1% of the population we serve, and 94% of respondents were already regular library users.
- In our five counties, 24% of people speak Spanish at home, and 46% of these Spanish speakers have limited English language skills. However, only 0.02% (44) of the public survey responses we received were in Spanish.

GOALS

- » Develop a bilingual/bicultural advisory committee to help us better serve Spanish-speaking populations. **2019**
- » Promote data-driven decision-making throughout our organization by making internal and external data points centralized, organized, and accessible. **2019-2021**

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Expand our capacity to respond swiftly to acute needs and changes within our communities.

Current State

- There have been more than 20 large wildfires in our five county area over the past two years, many of which threatened homes and forced the evacuation of thousands of people. Corresponding flooding and other natural disasters have also had a widespread impact.
- All five of our counties have unemployment rates higher than both state and national averages. At 11.9%, Ferry County's unemployment rate is the highest in Washington State.
- Employment options in our most rural communities are limited, meaning that changes made by one major employer can lead to community-wide issues such as joblessness and rising poverty rates.

GOALS

- » Develop plans that define and address how we handle emergencies in our libraries and how we support acute needs in our communities. **2021**
- » Provide resources and training to help our staff connect people in crisis with the resources they need (including employment, housing, food, health, and more). **2021**

¹⁵ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Public Survey. March 30, 2018.

¹⁶ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

¹⁷ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Public Survey. March 30, 2018.

¹⁸ Northwest Interagency Coordination Center, 2017 Annual Fire Report and NW Large Incident Summary (YTD). gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc/predict/intelligence.aspx. 2018.

¹⁹ Employment Security Department, Monthly Employment Report December 2018. esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report.

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



OBJECTIVE 4.1

Collaborate with civic leaders to further community goals and address challenges.

Current State

- In interviews with our librarians, stakeholders repeatedly emphasized their desire to partner with our library system to better understand community needs and collaborate to meet them.
- When asked what their communities will need to be successful in the future, over 50% of stakeholders spoke about a general lack of resources, services, and learning opportunities to meet current community needs.
- When asked how our library system could better serve our communities, the most frequent response from our staff was to encourage strong relationships with civic leaders and community groups. However, many of our staff members have asked for additional support in building these relationships.

GOALS

- » Offer tools and training to staff on making presentations to community groups. **2020**
- » Identify and regularly connect with key stakeholders in each community. **2019**

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Develop strategic partnerships to engage new users and strengthen communities.

Current State

- Only 24.5% of people living in our service area have used their library card to borrow an item from one of our libraries in the last two years.
- Over 30% of stakeholders noted a belief that our library system needs to build partnerships to stay in touch with what their communities need.
- Public survey respondents, staff, and stakeholders overwhelmingly agreed that we should partner with school districts to provide resources to parents and children.
- 26 of our 30 libraries have an active Friends of the Library group. These volunteer-run organizations provide invaluable support to their local libraries by fundraising and promoting library use in their communities. Several Friends of the Library groups have led capital campaigns and other efforts to renovate their local library.

GOALS

- » Develop individualized plans that outline how each of our libraries will enhance their offerings in four areas: community partnerships, access to resources, programs, and services. **2020**
- » Develop individualized community partnership plans for all internal departments. **2020**
- » Improve communication with and demonstrate appreciation for Friends of the Library groups. **2020**

²⁰ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Stakeholder Interviews. March 30, 2018.

²¹ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Stakeholder Interviews. March 30, 2018.

²² 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Staff Survey. March 30, 2018.

²³ NCRL Annual Use Report: Active Borrowers. 63,234 active borrowers from 2017-2018.

²⁴ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Stakeholder Interviews. March 30, 2018.

²⁵ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Finding Summary. March 30, 2018.

STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

OBJECTIVE 5.1

Recruit and retain a workforce that reflects and is equipped to serve the diverse people of North Central Washington.

Current State

- By definition, public libraries are a resource for every member of the community. However, access can be inadvertently limited if certain populations do not feel welcome or accepted.
- 31% of people living in our service area identify as Hispanic or Latino.
- 24% of people living in our service area speak Spanish at home, but only 9% of our regularly scheduled staff are able to speak Spanish fluently for work.
- Only 0.02% of the public survey responses we received were in Spanish, making it clear that we need to greatly increase our efforts to connect with this population.

GOALS

- » Offer a pay differential for staff that use Spanish language skills for their work. **2019**
- » Investigate a learning mechanism for current staff to gain Spanish language skills. **2019**
- » Provide ongoing cultural awareness, diversity, and anti-bias training for all staff. **2019-2021**

OBJECTIVE 5.2

Foster a culture that both maintains high standards of integrity and accountability, and empowers staff to be creative and resilient.

Current State

- From Curlew in the north to Mattawa in the south, our libraries are spread over a vast service area that is nearly 14,500 square miles.
- 20 of our 30 libraries have just one full- or part-time staff member regularly scheduled to work.
- In 2018, we employed 116.64 FTE (full time equivalent staff) to serve a population of 258,088, which is 19.2% lower than the average public library staffing rate in Washington State.
- Our 2018 operating revenue per capita was just \$45.93, while the Washington State average for public libraries is \$61.26.
- In 2018, we had 234 volunteers give 8,074 hours of their time to our library system.

GOALS

- » Provide ongoing skills training and development opportunities that staff can access anywhere, any time by selecting and deploying an online learning platform. **2019-2020**
- » Improve internal communications through the development of a comprehensive communications plan. **2019-2020**
- » Develop comprehensive, position-oriented training plans that are based on core competencies. **2019**
- » Develop a sustainable staffing plan that will help us attract qualified candidates and provide exceptional service in our communities. **2019-2021**
- » Establish a volunteer appreciation plan. **2021**

²⁶ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

²⁷ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

²⁸ 501 Consultants. NCRL Survey Report: Public Survey. March 30, 2018.

²⁹ United States Census Bureau / American FactFinder. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

³⁰ Institute of Museum and Library Services, Public Libraries Survey: Washington State Profile. Fiscal Year 2016.

³¹ Institute of Museum and Library Services, Public Libraries Survey: Washington State Profile. Fiscal Year 2016.

³² NCRL Annual Use Report: Volunteers. 2018.

A SUPER BIG

Thank You!

To our Staff, Board Members, Friends Groups, Supporters, Donors & Patrons.
We could not do it without you.



CONNECT WITH US

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SOCIALIZE WITH US

