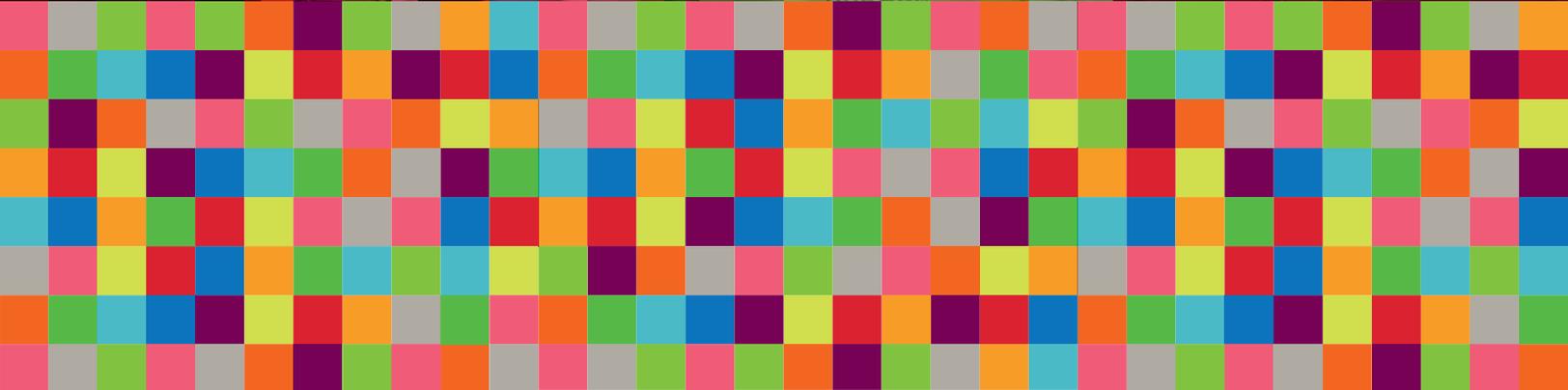


i can create a library of possibilities.
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Strategic Plan | 2014 - 2017





Planning for possibilities.

Since the funding crisis in 2010, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library has worked diligently to stabilize, focus and reinvigorate library operations and activities. As fiscal year 2014 begins, the Library once again has strong momentum.

The Library's next chapter has been the topic of many conversations over the last nine months, involving thousands of Library users, local citizens, community leaders and Library staff. Based on those discussions and input, we have created a new strategic plan for the Library that will guide our institution to become a Library of Possibilities that better engages and serves our community.

Four distinct roles - Library as Community Services Business, Library as Place, Library as Leader and Library as Community Strategy - underpin the new strategic plan, which establishes three clear strategic goals:

- *Increase community awareness and engagement.*
- *Innovate to support 21st century access.*
- *Increase operational excellence, fiscal stability and sustainability.*

Advancing the organization in these ways will enable the Library to be a welcoming place, where reading, learning and imagination thrive; a recognized leader and respected voice in our community; and a model library in our industry. By successfully implementing this plan, we will also position the Library to play an even larger role as community strategy and catalyst for ensuring an increasingly literate, informed and livable Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

We are grateful to each and every person who offered ideas, suggestions and advice to ensure that the Library continues to serve the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community in the best possible ways in a world of constant change. We look forward to working with the community to create a "Library of Possibilities" that opens its doors to everyone and empowers them to think, "I Can."



Lee C. Keesler, Jr.

Lee Keesler,
Chief Executive Officer

David W. Singleton

David Singleton,
Director of Libraries

Charles Bowman

Charles Bowman,
Chair, Board of Trustees

Molly B. Griffin

Molly Griffin,
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees

Three key questions

When we began this strategic planning process in the fall of 2012, we set out to answer three key questions:

1. **What does the community want?**
2. **What do we believe?**
3. **Where do we want to go and how do we get there?**

By answering these questions in sequence, we determined how the Library can best serve local citizens, what goals to embrace for the next three years and beyond, and which strategies to implement to achieve our beliefs and goals.



What does the community want?

We utilized surveys, public forums and smaller focus groups to engage a wide variety of public leaders, stakeholders, citizens and Library users in Mecklenburg County. In the process, we gathered input from more than 5,000 people and learned a lot about how people want the Library to serve our community. We also analyzed national studies and local data about actual use of our Library facilities and programs.

We found out that our Library is the most valuable, accessible, broadly attended and fully utilized resource in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. It continually enriches lives and empowers all of our citizens through the power of knowledge. On the facing page we have highlighted some of our key findings.



Key Findings

A

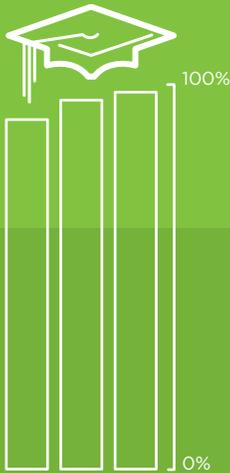
People use the Library in large numbers every day.



Our public library is the only community resource that provides everyone free access to the power of information in a welcoming, open and inspirational environment, and the public takes advantage of those opportunities every day. The Library hosted 3 million visitors last year, and 268,000 cardholders have used their library card within the past two years.

B

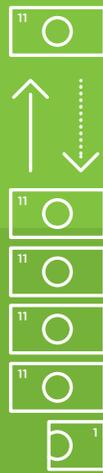
The Library supports learning.



99% of residents agree that the Library is a valuable educational resource, and 96% agree that the Library provides services for basic literacy, as well as lifelong learning. 83% agree that the Library has enhanced their education. Last summer, 15,000 children and teens read for more than 150,000 hours through the Library's Summer Reading program.

C

The Library enhances quality of life.



96% of residents agree that the Library improves the quality of life by providing free materials and resources. 97% agree that the Library enhances the image of the community. According to a 2009 UNCC Urban Institute study, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library returns \$4.57 in direct benefits for every \$1.00 invested from all sources.

D

The Library helps those with limited incomes.



According to our survey, 19% of Mecklenburg County households (approximately 180,000 children and adults) do not connect to the internet from home, and 31% do not use a smartphone. For those without internet at home, the Library provides the only free point of access to basic activities like completing homework and managing healthcare.

E

Libraries mean business – from new jobs to new employers.



Last year, more than 4,000 people used the Job Help Center at Main Library, which offers career counseling resources, résumé assistance, practice interview sessions, and help filing online applications. Also last year, according to the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, people created nearly 800 new businesses in Mecklenburg County. Long before they open for business, many entrepreneurs start their journey at the Library.

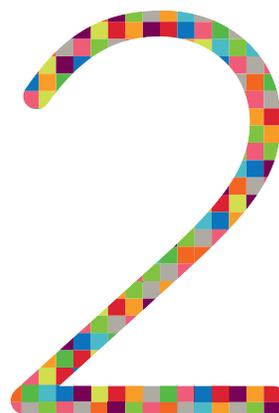
F

Universal trends are impacting the community.



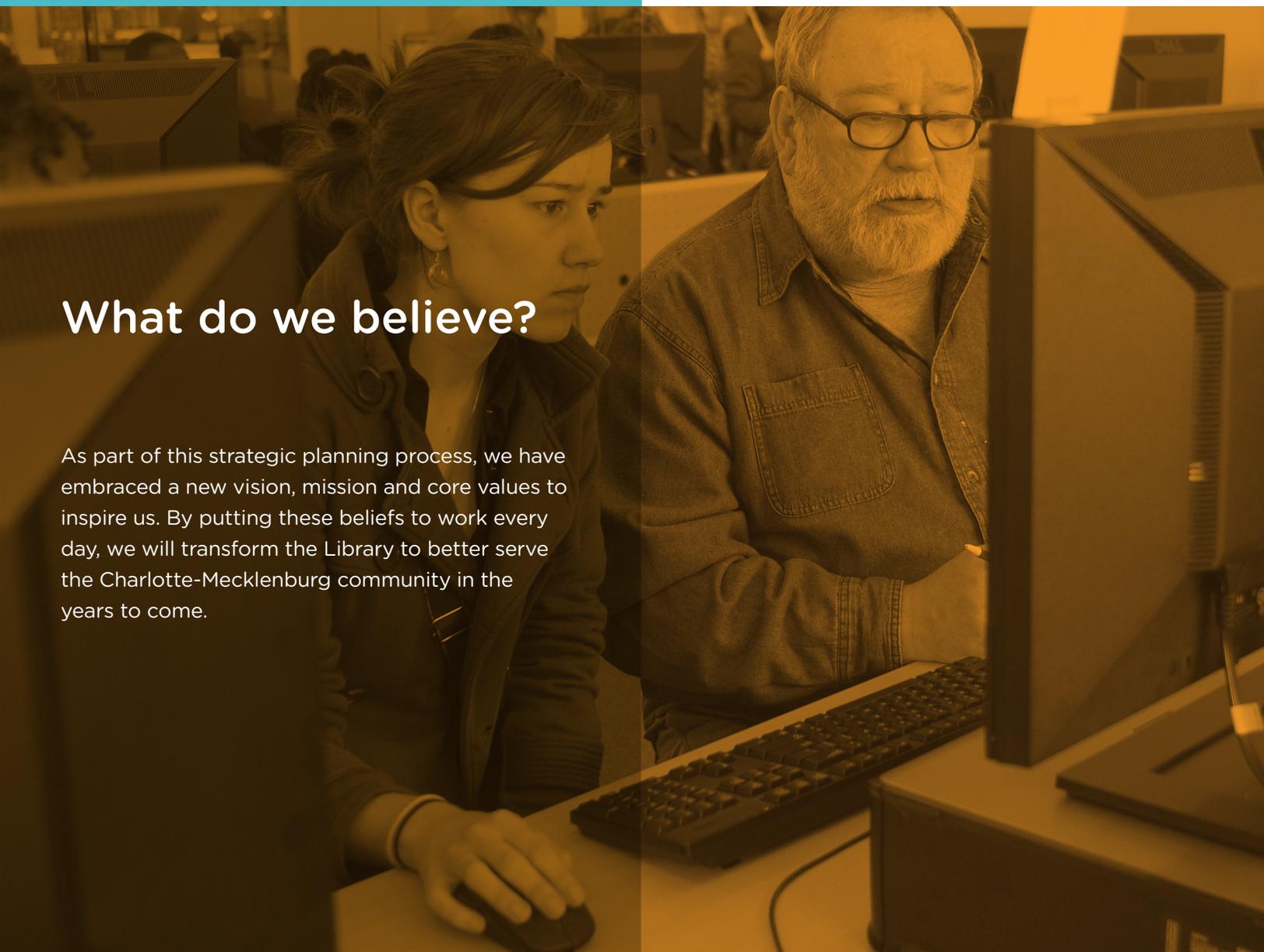
In response to the tremendous growth of electronic devices and reductions in government spending, the Library is adapting and innovating to serve its customers and the community at large.

Taking what we have learned, the Library has developed this strategic plan to guide our work for the next three years, 2014 to 2017 – and beyond.



What do we believe?

As part of this strategic planning process, we have embraced a new vision, mission and core values to inspire us. By putting these beliefs to work every day, we will transform the Library to better serve the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community in the years to come.





Our Vision:
What we aspire to be.

We aspire to be a welcoming place where reading, learning and imagination thrive; a recognized leader and respected voice in our community; and a model library in our industry.

Our Mission:
What we do.

We create a community of readers and empower individuals with free access to information and the universe of ideas.

Core Values: What we believe.

Learning – *We connect children, teens and adults with reading and information to expand curiosity, explore interests, and discover passions.*

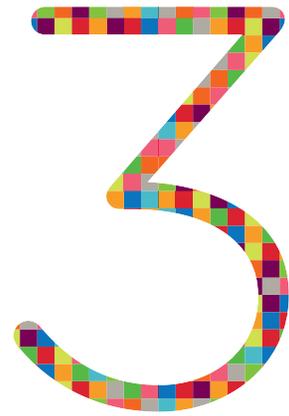
Openness – *We provide a friendly, helpful learning environment that supports free access to library resources and the exchange of information.*

Respect – *We act with integrity, deliver exceptional service, and earn the public's trust as responsible stewards of its resources.*

Inclusion – *We celebrate diversity, invite multiple points of view, and recognize the potential of every individual.*

Leadership – *We embrace the Library's role as community leader and empower staff to learn, innovate and lead.*

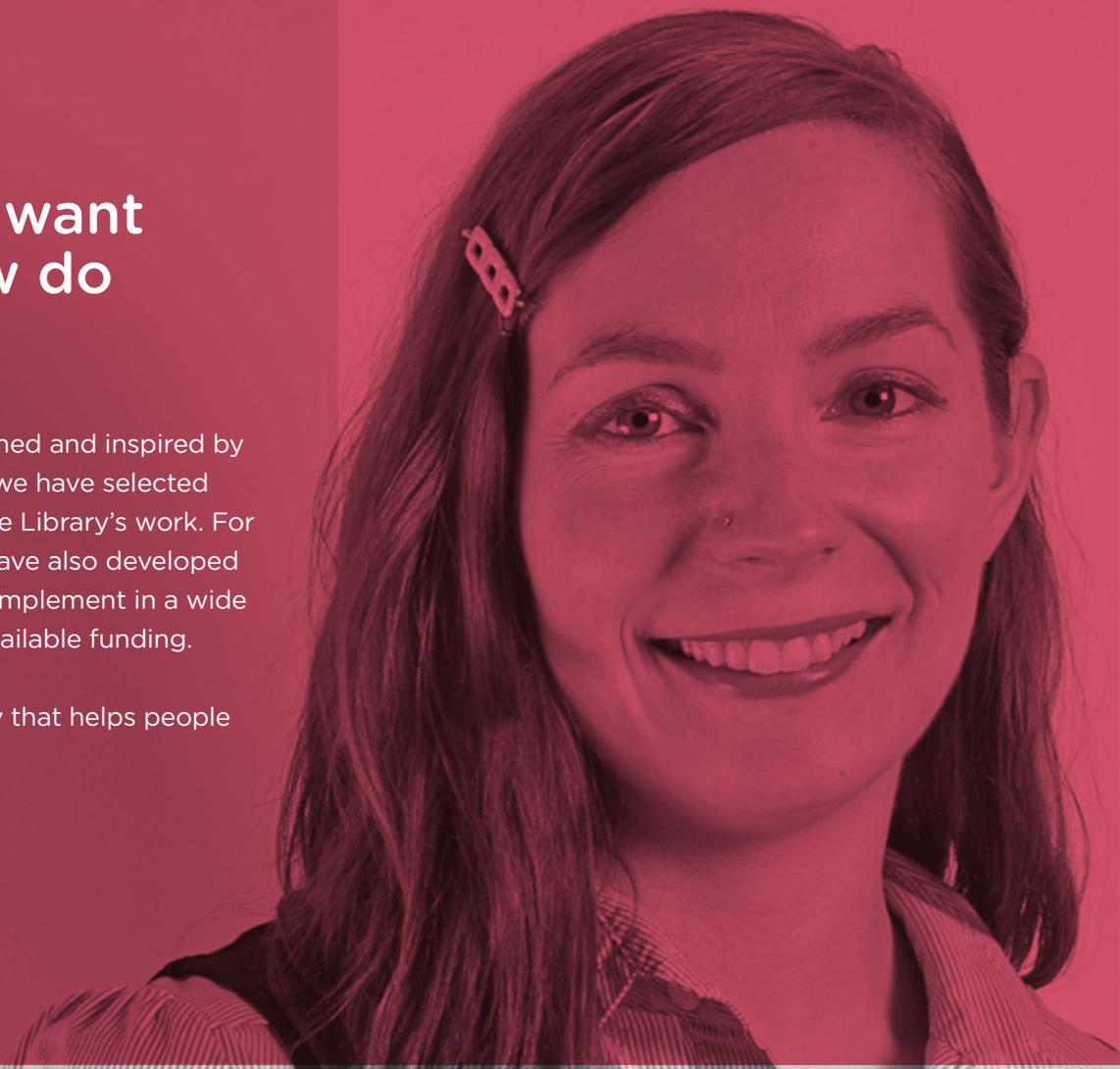
*Three primary goals will
guide the Library over the
next three years.*



Where do we want to go and how do we get there?

Informed by what we have learned and inspired by our vision, mission and values, we have selected three primary goals to guide the Library's work. For each of these three goals, we have also developed specific strategies that we will implement in a wide range of ways depending on available funding.

In short, we will create a Library that helps people think, "I can."





Increase community awareness and engagement

- * Broaden community impact
- * Lead the community as a center for lifelong learning
- * Identify customers' unique needs to shape service delivery
- * Improve days and hours of service
- * Engage underserved audiences
- * Tell the Library's story

Increase operational excellence, fiscal stability and sustainability

- * Optimize public resources
- * Empower staff for continued exceptional service
- * Revitalize volunteer support
- * Increase private support and earned revenue



Innovate to support 21st century access

- * Strengthen the collection
- * Implement digital strategy to expand virtual Library
- * Create welcoming and vibrant spaces



A Vision of Our Library Beyond 2017



The Library of the future will mean many different things to many different people. It will serve hundreds of thousands of people, while also responding to the needs of individual Library visitors. To meet this challenge, we aspire to excel in four key areas:

Library as Community Services Business - Enjoy excellent customer service, new technology, robust volunteer programs, convenient hours, and improved access to the physical and virtual Library.

Library as Place - Think of the Library as a place that is accessible and welcoming to all and the go-to place for literacy and lifelong learning, for finding inspiration and exploring possibilities, for meeting with neighbors, for connecting with community services, and for accessing a broad array of information resources.

Library as Leader - Expect the Library to lead important community discussions, to serve as a key partner in literacy and other community issues, and to serve as a model for digital technology and access.

Library as Community Strategy - Engage with a Library that connects people with the power of literacy and communication, where individuals and groups can learn, grow and make a difference in their own lives or the lives of others. Think of the Library as a catalyst for community betterment, where neighbors can share ideas and develop solutions to community challenges, and where volunteers and donors are eager to contribute to a literate, informed, working and thriving community.

This is only the beginning of what's possible. We look forward to working with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community to create a library that empowers people to think, "I can."

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG
LIBRARY

visit cmlibrary.org/stratplan for more information

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the many thousands of people who provided input for this plan by completing surveys, participating in forums and focus groups, and providing additional comments and ideas.

In particular, we want to thank the members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee for leading this planning process, including: Jennifer Appleby, Astrid Chirinos, Anthony Chow, Ph.D., Jenifer Daniels, Co-Chairs Molly Griffin and David Singleton, Jerri Haigler, Sophia Hollingsworth, Gloria Kelley, Mac McArthur, Ph.D., Amy Hawn Nelson, Ph.D., Susan Patterson, Tyler Ream, Cristina Shaul, Sarah Shifflet, Holly Welch Stubbing, and Bill Tome.

We also want to acknowledge and thank the staff design implementation team for providing tremendous support throughout the entire planning process, including: Cordelia Anderson, Karen Beach, Frank Blair, Michele Gorman, Sean Hogue, Leonora Kaufmann, Lee Keesler, Lois Kilka, Meryle Leonard, Chuck Mallas, LaJuan Pringle, Linda Raymond, Rick Ricker, and David Singleton.

Your energy and ideas have made this great plan possible.

Thank You.

