Library of the Year Application
Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

Contact:
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Statistical Data for 2015:

Population served: 178,406
Total annual budget: $17,543,046
Per capita budget: $98.33

Circulation: 2,330,123
Percent of the budget spent on materials: 9.4%
Visits: 798,452
Public Computer Sessions: 330,436
Digital Downloads: 274,670
Program Attendance: 90,841
Website Visits: 795,411

Number of staff: 190 FTE (225 total staff members)
Percentage of staff who are professional librarians: 18%

Cover image: A resident of North Topeka stands up at Garfield Park Community Center to share his thoughts at a community meeting led by the library and Heartland Visioning, August 10, 2015.
Creating Community

Theresa C. Hudson sleeps at the Topeka Rescue Mission while she tries to get her life in order. By day, she learns how to use computers at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library’s Computer Training Center, building her skills and allowing her to apply for jobs online.

Across town, in Topeka’s Hi-Crest neighborhood, 92% of families live in poverty. There, Jeannette Benson spends a couple hours each Tuesday with embedded librarians at the Dream Center searching for jobs that will better support her five children.

In downtown Topeka, Digital Librarian Amber Bonnett helps young entrepreneurs apply for small business loans at 712 Innovations, a makerspace and shared office space for inventors and professionals.

In a boardroom at the Chamber of Commerce, CEO Gina Millsap, COO Rob Banks and Community Services Manager Thad Hartman facilitate the strategic planning process for three separately operating chambers to develop a regional economic development partnership.

At Lowman Hill Elementary School, library staff serve up both storytimes and lunches to kids hungry for literacy skills and basic nutritional needs.

Because of the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, our community is a better place to live, and continues to improve every day. We show up. We roll up our sleeves and get involved.

Our mission tells our customers, the library is “your place” – it belongs to them and we are here for their needs. We improve and enrich lives.

We’ve successfully fostered community development by making sure the library is at every discussion, and more often than not, we’re actually leading those discussions. We’re creating leaders and lifting the community. We believe that our impact on the community is worthy of recognition. We believe that the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library deserves the honor of becoming Library Journal’s Library of the Year in 2016.

We do not simply provide meeting spaces. We facilitate meetings. The library has 42 trained facilitators on staff. Our librarians and professionals have successfully facilitated meetings both in and outside of the building. These are conversations centered around topics like increasing collective health, battling poverty and homelessness, creating work-readiness programs, increasing broadband access, feeding children and supporting young professionals. These are conversations where the library can have an impact, offer resources and identify needs that we can fulfill. We always have a representative at the table. But more than that, we are usually standing at the head of the table, marker poised at the flipchart.
Creating Community

The library is a convener for community conversations and a champion for community leadership. We also serve as a role model for other libraries in how they, too, can effectively cultivate community-wide impacts. Our strategic planning process piqued the interest of the Aspen Institute’s Amy Garmer, Director of Dialogue on Public Libraries, who visited Topeka last July to observe our community’s inclusive planning process.

The library’s dynamic CEO, Gina Millsap, is the immediate past chairperson of Heartland Visioning, a nonprofit organization working hard to improve the quality of life of Topeka and Shawnee County residents through a visioning process involving surveys, community input, strategizing and implementing real change.

Armed with market research, a community survey and input from citizens, the library’s management council continues to develop our strategic plan for the next decade and will announce and celebrate with Topeka and Shawnee County later in 2016.

At any time of day, library staff are zipping across the city and county, bringing resources, materials, services and our facilitation expertise to people and organizations that are enacting real, positive change.

Come along with us on the ride, and learn how our story is one that is fast-paced, energetic and brimming with love and promise for our community.

Pictured: Librarian Lissa Staley facilitates at the Community Health Plan meetings.

In 2015, the library worked with Heartland Visioning to hold community workshops to listen to the aspirations of our fellow citizens. As we move into the next decade, we are incorporating those aspirations into a strategic plan honed in on community improvement.
Creating Community Leaders

As a 21st Century library, we’ve changed to fit a new mold, and that means our information professionals go everywhere and do everything necessary to dovetail our skills and resources with the needs of the community. We’re always looking for opportunities to extend our reach and make a difference.

We’ve seized opportunities to help cultivate strong leadership in the community.

**Leadership Greater Topeka** brings together a broad cross section of both veteran and aspiring leaders from every corner of the community for an annual community leadership training course. Our library leadership participates in Leadership Greater Topeka so that our role as leaders in the community is acknowledged and strengthened. The course helps to develop skills, and also vital relationships with other community leaders.

**Leadership Greater Topeka Graduates**
- **David Leamon** – Retired Executive Director
- **Rob Banks** – Chief Operating Officer
- **Sheryl Weller** – Chief Financial Officer
- **Marie Pyko** – Public Services Director
- **Thad Hartman** – Community Services Manager
- **Michael Perkins** – Digital Services Supervisor
- **Sandy Hestand** – Bookmobile Supervisor
- **Stephanie Hall** – Public Services Manager
- **Scarlett Fisher-Herreman** – Technical Services Supervisor

**Candidate School** – Every two years, the library partners with the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations to create a program for prospective city council members, city commissioners and school board members, called Candidate School. Attendees interact with city and county officials, as well as past officeholders to learn firsthand about running a campaign, election filings and deadlines, campaign fundraising, how to synthesize constituent points of view into a coherent platform, how to work with other leaders to develop strong public policy and what to expect if they win.

“Our partners at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library are invaluable teammates in helping develop, organize and execute this important program which helps develop solid, well-informed leaders in our community,” says Curtis Sneden, Vice President of Governmental Affairs, Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce.
Creating Facilitators

The role of librarian has evolved throughout history. We’re redefining what it means to be a librarian.

Librarians started out in the role of “guardians of knowledge.” Over time, we progressed to sitting at a fortress of information, the desk, and if people came to us, they received excellent services and resources. Now, at our library, we’ve evolved into rovers, ensuring we go to where the questions are. It’s a natural progression to take our skills and passion for customer service out into the community, meeting needs right where they arise.

We’ve found that librarians have a built-in capacity for facilitation because it requires developing relationships based on trust. Our core values and skills as information professionals make us naturals in
- listening without judging
- maintaining confidentiality
- finding and synthesizing information on a variety of topics
- valuing diverse and different perspectives.

When the library underwent renovations in the late 90s, one of the major improvements was the addition of several state-of-the-art meeting rooms. These quickly became an extremely popular part of what the library offered the community.

20th Century libraries provided space for meetings; 21st Century libraries improve and enhance the activities that take place in those spaces and, by extension, in our community. For the library to be a convener and model for how groups work together, we knew we needed additional skills. Along with our colleagues at Heartland Visioning, we began to train library leadership and librarians in a methodology called Effective Facilitator/Masterful Meetings™. Ultimately, we hope to create a gold standard for how all community groups, including our elected and appointed bodies, work and make decisions together.

There is increased awareness of the importance of skillful facilitation in the library organization, in Heartland Visioning, in the general community and in the difference it makes in effective decision-making. The library has increased its own leadership capacity and helped build community leadership capacity by demonstrating the power of facilitation.

As a result, we now have a cohort of 42 trained facilitators who work within the library and in the community to help groups of smart people achieve great things together.
Creating Facilitators

“The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library played a key leadership role in facilitating community meetings involving over 5,000 individuals representing our City and County. Today, library leadership continues the training of their staff, members of non-profit groups and general community volunteers in the facilitation process. Library staff are recognized and praised for their expertise both in this facilitation training as well as providing top quality facilitators for various activities throughout Topeka and Shawnee County.”

– John Hunter, Executive Director, Heartland Visioning

Library staff and partners facilitated public meetings for Heartland Visioning, a community-building initiative, to establish what people want from their community now and in the future.

Facilitation training is a big investment and, honestly, a lot of work. Every hour of meeting requires an hour of planning. But the return on investment is invaluable. The library is now asked to weigh in and to come to the table when important decisions about our city are being discussed. People and organizations want to partner with us and they value the facilitation skills we bring to get things decided and done.

“The library knows it can make an impact, from leveraging the celebration of diversity, to creating more community pride. The library meets people where they are and brings them along in transforming themselves, their families and the whole community,” says Kristin Brunkow, Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator for Heartland Visioning

The library has continued to facilitate many important discussions and action meetings throughout the community, too many to list here. But here’s a glimpse:

• Community Conversation on Poverty (2014, 2015)
  The library provided a core group of facilitators to actively lead sessions and was able to assess ways the library could step up to take a role in action to improve the situation. For 2016, the library has been asked to provide all the facilitators needed.

“We were there to facilitate and listen to what the community had to say about poverty. The library has a role in being aware of poverty in our community and helping to resolve it,” says Scarlett Fisher-Herreman, Technical Services Supervisor and Facilitator.
Creating Facilitators

“One of the highlights of the Topeka Downtown Rotary strategic planning process was a hour and a half brainstorming session with almost 200 Rotarians participating. I facilitated from the podium and 20 Rotarians volunteered to have a quick introduction to our facilitation method so that there was a facilitator for each group. It was a great opportunity to showcase the difference the library makes in the community and that the skill set and toolkit of a 21st Century librarian can be of value to virtually any group who wants to make a difference in its community. The best part? The plan was used to guide the Rotary Club from 2012 – 2015 with great results and the strategic approach to the club’s work continues.”

– Gina Millsap, CEO

- **Kansas Research Nexus** (2013) Facilitated a strategic planning process for our local Chamber of Commerce and two others in neighboring counties to develop a regional economic development partnership.

- **Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods** (2012) Facilitated the launch of a coalition focused on improving Shawnee County through government, non-profit, education and business partnerships.

- **Community Health Improvement Plan** (2012-2016) The library helped community members and service providers create goals, strategies and opportunities for community action for the plan, based on areas of focus identified in a citywide needs assessment.

- **Topeka Downtown Rotary (2012)** Library CEO Gina Millsap facilitated a first-ever planning process for Downtown Rotary because of her facilitation training and work she’d successfully completed for other organizations. The group's goal was “To establish a model for excellence and a blueprint for action for our Rotary Club for the next three years.” Gina’s work with the group had great results. The group has cultivated more focused leadership, developed new projects relevant to current community issues and is sponsoring a $20,000 grant dedicated to community betterment.
Creating Facilitators

Pictured: We’re at the table at many community meetings where positive action is taking place

- **Fast Forward, Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce (2011-2015)** – Stephanie Hall, Public Services Manager, served as the Chair of Fast Forward, the young professionals (YP) group, whose mission is to provide opportunities for people to connect and engage with the purpose of establishing and retaining leaders in the Topeka community. As the Chair, Stephanie helped facilitate various committees that focused on business development, volunteerism, networking, continuing education and community retention. In her time with Fast Forward she also chaired the Young Professional Summit committee organizing a conference geared toward YPs. The Summit aimed to bring YPs from across the state together to learn, network and build a statewide coalition that can work together to better promote and expand the goals of young professionals, their communities and the state of Kansas.

- **Shawnee County Parks and Recreation (2014-2015)** – The library initiated and facilitated development of a partnership between the library and community centers including the implementation of shared computer labs, collaborative programs and the installation of a Smartlocker™ to reserve and pick up library items. “Shawnee County Parks and Recreation has told us repeatedly how grateful they are for the process we facilitated to initiate the library bringing computer labs to their community centers. It has resulted in an ongoing collegial relationship where we can progress together and address problems honestly and efficiently,” says Gina Millsap, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library CEO.

Organizations continue to invite the library to lead conversations about the future of our community, and we continue to enthusiastically accept. We’re also doing environmental scans as we work within the community to approach others when we see opportunities to get involved.
Creating Internal Change

Facilitation has changed the work culture at the library. All library staff have had an introduction to the basics of meeting management and participation. 42 managers and librarians are trained facilitators.

Facilitators and staff members have reported that meetings are focused, productive and that their colleagues are engaged.

Meeting leaders and members understand their responsibilities; no one gets to opt out or check out. Team leaders understand that, as facilitators, they have a responsibility to articulate the purpose, outcomes and agenda for each meeting. Meeting participants know they have a right to refuse to attend a meeting if that information is not provided in advance. This is about more than improving meetings. It’s teaching all library staff to value our most valuable resource: ourselves and the time we spend together to do good work.

Staff members are also cultivating relationships outside the library and participating in (and sometimes leading) conversations on topics ranging from health and poverty to the arts and the revitalization of downtown Topeka. Our staff members are ambassadors, role models and recognized authorities on getting the best from groups who want to make the community a better place to live, work, learn and play.
Creating Community Change

We’re committed to making a difference in the community and achieving more through collective impact. Shawnee County’s youngest residents are up against some harsh odds when it comes to school readiness.

• In Shawnee County, almost 1 in 4 of our children live in poverty.
• 50% of Shawnee County schools don’t provide pre-kindergarten or four-year-old at-risk programs.
• There are only 3.45 Early Head Start spaces available for every 100 children who need them.
• 16% of children in Shawnee County are born to mothers with no high school diploma.

A key element to preparing children and families for school success is access. Our most vulnerable children and families do not have access to resources, their library, daycare and other learning environments. With 70 years of experience with bookmobiles, we know how effective mobile services can be in reaching our most vulnerable residents.

This fall, we’re launching the Mobile Early Childhood Learning Center, a vehicle providing a fun, interactive play-based environment to teach the most essential skills necessary for school readiness. This mobile version of our Kids Library will remove the access barrier and bring resources to families where they live. Children’s brains develop through key relationships and learning through play. There will be a strong emphasis on parent engagement and education. Through manipulatives, programs and activities, children will develop behavioral skills, social skills, fine motor skills and vocabulary. The learning center will also be involved in early identification and intervention for kids with speech, hearing, vision, mental or other health challenges.

All of this is possible through a partnership between the library and USD 501 Parents As Teachers, USD 501 Sheldon Head Start, Shawnee County Health Agency, TARC (programs for the developmentally disabled), Washburn Institute of Technology, USD 437 Parents as Teachers, Child Care Aware of Northeast Kansas and the Topeka Rescue Mission. No one organization has the know-how or resources to have this kind of impact. Together we do.

Throughout the library, not just in the youth services department, staff are aware of our commitment to Shawnee County children and are working in many ways to make our impact felt.

Throughout the library, not just in the youth services department, staff are aware of our commitment to Shawnee County children and are working in many ways to make our impact felt. Here are a few examples:

• The library is facilitating early childhood learning to offset the effects of summer slide and address basic needs.
Creating Community Change

- The library employs five Outreach Storytellers who visit 75 daycares and preschools, telling stories to more than 3,700 children ages 3-5 every month.
- Our annual Summer Reading program, Summerfest, engages thousands of kids. In Summer of 2015, Shawnee County kids logged a whopping 72,527 hours of reading.
- Every summer, the Adventuremobile, a bookmobile designed specifically for school-aged children, visits all across the community, bringing animals and activities as well as books and media to children in their neighborhoods. In 2015, our Adventuremobile began handing out lunches to kids in need, as well.
- When it was announced in 2015 that Lowman Hill Elementary would shut its doors in the summer due to budget cuts, the library stepped in to keep it staffed so that children in central Topeka, where the library is located, would still have a site for free lunches. Library staff handed out lunches and literacy activities, thanks to a last-minute save and partnerships with Harvesters, USD 501, the Kansas Department of Education and the USDA.
- In one of our two teen spaces, library staff hand out afterschool snacks every day to children coming to the library hungry after school. We believe that learning on a full stomach is the best way to learn.
- Two homework coaches staff the library’s Homework Center six days a week so kids can get help with their homework.
- Bookmobile librarians visit classrooms throughout the school year armed with 25 exciting Kansas Connections programs that fulfill Common Core requirements in science, language, fine art, history and social studies.

Top: Super readers strut their stuff during Summerfest programming. Right: Kids are served free lunch by library staff.
Creating Connections

No branches? No problem.
The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library has a single, instantly recognizable building, its Michael Graves architectural crown -- the iconic rotunda -- occupying its rightful place in the city's skyline. It may come as a surprise that a single building can effectively serve a population of 178,831 Shawnee County Residents.

The library has no branches but uses multiple strategies to ensure service equity and access.

Access
We see a single building as an asset and a challenge to be innovative. Access to library services and materials has increased exponentially over the past several years. We’re visiting with our customers right inside their neighborhoods and hotspots.

- Bookmobiles stop at 20 locations throughout the 550 square miles of Shawnee County.
- Two new bookmobiles with original, community-based imagery featured on vehicle wraps have been added in 2014 & 2015.

“I am a regular user of the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library bookmobile. I am not alone in my use of the bookmobile. Often the aisle is crowded with other library users who are finding their reading needs and desires are easily met through this service.”

– Joanne M. Budler, library customer and State Librarian, State Library of Kansas

Pictured: 3D map of checkout locations in Shawnee County.
Creating Connections

Serving people where they are and removing barriers to learning experiences are two principles at the heart of our service philosophy and model.

- Red Carpet Senior Service visits 40 retirement and congregate living communities and delivers bi-weekly to 130 homebound customers.
- The Library @ Work service delivers materials to workers at six major employers in Shawnee County.
- The library operates two Smartlockers™ at the Oakland Community Center and grocery store, Hy-Vee.

Collaborations
We are always on the lookout to combine our resources with those of community organizations. Here are just a few of our successful partnerships:

- **Shawnee County Parks and Recreation** - In partnership with Shawnee County Parks and Recreation, the library added 36 new touchscreen computers, on-site library programs and a Smartlocker to community centers. The library employs an IT technician dedicated part time to servicing computers at community centers. Librarians hold book discussions, storytimes and genealogy programming.
- **712 Innovations** – At the membership-based industrial makerspace in downtown Topeka, our embedded librarians work shifts helping local entrepreneurs and inventors to do research, apply for small business loans and learn to use equipment. We will be adding 712 day-passes for library customers to access the makerspace, ensuring that member fees aren’t a barrier.
- **Kansas Children’s Discovery Center** (KCDC) – Thanks to a partnership with KCDC, library customers can check out a passport to visit this fun, hands-on children’s attraction with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, art and math. The passes are good for two adults and up to five children. The pass allows children to develop literacy skills and life skills in a fun environment for free, when otherwise the cost of entry could be a hardship for some families.
- **United Way of Greater Topeka** – The library has partnered with United Way of Greater Topeka on an initiative to raise funds for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program in Topeka. As a part of our community impact goal of “every child will be ready for kindergarten,” we are working to raise the funds for mailing every child in the community an age-appropriate book per month from ages 0-5. The Library Foundation and United Way are fundraising together to acquire the funds necessary to launch the program in Fall of 2016.
- **NET Reach Dream Center** – Hi-Crest is Topeka’s most impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhood. Unemployment, drug abuse and lack of literacy skills are the norm. The Dream Center is a place for families of the Hi-Crest Neighborhood to come to search for jobs, take job skill classes, practice interviewing and further their careers. Our embedded librarians assist job-seekers at the Dream Center, helping them to navigate complicated document requirements, transportation and childcare needs, write cover letters and fill out applications.
- **Broadband Access** – Our CEO participates in the Topeka City and Shawnee County Local Community Technology Plan, which seeks to extend high-speed and gigabit speed broadband access to all of Shawnee County. Our goals are to close the digital divide, to expand digital literacy and to promote 21st Century work skills and digital entrepreneurship.
Creating Data-based Services

 Seeking alignment through community, board and staff involvement

**Community Survey**
In 2014, the library sent 3,200 surveys to local households representing the population of Shawnee County. We received 844 completed surveys, double the number required to be statistically significant by ETC, the company that conducted the survey.

Their answers are driving our process of developing community impact goals. Respondents were asked what principal roles and services the library should emphasize in the next few years.

Pictured: The answers to question twelve were particularly helpful in determining community impact goals.
Creating Data-based Services

Seeking alignment through community, board and staff involvement

Their responses also confirmed that our first community impact goal – “every child will be ready for kindergarten” is what the community needs from us.

The Community Survey marks a shift in our methodology from assuming we know what our customers want, to data and fact-based evidence of what they really want.

**Strategic Planning**
Hearing our customers’ aspirations for the library and the community – and where the library and community intersect – is guiding our strategic planning for the next decade (2015-2025). Over the past several years, we’ve sought additional information through various sources.

**Board Retreat**
Members of the Library Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library, Foundation Board and Teen Advisory Board met in the summer of 2014 to help brainstorm and create the Community Impact Goals. Attendees participated in various brainstorming activities, including a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) analysis. After brainstorming, each attendee selected the five aspirations that they felt were most important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote reading and literacy</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support lifelong learning</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be the deciding factor for people moving to Topeka</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary leadership</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the latest technology available</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily accessible to the entire community</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids are ready for kindergarten</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful community outreach</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens are engaged and empowered</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community supports us</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are the best library</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of staff</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and nurture staff</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pictured: Three Board Retreat Results*
Creating Data-based Services

Seeking alignment through community, board and staff involvement

- **Staff Meetings** - All library staff members met in small groups and participated in the SOAR exercise and then ranked the aspirations that they thought were most important to the library. We then compiled the answers and grouped similar answers together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dots</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy for all ages</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead community change / social issues</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community hub</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach to targeted populations</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy and equitable access for all</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital literacy</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to technology</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone has a library card / uses the library</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite locations / more outreach services</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer centered</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun and safe place</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More quality, less quantity</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with employment</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner with more organizations</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table above: Staff results. Right: Members of a community workshop affix dots to the aspirations they find most important.*
Creating Data-based Services

- **Community Meetings** - In the summer of 2015 we held community meetings at four different locations throughout Shawnee County. The participants broke into groups and performed a SOAR analysis and used dots to identify the most important aspirations. We compared and ranked the results from all groups and found a high level of agreement on what the library should focus on for the next decade. Literacy, lifelong learning and serving readers were a priority for everyone.

We’ve compiled input from the community survey, three board retreat, staff meetings and community meetings. Now the library’s management council is engaged in its own learning process, what we think of as the equivalent of a masters degree in human learning, to ensure that the literacy and learning work we do is based on research and current learning theory.

We will present our new community impact goals to the Board of Trustees for approval, and announce the full plan and celebrate with Topeka and Shawnee County in the final quarter of 2016.

**Customer Relationships**
The library relies on more than spoken and written input from our customers. Starting in 2008, we began to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and market segmentation data to learn more about library users and those who don’t use the library. Our goal is to connect with people and build relationships based on real knowledge. As information professionals, we recognize we have a responsibility to serve our customers and communities by using the best information available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and literacy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate our diversity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten readiness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and opportunities that bring back college grads</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids are taken care of by parents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-age kids learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and viewing for pleasure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason people move to Topeka</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/social change</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve role in promoting Topeka/Shawnee County history</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More engaged citizens</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topeka Community – Move economic Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visil Downtown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment option – More!</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Pictured: Community Workshop results)
Creating Data-based Services

We worked with Civic Technologies to combine ILS data with consumer household data, market segmentation, demographic data and GIS mapping technology. Each library customer’s address was geocoded (assigned a latitude and longitude to locate data on a map). The customer record was associated with information about what and where items were checked out. This information was analyzed in the aggregate to identify use patterns. Using the combined usage pattern and market segmentation data, the library developed and implemented strategies to improve library services and reach out to specific segments of the population.

Here’s one of the ways we’ve used real data to build more meaningful relationships with our customers:

We discovered that there was a large group in the population that was underserved. This market segment is called “Green Acres” because of its location on the outskirts of the county. Green Acres residents represented 13.7% of the population but only 10.7% of library cardholders.

Civic Technologies provided information on residents’ buying habits and we were able to create a campaign based on their interests. We used postal mail (the market’s preferred method of delivery) and introduced people to library resources tailored to their interests. We changed the bookmobile schedule in the area to better match where our customers live. In the end, we increased bookmobile attendance, and checkouts increased by 7.9%.

Pictured: The blue area on the map is what we refer to as “Green Acres” – a previously underserved population of the county we identified using geolocation data.
In the library’s Creative Group, the place where Digital Services and Communications and Marketing intersect, some of our most creative thinkers gather one morning a week around a conference table usually brimming with cups of steaming coffee and sometimes donuts. All participants in this weekly meeting of the minds are concerned with one thing: Telling the unique stories of Topeka and Shawnee County.

The library has a role as a content provider, offering our usual brand of books, media and periodicals. However, we’ve made a major shift into becoming the creators of content. Because of our extensive involvement in the community, our data-based research, our collaborations and partnerships and our community-focused planning, we know our customers intimately. Who better to create content especially for them? We are the makers of our own content, and our content lends us our solid reputation as storytellers.

Community Novel and Writing Community
We’re providing a unique opportunity to 20-30 local writers every year to develop and write a novel set in Topeka. Writers mentor and coach each other and gain experience in self-publishing.

The Community Novel Project has been recognized by the industry, with a Trends/Perspectives article in American Libraries Magazine, and the organizers have presented nationally about the project. Their pilot has caught the eye of dozens of librarians across the nation, who contact the library asking for advice on how to begin their own community writing and publishing project, necessitating we publish a guide for other libraries to use.

In its sixth year, each chapter is authored by a different writer and has been serialized on our website, tscpl.org.

At the conclusion of the final chapter’s publication, the novel is published using the CreateSpace online self-publishing platform. In 2014, the project was recognized by Arts Connect Topeka with an Arty Award in the Literary Arts category.

Pictured: The 2015 community novel, Time Harbor, was authored by dozens of members of the Shawnee County writing community.

Pictured: The library’s Community Novel Project was awarded a literary award by a community arts organization.
Creating Stories

Staff creates website content
64 staff members from all areas of the library form our website’s writing team and social media teams. While the Communications and Marketing department develops the library’s main messages, staff are able to write and share their particular knowledge of collections and services with their own personal touch and passion.

Podcast
The library produces a monthly podcast, called Hush, which delves into books, writing and literature in many forms. Guests include local leaders, readers and staff members. The podcast is popular among library customers, with over a hundred subscribers on iTunes, and many more who download the podcast each month from tscpl.org.

Pictured: The library’s Pinterest team is composed of staff members from all over the library, from management to the mail room to the art gallery. Staff also creates a lot of content on the website and other social media channels.

You Made Me Read It!
The library produces its own monthly podcast, called Hush, which interviews local leaders and readers, and delves into books, writing and literature in many forms.
Creating Stories

Videos
The library makes videos. But these aren’t just any ol’ videos. They’re fun, engaging and really, really popular.

In 2015, our National Library Week video, “#CheckItOut” went internationally viral, making headlines at Yahoo News, Book Riot, and even making the front page of Ellen Tube.

As of this writing, the video has had 168,606 views on YouTube. It was made possible by enthusiastic members of our community, who showed up bursting with support for their library, danced in the rotunda, sang and recorded songs and volunteered to shoot and edit. Our staff shared their passion for the library with the whole world. It worked, and we continue to create bold new content that not only emphasizes the importance of the library to our community, but to all communities. Libraries are essential.
Creating Stories

Library News
The library creates its own bi-monthly newspaper, full of articles, graphics, original photography and events, and features members of the community who use the library. In 2015-16, we are mailing a copy of Library News to every household in Shawnee County. Residents love the at-your-fingertips information, the creative and energetic writing, and the professional design. Library News features real, local people. It’s not rare to see it hanging up in elementary school halls, workplace corkboards and floating throughout social media as our featured customers proclaim, “I love our library!”

Library News Update
Every other week, we send e-news blasts to more than 40,000 library customers so that they are hand-fed our great website content and news that they can use right away. Our e-newsletter, called Library News Update, is award-winning (Topeka Advertising Federation Addy Award, 2016), and has caught national attention. LibraryAware will host a national webinar in May 2016 about the success of Library News Update in generating web traffic, circulation and increased use of digital collections.

We spotted a copy of Library News in the halls of a local elementary school when teachers recognized their students on the cover.
Although big ideas, big goals and ambitious projects are part of who we are and how we work, at the end of the day we’re aware that community relationships begin with the human touch.

When a senior services librarian delivers a bag of books to a homebound customer, it’s the smile and the listening ear that count just as much.

When a resident of the Topeka Rescue Mission checks her email in the Computer Center and discovers she’s scored a job interview, it’s the computer class instructor’s high five that makes her week or, heck, even her year.

Those thousands of small connections, in the building, bookmobiles and all the urban and rural touchpoints in our county, combine to create relationships that last a lifetime. For Topeka and Shawnee County, the library is their place when, where and how they need us.