

Breaking New Ground

A Blueprint for Strengthening a Community Through Exceptional Library Service

Introduction

Public libraries have come a long way from simply acting as a passive repository of information. Contemporary libraries are dynamic, active community centers – places not only to build knowledge through information, but places to build opportunities through education and recreation. Libraries offer families a place to be entertained, relax and learn together. They encourage discussion and debate, supporting community endeavors and giving members a sense of place.

The public library has long maintained a vital role in communities, supporting the social, economic and civic threads of society. Libraries are even more valuable in today's culture as new technologies are introduced daily, new educational standards are mandated in the face of decreasing school budgets and new skills are necessary for employment in the current job market. Libraries must work conscientiously to meet the ever-changing and always increasing need for resources.

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) is proud to fill all of these roles for Western New York, especially as our community faces its own daunting set of challenges and issues in the 21st century. The Library is dedicated to providing expanded and new services that directly address the traditional and evolving needs of the residents of Erie County. By providing a venue for education, information, culture and recreation, the B&ECPL can directly impact the future of individuals, families and businesses in this area, strengthening the entire community. The planning process provides the foundation for these endeavors and offers direction as the B&ECPL strives to *break new ground* on what can be accomplished as a community.

A Foundation

As with all institutions, the B&ECPL does not exist in a vacuum. The Library's daily operations as well as future goals and plans are affected by its past. Today's B&ECPL System is actually the compilation of several organizations, each initiated to meet different needs in the community over varied time periods, dating back to 1836. These predecessors have all contributed their own history, values and collections to the current city/county, federated System.

The formation of this System in 1953 also spawned a complicated governance structure. Twenty-three separate Boards of Trustees oversee facilities. There are unique procedures and relationships when staffing, budgeting and maintaining buildings. Understanding these governance issues as well as the organization's history is essential

in appreciating the B&ECPL's present and planning for its future. Please refer to Appendix I for more detailed information.

In addition to its history and operational structure, the B&ECPL's mission and principles form the foundation for all activities, directly influencing how the Library does business and determining its priorities. These underlying goals are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they are consistent with the public's current expectations. See Appendix II.

A Changing Environment

Aside from all of the internal elements forming the B&ECPL's foundation, external factors, such as economic forces, population and social trends and changes in legislation, all affect the service goals and resource allocation decisions that the Library makes. Some timely issues that affect Library priorities are below.

Workforce Development -- The population and labor force continue to contract in the Buffalo-Niagara region resulting in a tight employment market. This factor is coupled with a growing "skills gap," creating the need to develop and enhance workforce skills to better match job-seekers with the types of jobs becoming available in an unstable local economy. By continuing to provide free training opportunities and helpful software packages, the Library offers the unemployed and underemployed the chance to obtain skills necessary to succeed.

Educational Standards -- With rigorous New York State standards and the fiscal crisis many public schools currently face, especially in the City of Buffalo, the B&ECPL is committed to providing innovative services to assist students of all ages.

Digital Divide -- Rates of computer ownership (with Internet access) are rising rapidly nationwide. However, there are still large sections of America that are not adequately connected digitally. Western New York is one of them. Data shows that schools, libraries and other public institutions continue to serve groups that do not have online access at home. Certain populations, including the unemployed and urban/rural poor, are more likely to use public libraries to access the Internet. Through its free and open access to technology and electronic resources, the B&EPCL is working to close the "digital divide."

Senior Population -- The number of American citizens over age 65 will double in the next 30 years, and the population of the Buffalo-Niagara region was found to be older on balance than its national counterparts. This is coupled with a decline in the young adult population in recent years. Such age shifts significantly affect the Library's service delivery priorities.

Virtual Library Users -- Library patrons who are World Wide Web users, a growing group, expect customization, interactivity and customer support. Approaches that are user-focused instead of library-focused are increasingly relevant, including new ways and technologies to simplify the task of navigating a complex information scene, personalized and current awareness services and new features to websites. The B&ECPL is finding ways to respond to this trend as well as provide remote access to library services and resources.

Community Awareness -- Public libraries face increasing competition for individuals' time and attention from large chain bookstores and the Internet. This factor increases the need for libraries to create a strong community presence through effective public relations and educational campaigns that emphasize the role of the professional librarian who is trained in acquiring useful and reliable information from a variety of sources.

Legislation -- Legislation also affects the Library's operations. For instance, in June 2003, the Supreme Court upheld the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which mandates the use of filters for public libraries that seek federal funding for Internet access, service or internal connections. The B&ECPL is installing filters on all computer workstations in compliance with CIPA.

Building on Successes

Efforts to create a strategic vision for the B&ECPL began in 1997 and culminated three years later with the report *Expanding Horizons: Directions for Superior Public Library Service in Erie County*. The specific targets outlined in that document, combined with dedicated, hard-working staff and the support of community members, organizations, public officials and businesses, allowed the B&ECPL to fulfill the majority of objectives identified in *Expanding Horizons*, accomplishing large and small improvements in both external and internal operations. The following achievements are examples of success.

Upgrading Public Access Computers -- To capitalize on cost savings and more efficient and effective operations, the B&ECPL recently completed a major upgrade of its public access computers by installing Citrix server-based computing, which allows the Library's Network Support staff to accomplish software upgrades without physically handling each of the more than 700 public access computers located throughout the System.

Improved Reference Services -- In 2002, the Central Library began providing telephone reference hours on Saturdays as well as e-mail reference through the B&ECPL's web site feature, *AskUs*. Both services are delivered through the newly established e-Branch.

Homework Assistance for Students -- To assist in the educational needs of area students, the B&ECPL began offering “Live Homework Help” in the fall of 2002. Providing free, online interactive homework assistance for 4th through 12th graders, “Live Homework Help” has been supported entirely with private funds.

Enhanced Services for Persons with Disabilities -- *ZoomText*, an adaptive technology that enlarges text on a computer screen, was installed at all B&ECPL locations in 2003. In addition, many libraries purchased *JAWS*, a screen reading software. To benefit persons with speech or hearing impairments, a new TTY loan program sponsored by Verizon, Erie County and the B&ECPL was instituted.

Relationship Building -- Partnering to address needs in the community, the B&ECPL has forged relationships with other non-profit organizations, such as just buffalo literary center, University at Buffalo Libraries, Explore & More ... A Children’s Museum, Theatre of Youth and Enterprise Charter School.

More Convenient, Effective Searching -- At the end of 2003, the B&ECPL introduced MultiSearch, which dramatically simplifies a patron’s quest for information by enabling simultaneous searching of many different electronic sources, including subscription databases, selected websites and the Library’s online Catalog.

New Training Opportunities -- By leveraging operating, capital and grant funds with grant money received from Verizon Superpages, the B&ECPL was able to open a second, state-of-the-art computer training lab at the Central Library with staffed hours available for interactive class visits and open access for students and adults. These training opportunities supplement continuing sessions offered to the public through Central’s original computer lab.

Website Improvements -- In 2002, through the reclassification of another position, a full-time webmaster was hired, enabling many advances to the B&ECPL website. In addition, the procurement and utilization of a software package designed to extrapolate statistics now allows the B&ECPL to derive how patrons are utilizing the Library's website.

Online Catalog Upgrade -- The B&ECPL unveiled a more functional, flexible and appealing online public access catalog. Among the service enhancements introduced was the ability for patrons to place requests for materials online without staff assistance. E-mail notification to inform patrons of requested and overdue materials was introduced, saving the traditional postage costs associated with mailing notices to all patrons.

Staff Communication -- A redesigned staff Intranet was introduced, offering new tools to enhance staff time and productivity, offer less duplication of efforts, save on paper and printing costs and provide an effective means of communicating important information with all personnel in the organization.

THE BLUEPRINT

To build upon the extensive efforts of the past three years as outlined in *Expanding Horizons* and to further accomplish objectives defined in its Five Year Plan of Service, the B&ECPL has set forth this plan and is poised to build a strong foundation for serving future generations of library users.

Provide Access to Informational, Educational, Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

Meeting and exceeding the needs of Erie County residents requires that the B&ECPL offer an extensive array of quality services that enhance the social, cultural and intellectual growth of the community. These services must be reflective of the changing informational, educational and recreational interests of those who live, work and study in Erie County. Services must also be inclusive, reaching out to all segments of the population, including those speaking English as a second language, persons in institutions and residents of underserved areas. In particular, the senior citizen population is increasing significantly.

With the demand for library service at an all time high, the B&EPCL must continue to focus on its traditional roles, such as developing significant and cost-effective collections, maintaining inviting physical spaces and offering opportunities for skill enhancement. At the same time, the Library System must constantly evaluate and enhance its more recent initiatives, including providing electronic resources, convenient access to technology and a user-friendly and effective website and online Catalog. Finally, the B&ECPL must be responsive and flexible in addressing service voids as new community needs emerge.

Action Items:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere, conducive to the needs of visitors.*
- Offer variety in programming to attract new, diverse and larger audiences.*
- Develop partnerships to address community needs.
- Maintain relevant collections for diverse audiences.
- Collect and analyze demographic data.
- Restructure existing outreach services and expand System-wide.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Target Opportunities to Segments Within the Community

The B&ECPL has identified several groups for whom resources, time and attention must be particularly devoted. These include:

Children and Young Adults

Promoting a life-long love of reading and learning among our community's children and young adults is of paramount importance not only to the B&EPCL, but to parents, caregivers, educators and agencies assisting this population. The B&ECPL will proactively provide youth services and work to ensure that all libraries maintain current collections and inviting youth areas. The Library System will also organize and host programs and events for a variety of ages within this population, including the hard-to-reach teen audience. In addition, the B&ECPL will investigate supportive materials, programs and collaborations to further attract the school-age audience.

Action Items:

- Emphasize System resource sharing, such as the collective purchase and use of activity kits.*
- Share quality programs to take full advantage of staff efforts.
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas and communication among youth services specialists.
- Evaluate and revamp youth sections in a selected number of libraries per year.*
- Promote young adult use of library services and facilities.
- Create a user-friendly online Catalog interface for children.*
- Address services to at-risk children.

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Ethnic/Minority Populations

The B&ECPL will tailor services and collections to meet the needs of Erie County's diverse communities.

Action Items:

- Identify languages and cultures representative of Erie County.
- Acquire resources reflective of diverse cultures.*
- Introduce a Spanish language version of the online Catalog.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Business Community and Job Seekers

Through better service to individuals, government and businesses of all types and sizes, the B&ECPL helps to support the economic development of Erie County and creates a better informed citizenry. There are many different audiences that can benefit from further developing the Library's business

services. Training opportunities and specialized sources need to be readily available for groups such as the unemployed, underemployed, entrepreneurs, small business owners and non-profit organizations.

Action Items:

- Survey business customers preferred information, communication and delivery technologies.
- Explore providing a venue in the Central Library for on-site entrepreneur services through partnerships with local economic development organizations.*
- Further develop job resources and programming.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Persons with Disabilities

The Library recognizes its role in delivering services to persons with disabilities. Materials in various formats, assistive devices and adaptive technology have been incorporated into B&ECPL collections and computer workstations. However, the Library needs to continue expanding and enhancing these services and collections.

Action Items:

- Upgrade and expand adaptive technology and assistive devices.*
- Develop and implement sensitivity training for staff.
- Continue to incorporate universal design principals to allow web access for the widest range of users.*
- Investigate cost and feasibility of a books-by-mail program.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Make Resources More Accessible

As technology continues to advance and become further engrained in our culture, more and more people are becoming increasingly proficient in its use, utilizing it in all aspects of life from communicating, to banking, to shopping, to travel planning and investing. These individuals, many of whom access library resources without ever entering a library building, expect more convenient, simplified information acquisition and delivery. The B&ECPL must continue to provide user-focused services to this population and enhance its website to serve as an additional customer service point.

Mobile library operations have traditionally sought to serve areas of geographic isolation, providing resources to those who lack convenient access to a stationary library facility. In order to proactively revitalize these services in light of changing budgetary climates, shifting demographics and other 21st century challenges, the

B&ECPL is in the midst of an intensive evaluation of its mobile operations. This project was selected as part of the Urban Libraries Council Executive Leadership Institute.

Action Items:

- Incorporate book reviews, cover art and author biographies into online Catalog.
- Establish online book discussion groups.
- Explore creation of customized/personalized interfaces.*
- Develop strategy to deliver information services during non-traditional hours.*
- Investigate and implement alternative online payment options.
- Redesign website to more effectively incorporate recent and upcoming service features and information.
- Establish an email subscription newsletter to distribute Library communications.
- Implement online document delivery.*
- Identify, evaluate, prioritize and digitize selected collections.*
- Test and implement voice automation software to produce hold and overdue notifications as well as allow patrons to phone in renewals.
- Investigate using “weblogs” to disseminate public information.
- Develop a pilot project to provide wireless access at the Central Library.*
- Improve and coordinate service provided by mobile library units as a result of *New Models for Mobile Services* report.

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Offer Skill Development Opportunities

Libraries within the B&ECPL System should not only house resources, but offer opportunities to enhance the skills necessary to use them effectively and efficiently, both within library walls and outside them. Patrons can benefit from the guidance of highly qualified library employees through visits to their local library and through formal training sessions offered there. Through these interactions, individuals achieve personal enrichment, gain new talents and strive for lifelong learning.

Action Items:

- Develop specialized programs for targeted audiences, including the business community, job seekers, seniors, children and young adults.*
- Maintain and investigate expansion of sessions conducted by librarian subject specialists and experts in the community.
- Expand computer literacy programs for individuals who lack home or school access to computers and/or the Internet.*
- Explore alternatives to on-site training, such as distance learning and/or video conferencing.*

- Expand access to online training programs and interactive tutorials.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Develop Central Library as a Downtown Destination

Opened in its entirety in 1964, the downtown Central Library has undergone relatively few changes in its 40-year history. In an effort to transform the building into a 21st century destination, the Library Foundation of Buffalo & Erie County received a grant from the John R. Oishei Foundation for a space utilization and design study. Based on Library staff input and collection statistics, the findings generated recommendations for numerous interdependent projects, which were then delineated by cost and separated into construction phases. Projects include a renovated main entrance, children's department, popular materials area and Grosvenor Room with enhanced rare book exhibition space.

By continuing these efforts in coming years, a more accessible, appealing facility will be created. The library's treasures and staff proficiencies will be showcased.

Action Items:

- Pursue funding support for renovation project in cooperation with the Library Foundation of Buffalo & Erie County.*
- Complete renovation of the main entrance and popular materials department.
- Finalize design of Children's Room and Grosvenor Room/Rare Book display area.
- Complete renovation of Children's Room and Grosvenor Room/Rare Book display area, addressing security and preservation issues.*
- Maximize open shelf capacity for high circulation items.
- Reevaluate and resubmit a capital proposal for a feasibility study on construction of a multi-story parking facility connected to the building.*
- Consolidate service points for patron ease of use.
- Enhance non-traditional amenities by expanding used book store/gift shop and adding a café.
- Create quality programs and exhibits internally and in collaboration with other organizations to promote the library as a downtown destination.*
- Reinvent the Ring of Knowledge as an exhibition and public programming space.*
- Maximize collaborative efforts with Erie Community College's downtown expansion plans.

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Enhance Quality of Library Facilities

Western New York residents consider neighborhood libraries a valued commodity. The B&ECPL should work aggressively to ensure that facilities within its System are functional, attractive, comfortable and accessible in order to make the experience more enjoyable, productive and convenient for library users. In achieving quality facilities, the B&ECPL will cooperate with community members, library boards and elected officials to evaluate current needs and discuss options for addressing them.

In 2003, Erie County Executive Joel Giambra presented an offer to municipal authorities and library boards throughout Erie County. The County will provide capital funds to any community that desires a new, state-of-the-art library if the facility replaces two older, smaller and less accessible or adaptable buildings. Community support and involvement is necessary for a project to proceed. This proposal creates a model for future library development in Buffalo and Erie County, which the B&ECPL will pursue with receptive, interested community members and elected officials in an open and public process.

Action Items:

- Assess, monitor and encourage improvements to the physical plant of B&ECPL, working with local municipalities.
- Coordinate with the City of Buffalo to oversee construction of the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch located in the East Side of Buffalo.*
- Collaborate with communities willing to consolidate resources (e.g., South Buffalo) to improve the level and quality of library service as well as manage rising operational expenses.*
- Review and update *Guidelines for Approval of New Library Construction and Generic Building Program* to reflect current standards and trends in library site selection, building design and construction.
- Update and expand B&ECPL facilities inventory toward development of a facilities master plan.

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Support Efficient Internal Operations and a Well-Trained and Informed Work Force

Without the support and hard work of a dedicated, informed staff, the B&ECPL could not succeed in offering quality resources, programs or facilities. The Library's employees are at the center of all efforts in achieving superior service delivery. Therefore, time and resources must be devoted to continually educating both new and long-term employees in a variety of topics and issues. Effective, timely communication among staff at all levels and from across the entire System is crucial. Through improved training and communication, the B&ECPL will create uniformity across the

System, enhance services, ensure optimal use of new resources, increase awareness for System goals, policies and procedures and engender a more flexible, satisfied work force.

To leverage the economies of scale available through the B&ECPL System and Erie County, the Centralized Human Resources (CHR) program was initiated in 2001 as a cooperative effort among the B&ECPL, Erie County and participating contract libraries. CHR provides payroll, benefits administration and personnel services to contracting libraries, functions that they had previously performed themselves. This approach reduces potential employment liability and frees limited staff time, translating into improved service delivery. As resources become even more limited, the significance of this program is likely to increase and further expansion must be pursued.

The B&ECPL embarked on a plan in 2002 to evaluate all public service functions through its Process Improvement Project (PIP). The B&ECPL surveyed all public service staff to record their activities. This information will allow job-specific data to be assembled and analyzed in order to streamline processes, eliminate or automate procedures and maximize time, staff and other resources.

Technology is an integral part of providing public service and assisting staff in performing their duties. Providing a state-of-the-art, stable and responsive automation system needs to be addressed as the current system approaches obsolescence.

Action Items:

- Cross train staff to increase familiarity with more than one job.
- Continue to refine and streamline management structure.
- Provide formal training for intermediate managers to identify and develop leadership capacity.*
- Develop and implement a formal orientation program for new employees.
- Encourage professional development of staff.
- Train staff on the use of new technologies and electronic reference tools as well as print resources.
- Train all public service staff on use of filters and related policies and procedures.
- Implement new strategies to enhance customer service skills.
- Increase training, educational and communication opportunities for staff.*
- Investigate creation of career path in youth services.
- Recruit and hire staff from ethnic/minority populations and with alternate language abilities.
- Analyze PIP data and develop implementation plan.
- Enhance staff Intranet information and tools and expand staff access.
- Facilitate meetings with library directors/managers and trustee members.
- Monitor and improve communications infrastructure.*

- Monitor, evaluate and expand CHR program.
- Migrate to *Sirsi Unicorn* library automation system and train staff in its use.
- Install voice automation system for patron notifications to reduce postage costs.
- Adopt retail approach to hours of services and coordinate schedules among libraries.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Increase Visibility to Build Support, Awareness and Involvement

Creating and sustaining awareness for the B&ECPL, its services, programs and collections is necessary to ensure success in all other Library goals. The community must be cognizant of the Library and its resources for the institution's full impact to be reached. Proactive communication to targeted audiences on a timely basis is key. It is especially important to ensure that elected leaders at the local, state and federal levels understand the needs and value of the B&ECPL System that serves their constituents.

Action Items:

- Expedite and maximize the dissemination of information on library events, services and resources.
- Develop and implement promotional campaigns.*
- Cultivate relationships with community groups, public officials, organizations, businesses and media outlets.
- Highlight successes.
- Invite elected officials to library events.
- Create easily recognizable mascot incorporated into children's logo.*
- Offer an e-mail newsletter service.
- Tailor marketing efforts to include requirements of persons with disabilities.*

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Ensure Financial Resources for the Library's Growth and Stability

The B&ECPL's financial structure, buttressed by a single countywide equalized property tax levy for library purposes averaging well under \$1.00 per thousand valuation (Appendix III), has allowed Erie County to achieve a distinction unique in New York State, free and equal access to **any** and **every** public library in Erie County by **all Erie County residents and taxpayers**. The books and other resources of every library are transparently available to every county resident regardless of where they reside.

This unique arrangement has allowed the B&ECPL to take advantage of cost saving economies of scale, obtaining better pricing on purchases and eliminating duplication in

a wide range of library functions. Under this structure, the B&ECPL provides for centralized purchasing of library materials, technology and even basic supplies. During the last planning period, centralized utility pooling and centralized human resource services were added to the mix. These approaches allow the Library to concentrate resources on service delivery to the general public.

However, while this helps generate the maximum value for each Erie County tax dollar provided, it cannot offset the impacts of increasing costs for goods, employee health insurance and retirement. Combined expenses for retirement and employee health insurance in the 2004 budget have increased more than \$1.965 million —106% above the 2000 budget. Excluding these volatile costs, the B&ECPL's remaining expenses increased 7.7% over the period, 2% LESS than the consumer price index's 9.7% growth (Appendix IV). These costs have grown disproportionately in recent years even though overall budgeted staffing levels are unchanged and actual filled positions System-wide have declined modestly over the same period. Meanwhile, the property tax for library purposes **decreased** by 8.3% (Appendix V).

To maintain present service levels, additional revenue support will be required from both the state and local levels. Private fundraising efforts will need to be enhanced to supplement basic service levels. Should the community not provide increased support, library services would need to be reduced in a manner that is fair across the County.

Guiding principles in this endeavor include:

1. Assuring the stability and security of the B&ECPL's base revenue stream in order to sustain basic Library operations;
2. Distributing Library resources equitably across the entire System, factoring in population patterns, usage and the needs of the less fortunate;
3. Continuing to meet or exceed state minimum operating standards;
4. Encouraging library building owners (municipalities and associations) to maintain and enhance their building offerings to ensure state facility standards are met or exceeded, including facility reconfiguration or consolidation where supported by the community; and
5. Providing accountability to funding sources and responsibly managing the use of Library resources.

Action Items:

- Seek to shift library materials support back from the Erie County Capital Budget to the property tax designated for library purposes and increase the budget allocation to offset inflation.*
- Advocate to improve state library aid programs by including provisions to offset the impact of population loss in struggling upstate areas and annually address the impact of inflation.

- Increase coordinated fund-raising efforts in cooperation with the Library Foundation of Buffalo & Erie County, Inc.
- Request renewal of the Library Protection Act, expansion to include capital outlays and, if possible, seek its permanency.
- Comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as enacted and interpreted by the courts in order to remain eligible for e-rate funding.*
- Apply annually for e-rate discounts.

**May require restructuring and/or supplemental funds beyond current resources.*

Conclusion

This is a promising time in B&ECPL history. Not only is demand for information and library services at an unprecedented level, but a number of unique opportunities are available that have the potential to benefit the System and cultivate the services it provides. With plans to create an education corridor in downtown Buffalo, enhanced development opportunities through the Library Foundation of Buffalo & Erie County and its multi-million dollar renovation project, the Central Library has tremendous potential and is working to become a destination point for all Western New York residents. Erie County Executive Joel Giambra has offered communities the chance to replace inadequate library buildings with new, superior facilities to better meet the needs of citizens. To ensure the most efficient and effective use of increasingly limited funds, the B&ECPL System is in the process of evaluating all public service staff responsibilities and its mobile operations. Additionally, cooperative programming and shared resource ventures are being initiated among City of Buffalo branches and can serve as models for the entire System.

By combining these opportunities with a strategic vision, balance between traditional roles and new initiatives, an investment in staff and technology, the flexibility to meet changing needs, greater community awareness and stable funding support, the B&ECPL can continue to foster real improvements in the lives of community members. Whether boosting the performance of students, multiplying the prosperity of businesses, providing needed health information to seniors or offering career training to job seekers, the Library is here to stimulate results, contributing to the success and quality of life of the people it exists to serve.

The plans for future library service outlined in this document will accomplish much more than the building of new physical structures. They propose building knowledge, opportunities and connections within our community.

Adopted July 15, 2004

APPENDIX I

History

1836 marked the beginning of continuous library service in Western New York when the Young Men's Association (YMA) was created to acquire books of permanent or lasting value for its members. In exchange for sufficient funds to support its varied operations, the YMA became the Buffalo Public Library in 1897, transferring ownership of its books to the City of Buffalo and re-establishing itself as a free circulating and reference library open to all city residents. Ownership of the building, however, remained with the Library.

A second library, the Grosvenor Library, had been operating within Buffalo as a non-circulating public reference library since 1871. As the years progressed, the Grosvenor established a host of noteworthy collections including patent information and military and legal documents.

In 1947, yet another library, the Erie County Public Library, was created. It provided bookmobile service to rural towns and villages, offered outreach service to the confined and instituted centralized support services - e.g., book ordering, cataloging, book preparation and consulting - for the county's independent, autonomous community libraries, each with its own Board of Trustees.

In an effort to protect the two city libraries as Buffalo experienced financial difficulties as well as provide better library services for the entire county, the three library institutions were merged by New York State special legislation in 1953. The merger created one federated, city/county organization: the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. Ownership of the Buffalo Public and the Grosvenor Library buildings and their respective book collections was transferred to Erie County. In 1963, their collections were integrated on the shelves in the partially completed east block of a new Central Library building.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, as the Erie County economy remained strong, a total of 25 buildings were constructed in Buffalo and surrounding towns. In 1976, the financial troubles experienced by the City spread to the County. For the B&ECPL, County revenue problems took the form of service and personnel cuts, although small restorations occurred the next year and a portion of the furloughed staff was recalled. Since then, as the County's industrial base continued to shrink, the B&ECPL's Board and administration struggled to maintain services, gain adequate materials' budgets and provide reasonable staffing levels.

In 1992, the Library won a lawsuit to secure the administrative and financial authority that had been abridged by Erie County officials. In that same year, the Library

Protection Act was adopted. This local law dedicates a portion of the real property tax for Library purposes and guarantees that funds appropriated by the Erie County Legislature cannot be re-appropriated to cover mid-year shortfalls elsewhere in the Erie County budget. The Library Protection Act does not guarantee a stable or escalating level of funding.

Governance Structure

As specified by the 1953 New York State Law, the B&ECPL is a legally constituted, federated library system serving both the City of Buffalo and Erie County. It is governed by 15 trustees: at least eight of whom are electors of the City and at least five of whom are electors of the County outside the city. These trustees have legal responsibility for the B&ECPL budget and the authority to set operations and service policies for the Library System as a whole. The B&ECPL Board also has the fiscal authority over how its funds will be expended. The Board, for example, has the power to determine the proportion of funding it allocates for staffing or for materials, for networked computers or for mobile services.

The B&ECPL Board enters into a contract annually with each of the 22 contract library boards throughout Erie County. Each library board is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents in Albany and constitutes a legally independent entity that selects its director, makes policy and serves the library interests of its community. When a library contracts with the B&ECPL, the municipality no longer directly raises money for library operations. An equalized county-wide tax supports all the libraries within the B&ECPL. The contract library's budget is part of the Library System's operating budget, and with the exception of the libraries participating in the Centralized Human Resources (CHR) program, a contract library is paid in quarterly installments. In return, the contract library receives materials and services supplied by the B&ECPL (e.g., computer network, shipping, ordering and processing of materials).

New York State grants the B&ECPL Board of Trustees considerable authority under the law. Historically, the Board had been restrained in its exercise of that authority, perhaps because it was not until 1992 that the State Court of Appeals issued a definitive ruling on the matter.

Within the federated system, however, the B&ECPL Board of Trustees does not have authority over any of the buildings the Library System occupies and manages for service delivery. Each building is owned by a free association or by the municipality in which it is located. The B&ECPL does not control the interior or exterior conditions of those buildings, except for the furnishings and collections it provides. It pays the salaries of the staff who may or may not be in the direct employ of the B&ECPL Board. The Central Library building is owned by Erie County, and the branches within the city are owned by the City of Buffalo with the exception of one leased property.

APPENDIX II

Mission Statement

Connecting our diverse community with library resources that enrich, enlighten and entertain.

Principles

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library will:

1. Provide open, equal and free access to information in accordance with the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights."
2. Deliver timely, confidential and customer-oriented service to meet the informational, recreational and educational needs of the community.
3. Promote lifelong learning by encouraging all children and adults in their enjoyment of reading and discovery.
4. Contribute to the region's economic vitality by assisting individuals, businesses and government as they pursue better jobs and economic growth.
5. Create and maintain an environment that attracts, develops and encourages a diverse and skilled staff.
6. Listen to the entire community in pursuit of the Library's Mission.
7. Manage resources effectively and be accountable to its funding sources.
8. Pursue the private and public funding necessary to fulfill the Library's Mission.

The Mission Statement and Principles form the basis for decisions that affect the daily operation of the B&ECPL and those that shape future goals and objectives. In adopting these, the Board of Trustees recognizes and upholds the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights.

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should

not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

APPENDIX III

ERIE COUNTY EQUALIZED FULL VALUE PROPERTY TAX RATES

	2000 ADOPTED BUDGET			2004 ADOPTED BUDGET		
	COUNTY TAX	FOR LIBRARY PURPOSES	TOTAL 2000 TAX RATE	COUNTY TAX	FOR LIBRARY PURPOSES	TOTAL 2004 TAX RATE
BUFFALO CITY	\$4.67	\$0.79	\$5.46	\$3.65	\$0.69	\$4.34
LACKAWANNA CITY	6.11	1.04	7.15	4.25	0.80	5.05
TONAWANDA CITY	5.74	0.98	6.72	4.38	0.83	5.21
ALDEN	6.80	1.16	7.96	5.69	1.07	6.76
AMHERST	6.69	1.14	7.83	3.69	0.69	4.38
AURORA	7.70	1.31	9.01	6.85	1.29	8.14
BOSTON	6.29	1.07	7.36	6.02	1.14	7.16
BRANT	5.70	0.97	6.67	3.71	0.70	4.41
CHEEKTOWAGA	7.59	1.29	8.88	5.84	1.10	6.94
CLARENCE	4.76	0.81	5.57	3.66	0.69	4.35
COLDEN	6.77	1.15	7.92	6.55	1.24	7.79
COLLINS	5.42	0.92	6.34	4.56	0.86	5.42
CONCORD	7.05	1.20	8.25	6.09	1.15	7.24
EDEN	4.86	0.83	5.69	4.35	0.82	5.17
ELMA	72.75	12.36	85.11	61.93	11.68	73.61
EVANS	6.02	1.02	7.04	5.06	0.95	6.01
GRAND ISLAND	7.66	1.30	8.96	5.97	1.13	7.10
HAMBURG	5.80	0.98	6.78	4.80	0.91	5.71
HOLLAND	5.44	0.92	6.36	3.71	0.70	4.41
LANCASTER	5.56	0.94	6.50	4.64	0.87	5.51
MARILLA	6.68	1.13	7.81	6.35	1.20	7.55
NEWSTEAD	4.74	0.81	5.55	3.89	0.73	4.62
NORTH COLLINS	4.78	0.81	5.59	3.71	0.70	4.41
ORCHARD PARK	5.92	1.00	6.92	5.12	0.97	6.09
SARDINIA	5.45	0.92	6.37	5.39	1.02	6.41
TONAWANDA	7.39	1.26	8.65	5.99	1.13	7.12
WALES	7.50	1.27	8.77	6.85	1.29	8.14
WEST SENECA	7.92	1.34	9.26	6.53	1.23	7.76
AVERAGE	4.79	0.81	5.60	3.72	0.70	4.42

Average Per \$1,000 of Equalized Taxable Full Value

Source: Erie County Adopted Budget Summary Books, 2000 and 2004 Adopted Budgets

APPENDIX IV

BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY 2000 TO 2004 ADOPTED BUDGET COMPARISON

	2000	2004	Change vs. 2000 Adopted	
	BUDGET	BUDGET	Dollars	Percent
Library General Budget				
Library Real Property Tax	\$26,393,455	\$24,197,118	(\$2,196,337)	-8.3%
All Other Library Operating Revenue	3,553,242	4,284,322	731,080	20.6%
Total Operating Revenue	29,946,697	28,481,440	(1,465,257)	-4.9%
Items In Erie County Capital Budget				
Support for Library Materials	0	4,500,000	4,500,000	
Support for Vehicles, Computer Equipment and Office Equipment	0	165,000	165,000	
Subtotal County Capital Items	0	4,665,000	4,665,000	
Library Debt Service Items Supported by Erie County				
For the County Owned Central Library Building*	0	885,404	885,404	
For Library System Automation	0	183,540	183,540	
Subtotal County Debt Service Items	0	1,068,944	1,068,944	
Combined Operating and County Capital Items	\$29,946,697	\$34,215,384	\$4,268,687	14.3%

Major Factors Impacting Library Operating Costs

State Retirement Charges	\$88,365	\$1,813,761	\$1,725,396	1952.6%
Employee & Retiree Health Insurance	1,761,071	2,001,345	240,274	13.6%
Subtotal	\$1,849,436	\$3,815,106	\$1,965,670	106.3%

Combined Library Cost Increase Excluding Retirement & Health			\$2,303,017	7.7%
Consumer Price Index as of January	168.8	185.2	16.4	9.7%

* As a result of the 1953 law establishing the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, library building ownership and the related capital expenses rest with the individual municipality or free association that owns the library building (these building ownership costs are not supported by the County-wide Property Tax for Library Purposes). As Erie County owns the Central Library building, it is appropriate that the above building ownership costs be supported by the County general fund rather than the County-wide Property Tax for Library Purposes.

APPENDIX V

BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY 2000 TO 2004 ADOPTED BUDGET COMPARISON

Erie County Adopted Budget	2000	2004	Change vs. 2000 Adpt	
	BUDGET	BUDGET	Dollars	Percent
Library Real Property Tax	\$26,393,455	\$24,197,118	(\$2,196,337)	-8.3%
General County Tax	155,372,986	128,332,433	(27,040,553)	-17.4%
Total Property Tax Levy	\$181,766,441	\$152,529,551	(\$29,236,890)	-16.1%

Bonded Support for Library	
Materials (In Erie County Capital Budget)	\$4,500,000
As a Percent Of the Library Levy	18.6%
As a Percent Of the Total Levy	3.0%
As a Percent Of the Library's Combined Operating, Capital & Debt Service Expense	13.2%