Maximizing Collective Resources:

A Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018

ACLA Vision

We envision a healthy, engaged, and thriving community supported by libraries that welcome, inspire and educate.

ACLA Mission

As a federated library system, ACLA provides and promotes the highest quality public library service possible for all residents of Allegheny County through collaboration, cooperation, and coordination.

ACLA Core Values

Visionary Leadership	*We encourage visionary leadership committed to excellence and innovation.*
Ethical Stewardship	*We promote ethical stewardship of resources.*
Openness and Collaboration	*We promote a free and open exchange of information and active collaboration.*
Respect	*We respect diversity of member library opinions and community needs.*

ACLA HQ Core Services

Advocacy	*We actively promote the value of public library service to municipal, County and State officials and other stakeholders and provide tools and information for libraries to do the same locally.*
Capacity Building	*We consult with libraries about governance, resource development, and library operations and we provide administrative support services to increase local library capacity and allow libraries to focus local resources on direct public service.*
Communications	*We coordinate, facilitate and manage internal and external communications, marketing, and public relations to assist libraries in service delivery and to promote broad awareness of library service.*
Professional Development	*We design and coordinate professional development opportunities for library staff and boards.*
Resource Development	*We secure and distribute public and private funds that further the mission of the system and our member libraries.*

ACLA Member Libraries

Andrew Bayne Memorial Library

Andrew Carnegie Free Library

Avalon Public Library

Baldwin Borough Public Library

Bethel Park Public Library

Braddock Carnegie Library

Brentwood Library

Bridgeville Public Library

C. C. Mellor Memorial Library

Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale

Carnegie Library of Homestead

Carnegie Library of McKeesport

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Clairton Public Library

Community Library Of Allegheny Valley

Community Library Of Castle Shannon

Cooper-Siegel Community Library

Coraopolis Memorial Library

Crafton Public Library

Dormont Public Library

F.O.R. Sto-Rox Library

Green Tree Public Library

Hampton Community Library

Jefferson Hills Public Library

Monroeville Public Library

Moon Township Public Library

Mt. Lebanon Public Library

North Versailles Public Library

Northern Tier Regional Library

Northland Public Library

Oakmont Carnegie Library

Penn Hills Library

Pleasant Hills Public Library

Plum Borough Community Library

Robinson Township Library

Scott Township Public Library

Sewickley Public Library

Shaler North Hills Library

South Fayette Township Library

South Park Township Library

Springdale Free Public Library

Upper St. Clair Township Library

Western Allegheny Community Library

Whitehall Public Library

Wilkinsburg Public Library

BACKGROUND

From its inception ACLA has promoted the value of working together to form a dynamic and customer responsive system. Chief accomplishments include:

- *The formation and establishment of a countywide federated library system.*
- *The securing of RAD, table gaming, and State funds to support local libraries as well as countywide service.*
- *The implementation of a countywide technology infrastructure with a unified catalog and providing "One Card" access across the system.*
- *The on-going delineation of responsibilities among ACLA, the District, and eiNetwork to reduce duplication.*

In 2014 ACLA participated in an in-depth, organization-wide process: *Library Service in the 21st Century* (*LS21*). Two reports were issued from that process that serve to inform the strategic direction and plan.

- [Final report from the County City Library Service Panel](#)
- [Final Report from Public Facilitation](#)

In addition to the findings and recommendations from the LS21 process, other information was reviewed and considered including:

- Previous standards documents and reports,*
- Various operational checklists compiled previously by Librarians Advisory Council subgroups,*
- On-going State discussion regarding standards.

This work, together with the collective history of the organization, serves as the basis for the strategic focus for 2016-18.

*Much of this information is readily available and [posted to the ACLA wiki](#) (acla.pbworks.com).

Strategic Goals for 2016-2018

Goal 1:	*Strengthen libraries and improve access to library service countywide.*
Goal 2:	*Leverage consortium size and resources to help local libraries thrive.*
Goal 3:	*Increase positioning of libraries as essential partners in community building.*
Goal 4:	*Re-assess existing structures and organizational systems to determine how best to maximize public investment in library service.*

Goal 1: *Strengthen libraries and improve access to library service countywide.*

Objective 1: Determine resources needed by local libraries for implementation of System Standards.

- *Convene work groups in the three areas of Standards (community responsiveness, consortium participation, and governance) to identify resources needed and current best practices.*
- *Make tools and resources readily available to library leadership.*
- *Coordinate training opportunities and one-on-one consulting with libraries as needed.*

Objective 2: Assist in promoting increased funding at the local level.

- *Assess current support.*
- *Provide tools and information to local libraries and municipal officials encouraging increased support.*
- *Provide training to local libraries in how to advocate effectively for increased support.*
- *Support libraries seeking local referenda.*
- *Actively encourage individual contributions to local libraries.*
  - *Promote online giving through the donor portal.*
  - *Coordinate public campaign for giving.*
  - *Coordinate fundraising and development training opportunities for library leadership.*

Objective 3: Improve and better promote accessibility and ease of use of library services.

- *Ensure shared catalog and ILS data is of highest quality.*
  - *Support standardized cataloging (RDA) for clean item records and minimal duplication.*
  - *Support correct input of patron information.*
- *Develop more consistent policies regarding patron services, as identified by the public (e.g., loan period, fines, computer use).*
- *Improve accessibility of all libraries and library services.*
  - *Conduct assessment of library facilities, prioritize needs, and seek funding to address deficiencies.*
  - *Assess and improve accessibility of library programming.*
- *Develop clear models for service to un-served or under-served populations.*

Goal 2: Leverage consortium size and resources to help local libraries thrive.

Objective 1: Develop additional organizational models.

- *Expand the use of administrative services agreements between libraries and/or ACLA.*
- *Investigate ways of sharing staff among libraries.*
- *Consider how high-level staff expertise might be deployed across multiple libraries.*
- *Consider how regional partnerships can leverage resources and improve efficiencies and quality of services provided.*

Objective 2: Develop opt-in back-office support services.

- *Streamline accounting and payroll services.*
- *Investigate similar support for Human resources.*
- *Support the development of cataloging services being piloted by CLP.*
- *Encourage pilot programs / services that may be provided by one Member Library to another.*

Objective 3: Create additional membership benefits by leveraging consortium size.

- *Investigate umbrella options for benefits, retirement opportunities, and other services (e.g., telephone systems, security systems, cleaning services, etc.).*
- *Identify volume purchasing options.*
- *Assess other insurance coverage options (including D&O, disability, etc.).*
- *Negotiate group memberships in organizations like PANO, Board Source, and United for Libraries, providing local library access to additional informational resources and technical assistance. Provide information / workshops on best way to take advantage of these membership benefits.*
- *Provide access to HR consulting expertise.*
- *Provide clearinghouse for policies, procedures, and forms.*
- *Coordinate professional development workshops in HR, accounting, and risk management.*

Goal 3: *Increase positioning of libraries as essential partners in community building.*

Objective 1: Demonstrate the value of public libraries to policymakers, funders and the public.

- *Develop and maintain a succinct "case statement" for value of libraries (supported by current data, statistics, and studies).*
- *Develop and track key impact measures of library service.*
- *Produce relevant marketing materials and informational pieces as well as adaptable templates for local application.*
- *Provide training in managing municipal relationships and how to be actively engaged in community planning.*

Objective 2: Establish strategic partnerships that promote and enhance library services.

- *Identify key county-level or regional players; establish relationships that offer:*
  - *Active involvement opportunities that engage both libraries and their communities;*
  - *Increased visibility of library services and resources on the local and/or county-level;*
  - *Potential funding opportunities through grants and other revenue streams;*
  - *Access to resources providing the most current information on issues/topics to both increase library staff knowledge and augment available library materials.*

Objective 3: Raise brand awareness and identity of the Allegheny County Library Association and its member libraries.

- *Develop and implement a marketing and advocacy plan that targets ACLA resources for greatest impact.*
- *Develop common messaging / branding for countywide and local application.*
- *Operate as clearinghouse for the public and stakeholders for information on libraries and library services in Allegheny County.*

Goal 4: *Re-assess existing structures and organizational systems to determine how best to maximize public investment in library service.*

Objective 1: Explore opportunities to centralize services where advantageous.

- *With the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh assess areas identified by libraries for possible centralization:*
    - *selection / acquisition / cataloguing / processing of materials;*
    - *technology support including web site management;*
    - *human resources including common job descriptions, performance standards, recruiting, training and policies;*
    - *access to highly trained staff including youth services and workforce development*
- *Create pilot opt-in programs for libraries through ACLA HQ or with other Member Libraries.*

Objective 2: Work with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh to determine most effective centralized support structure.

- *Continue to examine and monitor relationship among ACLA, CLP / District, and eiNetwork for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce duplication.*
- *Consider benefits of merging structures to streamline support for library service.*

Intended Outcomes

Libraries are viewed as essential community assets.

- ✓ *Library staff is integrally involved in community planning and decision-making.*
- ✓ *Libraries have data and information demonstrating the value of library services to their community.*
- ✓ *Libraries capture community testimonials.*
- ✓ *Libraries share their story in a way that resonates with the community.*

Boards are effective stewards of public resources.

- ✓ *Boards practice a focus on mission and strategy.*
- ✓ *Boards follow best practice in fiscal management.*
- ✓ *Boards clearly delineate and observe the roles of governance and management.*
- ✓ *Boards have a long-term strategy for maintaining the library's physical resources (including the building, equipment, and collection).*
- ✓ *Boards have a long-term strategy for maintaining an excellent staff (including providing adequate training opportunities, competitive wages and benefits packages, appropriate HR polices, and a safe work environment).*

Staff has skills to provide excellent service.

- ✓ *Staff is customer focused.*
- ✓ *Staff delivers a high level of early literacy support.*
- ✓ *Staff understands and supports shifting education platform (Common Core, STEM).*
- ✓ *Staff is ready to assist public with new technologies.*
- ✓ *Staff is prepared to connect users with necessary resources and outside support agencies.*
- ✓ *Staff is able and willing to advocate on behalf of the library and library services.*

Resources available for library service will increase and be used more effectively.

- ✓ *Libraries will generate more local government support.*
- ✓ *Private funding will be increased.*
- ✓ *Countywide initiatives will gain more financial support (private and grant-based).*
- ✓ *Functions with countywide impact will be streamlined.*
- ✓ *There will be more collaboration across municipal boundaries.*