



**The Innisfil Public Library**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**March, 2012**

## The Innisfil Public Library Strategic Plan

### A Message from the Chair and CEO

The Library Board and staff prepared this Strategic Plan to identify priorities and chart a future course for the Innisfil Public Library (IPL). The Plan describes how we will work with our Council and community to ensure the Library remains a vital and essential part of our changing community. Investing our resources wisely, we will maintain the high standards of library services expected by our current users and will actively seek out services to attract both new users and non-users to meet the needs of a diverse community today and in the future. These issues are important; however, they are not IPL's greatest challenge and they are not the focus of the Strategic Plan. Rather, the Strategic Plan's purpose is to describe a public library that keeps pace with a changing world.

In creating the Strategic Plan, the Board and senior library staff were guided by the results of community consultations. The Library enjoys a great deal of support among residents, Council members, and represents a wide range of community interests. We will maintain our current supporters, but also reach new sectors of the community and gain their respect, attachment and commitment. Our current users are very satisfied with our services. However, we discovered that among users there are many who do not fully understand or appreciate all the services available from the library. In addition, we recognize that we do not serve the entire community and many of our residents do not see the Library as an important part of their lives. A central goal of our Strategic Plan is to change this perception. Through the vision and actions that we have adopted, the Innisfil Public Library will find a meaningful place in the lives of all residents and make a substantial contribution to their community satisfaction.

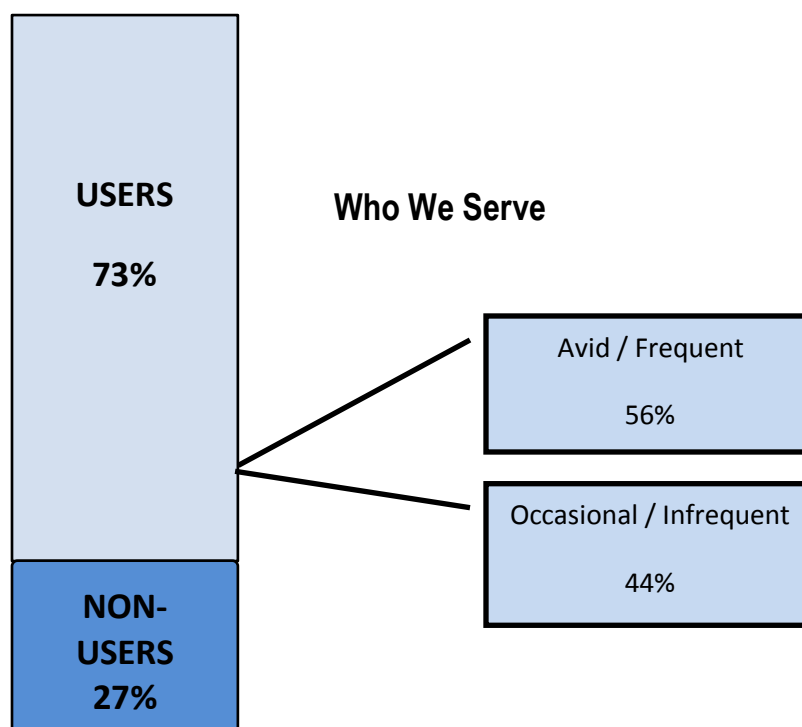
Sincerely,

Board Chair

Library CEO

## Our Challenge – Laying the Foundation for the Library of the Future

Before preparing our Strategic Plan, we took a close look at those we are serving today and the opinions of library users and non-users. What we discovered had a profound effect on our thinking about the future of the IPL. Seventy-three percent of households report using the Library in the past year compared to 27% who did not. This split of user and non-user would compare very favourably with other public libraries in Ontario and is encouraging. However, a closer examination of this data revealed some troubling signs. Among our users, close to half (44%) are occasional or infrequent users visiting only once or twice a year. Clearly we have not fully engaged these residents. We are confident that we can be a more significant part of their lives.



Our avid and frequent users visit at least once a month and are strongly committed to the Library. However, these users are older residents and, we expect, more connected to traditional library services. We also know that non-users are much less likely to have children at home. We appear to be most successful in reaching older recreational readers and families with young children. In some respects this is not surprising as these are traditional roles for the public library; however, we believe that our future is strongly tied to reaching out to occasional and infrequent users and non-users. This will be a challenging task because the survey data indicates that these residents are not dissatisfied with what we offer, but simply do not see the Library as a relevant part of their lives. Two-thirds of our non-users (and a third of our users) indicate that the Library “is not top of mind and they just don’t think to go there”. The majority of both users and non-users could not identify specific services that would encourage or

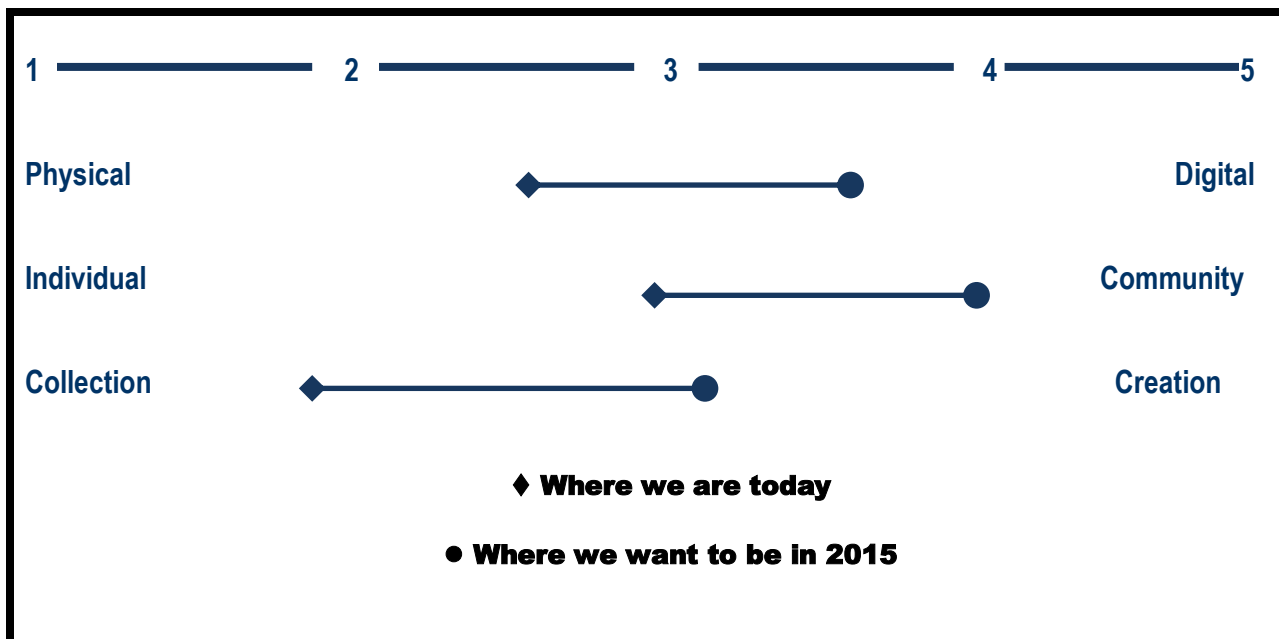
increase their use of the IPL. To reach these residents, we must present them with a different type of library. It will be a library that is an integral part of this community and an active participant in resolving the issues that matter most to our residents. It will be a library that facilitates innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. It will be a partner in important community initiatives and a resource to residents coping with a rapidly changing world.

To successfully reach a broader spectrum of our community, we will need to reposition the Library and shift the focus of our service. We discussed this with respect to three continuums of library service delivery – the Physical/Digital Library, the Individual/Community Library, and the Collection/Creation Library.\*

All public libraries are considering the appropriate mix of physical, digital, virtual resources and spaces. While we have significantly increased our digital options and virtual presence in recent years, we see these trends continuing.

We will continue our recent efforts to more closely connect the Library to the community. Our staff will provide personalized service for individual residents, but will also increase the Library’s community focus by offering resources to community groups; working directly on community projects; participating in community events; providing access to local information and community memorabilia and artifacts, and by telling the community’s story.

### Shifting Roles for Our Library



Note: Library Board members and staff indicated where the Library was today and where it should be in the future on a 5 point scale as indicated above. The figure represents the average values as reported by all participants.

\*See *Confronting the Future: Strategic Visions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Library*. ALA. Office of Information Technology Policy. June 2011.

Finally, our Library will increasingly become a place for creation. It is perhaps the most significant shift in service that we envision for the future. In addition to providing convenient, free access to collections, information and works of art and entertainment, we will become the place where these materials are created and where residents have access to the specialized equipment, facilities, staff and other resources to explore their creativity, imagination and innovation.

We will be a different type of Library in the future; one that can more successfully serve the wide range of interests and needs reflected in our community. The Strategic Plan is our guide to that future.

“We see the library as not being in the book business, but being in the learning business, in the exploration business, in the expand your mind business.

- Jeff Krull, Library Director Allen County, Podcast on CBC 2011

## Our Vision: Sparking Ideas to Ignite A Creative and Dynamic Community

In the future, the Library will be embedded in the very fabric of the community. Not only will it reflect the community, but it will also actively connect residents with ideas, knowledge, culture, services, content, media, technologies and other people.

The Library will act as the catalyst by which Innisfil residents transform their lives, themselves. It will become "top of mind" by providing access to opportunities for people to come together to learn, discuss, discover, test and create.

To support this vision, library spaces will be designed for creating, thinking, learning, performance, individual and community interaction. Our organizational culture and structure will complement and support our service delivery in its responsiveness and innovation.

We'll pursue our Vision by focusing on five Strategic Directions:

- Make the library a hub for discovery and experience
- Design and construct creative, collaborative space
- Develop a strong community presence
- Cultivate a "hacker ethic"
- Foster a culture of innovation.

In the pages that follow, we describe the actions we'll pursue to achieve these strategic directions. These actions will be further developed in IPL's annual operational plans, budgets, staffing priorities and management activities. The Strategic Plan will be a guiding document and a point of reference for these ongoing operational responsibilities.

These strategies do not describe all that the IPL must do in the next five years; instead, they describe the five key areas where the IPL must chart a new course and embark on new directions to better serve the community in the future. IPL will pursue these new directions, but will also continue to improve and expand the services that residents currently enjoy.

The Strategic Plan is the over-riding document describing the Library's future. It is the umbrella under which other planning studies, policies and procedures will be developed.

*"Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something"*

- Kurt Vonnegut

## Make the Library a Hub for Discovery and Experience

**Our goal is to offer services and programs that are meaningful for all Innisfil residents.**

*The Library of the 21st century goes beyond the media, technology and events of today. It acts as a guide to innovation and a source of constant discovery for those who make Innisfil their home or place of business. Our library provides all residents the opportunity to grow and transform their lives through meaningful experiences.*

**To realize this goal, we will take the following actions:**

**Action Plan #1: Continuously Invoke Curiosity, Stimulate the Imagination, and Encourage Life-Long Learning and Literacy** - We will provide unique experiences and opportunities for the community which spark innovation, collaboration, experimentation, exploration, re-thinking, social and civic engagement in a free and open environment. The Library will be the centre for the sharing and recognition of community and individual ideas and creations.

**Action Plan #2: Capture Community Memory** – the Library, in conjunction with other community groups, is in a unique position to tell Innisfil’s story and to celebrate those things, past and present, that make our community special. We will play a central role in initiatives designed to bring Innisfil’s story to the community by focusing on heritage, significant events and people, the cultural landscape and the manner in which the “land and the lake” have formed our community. We will do this in conjunction with local community groups, but also by promoting and supporting the creative talents of local residents.

**Action Plan #3: Undertake a Service and Program Review** – we will review our current services and programs for consistency with the Strategic Plan directions and priorities. To ensure that we continue to make the best use of our resources (including technological devices and applications, staff, partners and budget), we will as necessary add, divest and adjust existing offerings. We will collaborate with business and community stakeholders to ensure services and programs are relevant and respond to the needs of the community.

**Action Plan #4: Position the Library as a Major Community Asset** – we will ensure that all sectors of the community, and particularly those that may not currently have a relationship with IPL, recognize their Library as a dynamic, creative resource offering a wide range of services. We acknowledge that we do not serve all Innisfil residents and that many of these residents do not view the public library as a significant or relevant part of their life. In order to reverse this trend, we must rebrand the Library and develop a model for citizen involvement that invites all residents to explore the full range of library services. We will prepare a marketing plan specifically for this purpose as well as continually evaluate and improve our services to ensure we are relevant to all Innisfil residents.

“A voyage of discovery consists of not seeking new lands, but seeing with new eyes.”

- Proust

## Design & Construct Creative, Collaborative Space

**Our goal is for people to experience and contribute to services in both virtual and physical spaces that are engaging and reflect the uniqueness of Innisfil's communities.**

*As technology increasingly becomes an integral part of everyone's life, our spaces will continue to evolve. They will be places where people come together to learn, to explore ideas, to create, converse and build community and personal relationships. These spaces will be highly flexible, readily adjusting to changing service requirements. People will feel these spaces are their spaces – reflecting their Innisfil and their lives.*

---

**To realize this goal, we will take the following actions:**

**Action Plan #1: Build and Modify Physical Spaces that Accommodate Human Needs and Desires –**

During the strategic planning process we heard from the people how important the physical places are in their lives – as places to gather with friends, engage in programming, create, explore digital and print resources, encourage their children's sense of discovery and love of reading, and for quiet study and contemplation. They see these places as a part of their neighbourhood. As part of our overall review of services and programs we'll determine how best to:

- a) transition our current physical places into flexible multiple purpose spaces that embrace performance, creation, meetings, programming, arts and culture as well as quiet and transformation space and emerging new formats/media.
- b) position convenient service points in the community for different service levels (e.g. kiosks, shared service points with other agencies, etc.)
- c) design and construct new physical places to support Innisfil's growing, diversifying residential and business communities

**Action Plan #2: Expand Virtual Spaces to Provide Heightened, Responsive, Barrier-free Experiences–**

Technology is an incredible enabler. We will provide the tools and applications that enable people who can't physically travel to participate in programs and partake in services that might otherwise be restricted. They bring people together with resources and experts, neighbours and colleagues. Digital tools take the Library into homes and offices. We'll continue to push the boundaries of our web spaces with an annual digital space plan that identifies tools, applications and partnerships we'll pursue and for which we will allocate resources to incorporate into our services and programming spaces.

“...the arts are not a way to make a living; they are a very human way to make life more bearable.”

- Kurt Vonnegut



## Develop a Strong Community Presence

**Our goal is to be a resource to all community residents and to a play central role in the affairs of the community.**

*Possessing a close and collaborative connection to our residents, businesses and community agencies is essential to our ability to serve the community. The IPL will build more robust partnerships by working more closely with our users and reaching out to non-users. We will expand our role in important community initiatives, including economic development, special events and efforts to tell our story and celebrate all that is unique and important to Innisfil. We will ensure that we have a more visible, vibrant position in the community and more effectively contribute to Innisfil's future.*

***To realize this goal, we will take the following actions:***

**Action Plan #1: Make Collaboration a Way of Life** – the continued development and enhancement of community partnerships is a critical element of the community relationships strategic direction. We have always been open to partnerships with the community but have not always pursued these relationships with a clear sense of the long term objectives of the Library. We recognize the fundamental importance of partnerships to our future and will take steps to ensure we make the most of the opportunities offered by future partnerships. Criteria will be developed and used to regularly evaluate partnerships to ensure that those pursued by the IPL are consistent with outcomes and support future strategic directions as well as meet the needs of the IPL and our partners.

**Action Plan #2: Be a Driving Force for a Creative Economy** – we will continue to work with the municipal economic development staff and provincial government agencies to support small businesses. IPL will explore the feasibility of establishing a small business centre to provide both physical and digital access to information resources, expertise and advanced technologies that may not be otherwise available to these businesses. As a trusted expert resource, IPL will partner with other agencies to promote entrepreneurship in all sectors of our community and assist our residents to successfully participate in an economy that will increasingly be dominated by technology, information and innovation.

**Action Plan #3: Develop an Event Strategy** – the IPL has enjoyed considerable success with community events that involve and engage both our traditional users and residents who previously had little connection to the library. We will continue to be an active organizer and participant in community events, but will also develop mechanisms to ensure our participation makes the best use of available resources and is consistent with the overall objectives of the Library and the Strategic Plan. Events that promote the core outcomes of the public library; that are tied to other municipal priorities such as tourism, heritage and arts and culture; and that engage those sectors of the community that are not currently library users will take priority in our future event strategy.

**Action Plan #4: Take the Library to the Community** – we will bring the Library to the community through new approaches to service delivery such as kiosks, where residents congregate, and expanded wireless services at points where both residents and visitors can access the Library's resources.

## Cultivate a “Hacker Ethic”

**Our goal is to enable residents to become comfortable with the tools that allow them to create, collaborate, innovate and pursue their personal and professional objectives.**

*Our technologies and applications will be enablers for those engaged with the library. The citizens of the 21st century must be as adept with new technologies as those of the 20th century became with telephones and cars. Our focus will be on integrating technologies into our services, spaces and processes as natural elements to allow us to collaborate with other agencies and improve our capabilities.*

---

**To realize this goal we will take the following actions:**

**Action Plan #1: Integrate Technologies into our Service, Spaces and Processes as Natural Elements–**

We will update the *Technology Plan* to include a *Tools and Application Plan* as well as develop and implement an annual plan for managing our technologies’ lifecycles. We will consistently upgrade our existing technologies, divest what’s lagging and invest where required, while continually integrating devices and applications into our services and operations. We will continue to investigate and implement improvements to social media connections and incorporate mobile applications into our delivery mechanisms, encouraging residents to use and create these applications as a part of our discovery-oriented service offerings.

**Action Plan #2: Make Use of Other Great Minds and Skills** – Our staff and members of our community will be encouraged to search for applications and tools that enable the public to utilize technology, including library resources, in an accessible and intuitive way. We will investigate all findings and incorporate the best into our annual tools and applications plan.

**Action Plan #3: Spur Innovation Through Hands-On Experiences** – We will investigate the feasibility of a Maker Space, Creation Lab, enhanced computer lab, or other space that will drive more ideas through creative, hands-on experiences with new and innovative tools, applications and technologies for entertainment, work and play. Devices such as 3-D printers and various programs that broaden hands-on experimentation will be evaluated.

**Action Plan #4: Build Technology Confidence Including an Increased Awareness of Hacker Culture Within the Community** – As tools and applications become a natural part of everything we do, all residents, staff and Board members need to be confident within an integrated technology environment. Staff will be trained and mentored in using technologies. They will coach library members and community partners in using and trouble-shooting technologies to enable them to achieve a level of comfort and proficiency that allow them to create, collaborate, innovate and generally pursue their personal and professional objectives.

"You see, I don't believe that libraries should be drab places where people sit in silence, and that's been the main reason for our policy of employing wild animals as librarians."

- Monty Python

## Foster a Culture of Innovation

Our goal is to create an organizational structure with the staff, policies and procedures in place that allow the IPL to implement the Strategic Plan.

*We will be an organization that inspires and engages the community and our partners to work with us to build a better future for Innisfil. We will accomplish this through a culture shift that makes change an integral part of our service delivery and philosophy. We will develop a sustainable culture with the competencies and commitments necessary to implement our Strategic Plan and realize our Vision. IPL will address these challenges by continuously reviewing and improving our operations, staffing, governance and planning.*

**To realize this goal, we will take the following actions:**

**Action Plan #1: Undertake an Organizational Review** – Our Strategic Plan describes a different future for the IPL. As we embark on these new directions, we must ensure that the organizational structure, policies, job responsibilities and competencies of management staff are appropriate to lead IPL through the transition envisioned by the Strategic Plan. To this end, we will review our organizational structure, job descriptions and key responsibilities of senior staff and policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the Strategic Plan.

**Action Plan #2: Strive for Continuous Improvement** – Our research has consistently demonstrated that Library staff are one of our greatest strengths. We will ensure this continues with an ongoing investment in training and development. We recognize that as the focus of our services change to place a greater emphasis on community, special events, local story telling, partnerships, and the creative capabilities of our residents, the role of staff will evolve. Appropriate skills, roles and responsibilities will need to be introduced and strengthened. An integrated physical and digital environment also demands different ways of thinking. Some libraries are turning to *Design Thinking* when considering solutions for diverse communities with diverse capabilities in both physical and digital environments. We will encourage “outside-of-the-box” solutions by providing opportunities to learn and practice new ways of thinking.

**Action Plan #3: Enhance Board Outreach, Awareness and Advocacy** – The Board has an important role to play in implementing the Strategic Plan. As community ambassadors, Board members will play a more active role in engaging the community, reaching out to sectors of the community with whom the Library needs to establish a stronger connection and promoting the new roles and services of the IPL as envisioned in the Strategic Plan. Board members will acquire a level of comfort and expertise through on-going training programs.

**Action Plan #4: Develop a Recruitment, Retention and Succession Management Strategy**– We will adopt the management procedures necessary to ensure that our organization is sustainable by recruiting, retaining and developing capable individuals to fill key positions as they become available. To accomplish this goal, we will determine our future requirements, assess current capabilities, and build capacity within the organization. We are committed to having a succession management strategy in place to ensure IPL can effectively address the challenges associated with implementing the Strategic Plan and continuously improving library service.

## Measures of Success

We will be successful when we implement all of the action plans in our Strategic Plan. This in itself is a major undertaking because we have adopted an ambitious, bold work program. Nonetheless, we are committed to moving all of these actions forward and we will both regularly update the plan and use it as a management tool for the Library.

In addition to undertaking the actions in our plan, we will ensure they are having the desired effect through the adoption, use and monitoring of performance measures. We anticipate developing measures that reflect the two major future directions identified in the Strategic Plan. These are (1) a shift in our service focus, and (2) reaching a broader sector of the community.

We will shift our service delivery to place greater emphasis on digital resources, the community and creativity. We will identify appropriate benchmarks for each of these dimensions and track changes over the next four years. Measures will need to be determined for each benchmark and these could involve activity counts (e.g. items circulated; web site hits; program attendance); resources committed (e.g. budget; staff hours); supply indicators (e.g. items held; hours of operation; equipment or space available) or demand indicators (e.g. requests for information; waiting lists). Measures will be selected based on their relevance to the benchmark and the availability of the information. Benchmarks might address such things as:

- In-library versus virtual use
- Expansion of digital resources
- Growth in community partnerships and joint service delivery
- Growth in community events, programs
- Customer service improvements
- Growth in programs or events that involve the creation of media
- Growth in programs or events that are specific to and deal with local issues

While monitoring performance in these areas will track the shifting focus of our service delivery, they will not indicate our success in reaching out to new sectors of the community. The best way to measure or track the progress of these key performance measures is to repeat a version of the Strategic Plan's community survey every 4-5 years. We will monitor:

- The proportion of households who are users/non-users and the relative proportion of infrequent and occasional users. Specific targets could be adopted based on the survey results (e.g. to increase users from 73% to 78%).
- Shifts in perceptions and attitudes concerning the public library (e.g. a decrease in households reporting it is not top of mind; increases in households who see it as a proactive organization; a necessary institution in an information age; and essential resource for training etc.)

We will prepare and put in place a monitoring approach in the first year of the Strategic Plan's implementation.

## Updating and Implementing the Strategic Plan

The Library Board will regularly update the Strategic Plan. The Vision and Goals (keyways) will also be formally reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to reflect the preferred future for the Innisfil Public Library. The Vision and Goals should be applicable for the short-term (3-5 year) and will be updated when the Strategic Plan is updated in 4 years. The action plans will be reviewed annually. Action plans that have been completed will be eliminated and revisions and additions will be made as applicable.

The measures of success will be used to monitor the Library's success in achieving the Vision and fulfilling the Goals. The measures of success will also be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

In addition to regularly updating the Strategic Plan, its Vision, Goals and Action Plans, formal procedures will be adopted to ensure that the plan is used in the ongoing management of library service delivery. Staff reports and recommendations should be consistent with the Strategic Plan. A process for incorporating Strategic Plan goals and initiatives in the annual budget process will also be considered.

*"Innovate your libraries or die."*

Knud Schulz, Librarian, Urban Mediaspace, Aarhus Denmark.