

Strategic Planning

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LIBS 674: Library Management and Leadership

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October 22, 2023

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Calvert Library

Calvert Library is in Calvert County, Maryland, with an estimated population of 94,573 in 220 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). The following demographics are from the 2022 U.S. Census, and the data points were selected for their relevance to the strategic plan project.

- under the age of 18: 28%
- 20% of the population are non-White
- 4.6% of the population are from non-English speaking homes.

Calvert County has four libraries and a Mobile Services Department with a reported 52,100 cardholders (Calvert Library, 2023). It should be noted, however, that any Maryland resident can access a Calvert Library card. Calvert Library does not provide the exact number of Calvert County residents with a Calvert Library card in their annual report.

The strategic plan project is for teens 13 and older. Although the number of residents in Calvert County that fits that description is unknown, an estimate was derived from the county school system. Calvert County has four public high schools with 5,061 students. (Public School Review, 2023). This number doesn't include the home-schooled teens or the one private school in the county.

The Williams Institute (2019) of UCLA's School of Law estimates there are 4.11 same-sex couples per 1,000 households in Calvert County, equating to about 127 same-sex couples. In comparison, the Williams Institute estimates 5.81 same-sex couples per 1,000 households in Maryland. This factor is pertinent because the project includes books related to books with content related to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Calvert Library Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan

Calvert Library's mission and vision are available on its website as the following:

“Calvert Library's vision is to *Inspire Possibility*. Calvert Library's mission is to serve as a gateway to information, imagination, and inspiration. We

- Empower individuals by facilitating lifelong learning and
- Strengthen our community by providing opportunities for connection to one another and the world” (Calvert Library, n.d.-a).

Calvert Library's strategic plan for 2021-2024 is also available on its website here:

<https://calvertlibrary.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CalvertLibrary-StrategicPlan-FY21-24.pdf>. It has three core areas: improving lives through education, enriching community life, and increasing public awareness of the library (Calvert Library, 2020). Each core area is divided into initiatives and the actionable tasks to accomplish the initiative.

Part One: Reflection on Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan

Although vision statements are supposed to be inspirational (Moran & Morner, 2018, para.1), Calvert Library's vision statement may be too inspirational. “Inspire Possibility” could be a tagline for a technology company, a beauty school, or a car dealership. Nothing in those two words obviously connects to a library's role in the community. In comparison, the Belleville Public Library's vision statement is “To be the welcoming heart of our community where all come to learn, discover, create, and connect” (Belleville Public Library, n.d.). This provides a greater context of what the library is in the Belleville community.

The mission statement describes why the library exists by stating it is “to serve as a gateway to information, imagination, and inspiration” (Calvert Library, n.d.-a). Moran & Morner

(2018) recommend a mission statement answers three questions – who are the customers, what services are offered, and how the activities support the customers and services (p. 91). Calvert Library’s one-line mission statement is missing the most essential component of a mission statement; it doesn’t include a description of the customers. The bulleted items under the mission statement mention individuals and the community, but it is almost an afterthought. A stronger mission statement may be “Calvert Library’s mission is to serve as a gateway to information, imagination, and inspiration for individuals and the community.”

The Calvert Library strategic plan is well-organized and cohesive, but connecting the mission and vision statements to the strategic plan is difficult. It also needs to include all members of the community. For example, the “improve lives through education” section includes programs for early childhood, college-bound students, job seekers, adults, and seniors (Calver Library, 2020, p. 2). However, no specific strategies exist to engage school-aged children, teens, and young adults. The strategic plan does not mention resources or programs for these age groups, which I believe is a notable oversight.

It may have benefited Calvert Library to be more specific in its strategic plan. For example, one of the three core focus areas in Calvert Library’s strategic plan is to “increase public awareness” (Calvert Library, 2020, p. 4). The Norfolk Public Library’s strategic plan has a similar focus area but is phrased as “increase awareness of libraries and activities to the community, both users and non-users alike” (Norfolk Public Library, 2018, p. 17). This slight change makes the Norfolk Public Library’s goal more defined and measurable. Similarly, the actionable items under this focus area for Calvert Library are general, whereas the Norfolk Public Library’s strategic plan provides more concrete tasks. For example, Calvert Library includes “plan marketing initiatives to promote particular tools or services” (Calvert Library,

2020, p. 4). Norfolk Public Library's strategic plan states, "Focus attention on marketing for early literacy efforts" (Norfolk Public Library, 2018, p. 17).

I have never noticed the library's vision, mission, or strategic plan on library signage, marketing collateral, or social media platforms. Including these items in more visible places may be beneficial as a reminder to the public and the employees.

Part Two: Strategic Plan Project

This project aims to increase teenagers' interactions at Calvert Library by participating in The New York Public Library's (NYPL) "Teen Banned Book Club." There are 5,061 teenagers enrolled in Calvert County public high schools (Public School Review, 2023). Monthly events at Calvert Library currently are based on non-book activities like Dungeons & Dragons and Anime (Calvert Library, n.d.-b).

In September 2023, NYPL launched the "Teen Banned Book Club" (NYPL, 2023). The book club is part of an extensive NYPL campaign called "Books For All: Protect the Freedom to Read." Individuals or libraries can participate in the "Teen Banned Book Club," focusing on a different banned book every two months through discussions and a writing contest. The selected book is available electronically to all, regardless of where you live in the country, on the free e-reader app SimplyE.

NYPL provides a "Teen Banned Book Club" toolkit with flyers, discussion guides, and social media prompts, which can be downloaded (<https://www.nypl.org/spotlight/books-for-all/teen-book-club>) in print-ready form or Canva to allow libraries to add their branding assets. A targeted social media strategy would be created for the book club to maintain interest in the book club and the writing contest. Hursh (2020) notes one of the benefits of targeted media social media marketing is to allow for results measurement and the ability to adjust as needed.

A “Teen Banned Book Club” supports Calvert Library’s mission of empowering individuals by facilitating lifelong learning and strengthening the community by providing opportunities for connecting with other members of the community (Calvert Library, n.d.-a). This book club would aid in creating lifelong learners by engaging teens and encouraging them to see libraries as a community hub. It would strengthen the community by providing teens a place to gather for discussions related to books and encourage an understanding of differing opinions.

While any teen book club would support this mission, engaging teens with banned books offers unique opportunities. The “Teen Banned Book Club” book list is not available, but in looking at ALA’s Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2022, the topics of the book are related to LGBTQIA+ content, sexual content, sexual abuse, and drug use (ALA, 2023). While the number of Calvert residents fitting the LGBTQIA+ demographic is unknown, the Williams Institute (2019) of UCLA’s School of Law estimates 4.11 same-sex couples per 1,000 households. Although adults may not participate in this book group, all community members may recognize the library as an inclusive, safe space, thus strengthening the community.

The first book in the book club is *Each of Us a Desert* by Mark Oshira, a Latinx author. Because Calvert County is 20% non-White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), having authors like Oshira in the book club is beneficial. Crossland (2023, para. 7) notes, “By acknowledging today’s issues of gender, race, and other differences in books, we also acknowledge the teens who wrestle with the issues surrounding them.” This is why having the book club focus specifically on challenged books is valuable for the teens of Calvert Library.

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