

SDSL's Cornerstone Newsletter

South Dakota State Library's e-newsletter

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Huron Public Library Plans for the Future

After months of planning and community outreach, the Huron Public Library wrapped up their strategic planning process and presented their new plan to their Board and the Huron City Commission in August 2023. Angela Bailey, Huron Public Library Director, led the strategic planning process with the assistance of the South Dakota State Library and a strategic planning committee comprised of members of her staff, Board, Friends group, City Commission, and the Huron community.

Bailey said that she was inspired to start the planning process after participating in the South Dakota Library Association session on strategic planning in 2022.

"[Sarah Jones-Lutter's (Redfield Carnegie Library Director)] collaborative efforts with the South Dakota State Library in the development of a strategic plan for the Redfield Library demonstrated that the process was not only feasible but also highly effective," shared Bailey. "Sara demonstrated that the strategic planning process strengthened the partnership between the library and its community. It was my hope to do the same in Huron."



A key component of the strategic planning process for the Huron Public Library was the community survey. Bailey stated, "This survey provided valuable insights into our community's library usage patterns, illuminating key needs for future outreach efforts to engage individuals who currently do not utilize our services. The survey initiative successfully united various stakeholders, including the Library Board, City Commission, and the broader community, all working towards a shared goal. We prioritized transparency throughout this process, ensuring the community understands our commitment to serving their needs."

The survey was also a unique opportunity to receive both constructive and positive feedback for the library.

"I was excited to read the positive feedback from our library users in the survey. It was also heartening to witness the strong support from the community, indicating a genuine engagement with the survey," said Bailey.

A few of the positive comments from the survey included:

"I love that our library serves as a community connector. People from all ages and walks of life utilize our library, and there seems to be something for everyone in their programming. Friends and family from out of town are always amazed when I tell them the great things that happen at our local library."

"That our community has a great Library for everyone to use. Our kids used the library all the time when growing up and now that we have grandchildren when they come it is still a highlight for them"

to go to the library.”

“I really appreciate the effort that they put into helping in the development of young children. It is a very important role that I think gets overlooked by a lot of people, but I know my child absolutely LOVES the atmosphere and the learning that he receives. Interactions with peers outside of his classroom at school has done a lot for his personality development and made him much more sociable.”



While the strategic planning experience was a positive one overall, Bailey did share some challenges she and her planning committee faced.

“We had the survey translated into Spanish and Karen, but we discovered that many members of the community who speak these languages may not be able to read them,” said Bailey. “Additionally, the Spanish survey was translated into a dialect that not all Spanish speakers can understand. This led us to realize that there are numerous variations of the same language spoken in households throughout our community.”

Bailey also shared that holding focus groups was a challenge. “It appears that the term 'Focus Group' may not be widely understood by patrons in Huron, leading to confusion,” she stated. “If we were to revisit this approach, we may consider bypassing the focus groups altogether. We decided to instead speak with already formed groups and handed out surveys at their meetings: Kiwanis, Lions, Senior Center, etc.”

When asked what her advice would be for other libraries looking to start strategic planning, Bailey shared, "Don't be scared! Go for it! Make sure that your committee members are invested in the library. Our committee was filled with library cheerleaders and our meetings were filled with excitement and ideas."



About SDSL

The South Dakota State Library provides leadership for innovation and excellence in libraries and services to state government.

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