The Queen Anne's County Library’s mission is to educate and enrich our community through free access to resources and programs. Our new Strategic Plan supports this vision by cultivating the next generation of library users, expanding the library’s footprint and enhancing the library’s marketing and outreach efforts.
The Queen Anne’s County Library initiated a strategic planning process in 2016 to develop a deeper understanding of its customers and their needs. The planning proceeded in three phases:

- An analysis of the county's characteristics and cardholder attitudes and behaviors;
- Library Board engagement through two facilitated planning sessions; and
- Development of strategic alternatives based on these inputs.

Key Findings

The library serves a broad geographic area on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Its service area includes the shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay to the agricultural region in the northeastern portion of the county. Demographically, the county’s 49,077 residents skew older with a median age of 44.1 years and wealthier as a whole when compared to the United States and Maryland with a median household income of $87,750.

Library utilization, as measured by market penetration, shows uneven participation across the county. The western portions of the county, defined by council districts, show penetration in the mid-thirties, with the highest being council district four with 38 percent (Chart 1: Market Penetration). That number falls to 14 percent in council district one, the eastern-most district. Interestingly, Council district one has the second highest number of households. This indicates an untapped demand for library services might exist in this area.

A second view (Chart 2: Active Households by Council District) presents this from another perspective. Moving westward, the number of active library households (those households with a library card used in the last 12 months) INCREASES. District one has between 500 and 600 actives households and District four between 1,800-1,900 active households.

Chart 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council District</th>
<th>Market Penetration Q4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>31%</td>
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Chart 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council District</th>
<th>Active Households (Q4 2016)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>500-600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>1,400-1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>1,601-1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 4</td>
<td>1,801-1,900</td>
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Chart 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Unique Patrons Visits to Library Locations 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent Island</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centerville</td>
<td>40%</td>
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This advises that proximity to a physical library increases usage. The four council districts share a like number of residents, however, their geographic sizes differ greatly. This highlights the point that access is an important variable. The next chart (Chart 3: Unique Patron Visits to Library Locations, 2016) supports this idea. It shows the Kent Island Branch serving 60 percent of library users while Centerville serves 40 percent. The difference between the two could, therefore, be the distance people need to travel for services. If that holds true does the library’s physical footprint need to be expanded. The library board is interested in exploring options to increase the size of the Kent Island Branch and developing new service options in Council District One.

The data analysis identified a second concern relative to accessibility. The customer survey showed 50 to 60 percent of cardholders used the library as a child. However, when planners studied inactive cardholders, an unexpected trend emerged. The largest number of inactive cardholders were found in the younger age groups (Chart 4: Inactive Users). This fact dovetails with a noticeable decline in circulation of youth and teen materials. Viewed from the opposite perspective (Chart 5: Active Cardholders Age 0-17 by Council District) shows the relatively low numbers of youth cardholders. The
chart also raises the proximity issues again. Council district two has the largest numbers of active youth cardholders, followed by district four. This owes, no doubt, to the close location of the Kent Island Branch and Centerville branches to public schools. Physical facilities represent one solution for accessibility issue and digital content represents another. Survey results demonstrate the general acceptance of this proposition among cardholders. The survey asked cardholders to rate the level of emphasis the library should place on a variety of service options. Access to digital services rated the highest among cardholders, with some 72 percent saying the library should be actively involved in this activity. The survey also asked cardholders about their awareness of these services (Chart 6: Awareness of Services). This chart illustrates that while most cardholders have an awareness of digital content, other digital services were shown to have low levels of awareness, such as free online courses. Regardless of the awareness level, digital services across the board have low levels of adoption.

**Strategic Initiatives**

The study points to a clear direction for the library moving forward. Each seeks to grow utilization throughout the county-wide service area. These initiatives include:

1. **Build the next generation of library users**
2. **Expand the library’s footprint**
3. **Intensify library’s marketing and outreach efforts**
4. **Ensure the current and future financial stability of the Library**

Queen Anne’s County demographic trends combined with broader library usage trends signal a need to build library usage among children and youth – the next generation of library users. Generally speaking, library usage declines with age, and with the county population aging, it become necessary to bolster participation among youth segments. However, as the study noted, the younger age group are the highest level of inactive users. The library also needs to attract new youth users. To achieve this, it should build a stronger partnership with public schools, in order to create a steady stream of new users.

The study findings pointed to a need for an increased physical footprint that brings the library within reach of more county residents. Toward this end, the library plans to secure state and local funding for the expansion of the Kent Island Branch. The branch, as mentioned above, serves the 60% of users and has reached capacity. To expand use, the library must secure this expansion. The library also seeks to secure a pilot location in Sudlersville to test the proposition that such a facility increases marketing penetration in council district one. Currently, residents in that town, for example, must drive 22 minutes to the nearest location.

Finally, the library needs to expand its marketing and outreach activities. In particular, it should focus on creating personalized customer experiences through targeted communications. The library will develop a marketing strategy to highlight and promote specific collections and services. To facilitate these efforts, additional staff resources will be needed to develop marketing efforts.
Executive Summary

Our Vision: A thriving, literate community
Our Mission: To educate and enrich our community through free access to resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Strategies</th>
<th>Build the next generation of library users</th>
<th>Expand the library’s footprint</th>
<th>Enhancing library’s marketing and outreach efforts</th>
<th>Ensure the current and future financial stability of the Library</th>
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<tr>
<td>What the entire system seeks to accomplish.</td>
<td>Position program offerings, physical and digital collections to reflect youth segment</td>
<td>Expand the Kent Island Branch to drive greater utilization</td>
<td>Obtain additional staff/intern or seek professional services to help improve marketing and outreach</td>
<td>1. Become effective advocates for the Library Operating Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Develop partnerships with schools to introduce students to the library</td>
<td>2. Assess library service needs in North County to determine the feasibility of establishing a library branch in Sudlersville</td>
<td>2. Create personalized experiences through targeted communications</td>
<td>2. Pursue avenues of private funding in the Community to enhance the Library’s mission</td>
<td>3. Promote the continued growth and reach of the Friends of the Library in their role as advocates and fundraisers</td>
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<tr>
<th>System Targets</th>
<th>Market Penetration</th>
<th>Increase market penetration to 40 percent</th>
<th>Youth Participation</th>
<th>Increase engagement of children (ages birth to 12) to 20%</th>
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<tr>
<td>The specific data sources and measurement techniques that will be deployed to track the System Strategies.</td>
<td>Increase engagement of teens (ages 13-17) to 15%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Customer Retention</td>
<td>Maintain new cardholder retention at 40%</td>
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40% Market Penetration
7,379 Households served by 2020

31% Market Penetration
5,651 Households served by 2016
Goal 1: Build the next generation of library users

**System Tactic 1.1 – Position program offerings, physical and digital collections to reflect youth segments**
- Promote and market library materials and services most relevant to teens and children
  - Strategy: Using ILS data and Savannah to track library usage by key age groups to see trends in items borrowed, programs attended and digital services used.
  - Date: Ongoing
- Increase summer reading participation for both teens and children
  - Strategy: Track teen and children summer reading participation using Savannah. Use Savannah to directly communicate with parents, children and teens to encourage completion of summer reading program. Develop methods for engaging summer reading patrons throughout school year.
  - Date: Ongoing

**System Tactic 1.2 – Develop partnerships with schools to introduce students to the library**
- Implement new “student” SOAR (Student Online Access to Resources) cards for all QACPS students
  - Strategy: Coordinate staff visits to schools to demonstrate use of digital resources for students and faculty
  - Date: Fall 2017
- Conduct outreach in underutilized areas
  - Strategy: Using Savannah’s mapping feature, analyze outreach approach and intensify efforts in areas with inactive youth and non-patrons
  - Date: Summer 2018

Goal 2: Expand the library’s footprint

**System Tactic 2.1 – Expand the Kent Island Branch**
- Begin the initial planning for the branch expansion
  - Strategy: Engage in a contact with an architectural firm to develop a site plan and working plans for the expansion.
  - Date Certain: Spring 2018
- Continue to negotiate with County Commissioners to provide the necessary funding for the construction phase of the expansion
  - Strategy: Continue to meet with the Commissioners on a quarterly schedule to keep them informed and engaged with the project.
  - Date Certain: Ongoing
- Continue to seek grant funding from the state for construction and FFE costs for the expansion
  - Strategy: Develop a timeline for gathering information needed for future grant applications.
  - Date Certain: Ongoing

**System Tactic 2.2 – Assess library service needs in North County to determine the feasibility of establishing a library branch in Sudlersville**
- Engage with community stakeholders to determine service priorities
  - Strategy: Work with Judy Center, Family Center, QACPS, and other community stakeholders to quantify and prioritize service needs in the North County.
  - Date Certain: Fall 2019
- Engage in negotiations with Town Council, Library Board, and possibly the County regarding a location for a new library branch run by QACL
  - Strategy: Once service needs are identified develop an action plan for providing library services and facilities in Sudlersville
  - Date Certain: Fall 2020
**Goal 3: Enhance library’s marketing and outreach efforts**

**System Tactic 3.1 – Obtain additional staff/intern or seek professional services to help improve marketing and outreach**
- Evaluate options for hiring part-time marketing assistant/intern or consider contracting with an agency to assist with marketing strategy
  - Strategy: Develop a marketing plan utilizing print and digital promotions.
  - Date Certain: Winter 2017
- Develop AmeriCorps partnership to train interns to coordinate outreach and volunteer efforts
  - Strategy: Recruit and train volunteers for internal and external volunteer programs.
  - Date Certain: Fall 2019

**System Tactic 3.2 – Create personalized experiences through targeted communications**
- Increase email marketing efforts
  - Strategy: Targeted email promotions includes monthly promotions of physical materials, new cardholder promotions, communications about events, monthly targeted digital promotions, etc
  - Date Certain: Ongoing
- Analyze messaging and usage trends to allocate funding to most popular resources
  - Strategy: Using Savannah analyze usage trends to find most used resources by target audiences
  - Date Certain: Ongoing
- Conduct programing around digital offerings and train staff to be fluent in digital offerings on various devices
  - Strategy: Plan programs based on feedback from survey. Train staff in digital offering on variety of devices emphasis on ease of access
  - Date Certain: Winter 2018

**Goal 4: Ensure the current and future financial stability of the Library**

**System Tactic 4.1- Become effective advocates for the Library Operating Budget**
- Strategy: Regular attendance and communication with governmental funding authorities
- Date certain: Ongoing

**System Tactic 4.2- Pursue avenues of private funding in the Community to enhance the Library’s mission**
- Strategy: Widely publicize and promote the recently created Endowment Fund as a vehicle for larger donations in a variety of forms
- Date certain: Ongoing

**System Tactic 4.3 Promote the continued growth and reach of the Friends of the Library in their role as advocates and fundraisers**
- Strategy: Designate the Friends as the chief fundraising vehicle for short term and smaller fundraising efforts, including the Annual Appeal, Book sales, and other events
- Date Certain: Ongoing
- Strategy: Support efforts to grow the Friends membership and participation in the community
- Date certain: Ongoing