

Nebraska Futures SWOT Notes
JUNE 9-10, 2008

THREATS

- Tradition.
- Continued lack of funding – YES!
- Perf budgeting – Zero-based budgeting.
- Locally: combating “guns& hoses” budgeting mentality.
- Wait too long to respond to funding threats.
- We are not needed.
- An obsolete institution – yep!
- Perceptions of library as a place and not as a service/community focal point.
- Other worthy causes in the community asking for support money.
- Barnes & Noble – we need to become more inviting to our customers.
- Aging professionals – and too slow to recruit a new generation.
- Professionals who live in the past and pull others down.
- Regulated Internet tiers.
- “Other” things are more important to fund.
- Anti-immigrant response – Amen!
- Fear.
- Thinking that co-location of libraries is “magic” answer to cost savings. What about better services? Different missions?
- Not seizing opportunities for tech innovations to advance services
- Continual whining about what we don’t have – Amen!
- Lack of desire/money/education to pursue new technologies.
- Too much of holding on to “sacred cows” – protect our turf – Amen! Moo, Moo.
- Resistance to change.
- Staff that will not change how “we’ve always done it.” – Change this.
- Apathy
- Loss of population in greater Nebraska.
- Legislation taking away right to privacy.
- Hierarchical culture crushes/ignores new talent and input.
- Weak libraries go out of existence.
- “Noise” of many “needs” in the community. Library seems to be a quiet place not requiring community attention – “under the radar.”
- Ourselves – pulled in many directions. This is so true!
- Competition from others to provide information. Extension and other publicly funded entities.
- Amazon, Google, scholar doing our job. Really?
- Web sites cannot replace us.
- Assumption that free information on Internet can replace entire libraries. Yes!
- Perception of this – The Internet has all people need – Libraries are obsolete.

- Lack of funds.
- Inability/unwillingness to “toot our own horn” and market ourselves.
- No public databases that support emerging literacy.
- Organizational self-doubt.
- Lack of collaboration.
- Entropy/bureaucracy
- Used by a minority of the population
- De-emphasis of print material – why?
- Money/time to investigate new user groups.
- Because libraries are open to everyone libraries become sanctuaries for mentally ill and homeless.
- Libraries don’t become sanctuaries for anyone.
- People being satisfied with a quick answer, not necessarily a good answer.
- Information literacy – being a good consumer of information.
- Well meaning, but harmful to access to information, legislation.
- The need to “no.” Time to start saying “yes.”
- Dinosaurs in “the pit” – holding back.
- Staff faces not reflecting the customers’ faces – Yes!
- Not viewed as “essential” government services. And seen as adding no value to community.
- People (taxpayers) don’t understand what librarians actually do.
- Economic viability – extinction by constantly serving the underserved – those without power and influence in the community.
- Lethargy.
- No elected officials with library/information background!
- Will you run if nominated?
- Educate us!
- Yes – advocate!
- May have experience with libraries but don’t understand the issues.
- So how are the new libraries being built?
- Negative buzz – or even worse, no buzz in a community.
- Community has a certain perception and library is not telling its own story.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Tradition.
- Lots of free technology/software for community building.
- Look at banks as models of service distribution – totally virtual. Great idea!
- Other organizations are available to help!
- We focus on technology...offer tech support.
- Show our value by using library value calculator on all web sites. It’s easy?
- Have fun!
- Interlocal agreement option for cooperation; by all types of libraries; between/among different types of entities. Another example of partnerships!

- We can provide the location and opportunity for issues discussion and knowledge sharing.
- Extensive (sometimes) patron databases – what are/should we be doing with information we have? What more could be collected and used?
- Volunteers.
- High school students – teach senior computing classes and seniors help with ESL classes. Intergenerational opportunities.
- Services for mentally handicapped.
- “Open Source” thinking across the board creates a “one for all” attitude and known resources to help one another. Amen! Yes!
- Voice of many, not the “few.”
- Teach about information beyond the first 3 hits.
- Skills to take people beyond Google.
- Work together – we don’t need to do this alone.
- Library partnerships – share the wealth – spread the expense.
- Employment and growth.
- Upcoming transfer of wealth – find raising opportunities.
- Libraries still have citizens who want to tell great stories about us.
- Partner with schools
- You must figure out a way to engage the baby boomers and their wealth.
- To continually change – embrace change – to try new programming – new ways to thinking.
- Opportunity to pool human resources (librarians, info techs, academics, etc.) on an unprecedented level to “tame” the information explosion.
- Increase in diverse population – also offers increases opportunities for community partnerships. Yes! Amen!
- We have the opportunity to constantly re-invent ourselves.
- Maximize the money and resources that Google, etc. put into development for our patrons, our society, and our world.
- Huge resources available – make it accessible with technology.
- Use students as peer tutors.
- We can get into places/meetings other can’t – we are perceived as a non-threat. Great point!
- Ask the users what they want us to be/do.
- US – we aren’t tapping what we can do. Our skills, interests, passions, connections, talents, contacts, hobbies, skills, knowledge, experience, and preferences in chocolate.
- Have those staff create subject guides.
- Networking (global) – yes, let’s work together.
- Help new populations (immigrants, newcomers) and “have not’s” – by developing welcome packets and welcoming meetings. Either hire bilingual staff or provide staff comprehensive language training.
- Develop/create models/games to teach students value of information.
- Brain trust of retired trustees and librarians to draw upon.
- Mentoring.
- Customize library services/materials to specific business/interest groups.
- Collaboration – ask other leaders in schools, businesses, health care, government, etc. how they can work together. Be the spark that makes this happen. Start the conversation.

- WilsonWeb, Infotrac, ... try to offer these.
- Be the UPS of information. What can “brown” do for you? Being where the people are...online, places, etc.
- More involvement in community activities.
- Can hold events that will pull teenagers (for example) in like puppet shows for elementary kids or mystery night for teenagers. Gets the kids busy and off the streets.
- Partner with social service organizations.
- Desire for this in the community in the library. The environment is ripe for this.
- Ditto: libraries have the opportunity to become the core of the community.
- Also perceived as neutral place.
- Reinvention before extinction. There may still be time.
- Get to know political candidates before election.
- Strengthen school/library partnership, working collection development to include curriculum.
- Extend curriculum.
- Tell our stories.
- Don't just talk about what libraries can do, demonstrate what we can do.
- Respond to the longtail. Yes!
- Changing demographics means changing communities.
- Open to everyone.
- Use resources to improve mental health or rehabilitation process.
- Teens.
- To hire diverse people in community to mesh community and library together.
- Pioneers in public awareness of issues – provide the tools to further public discussion.
- Webmd.com does ads – why can't we solicit pro-bono ad campaigns?
- New ideas/focus can bridge generation group.
- Be innovative = go where people are.
- Reinvent ourselves using social networking ideas and move past the way we have always done business.
- Appeal to Boomers – health, leisure, travel.
- Lots of educational opportunities. Lots of folks in library education programs.
- It's a business – we should run libraries as a business.
- Marketing
- Outreach – proactive delivery of information to groups.
- If everything is under control, you're going to slow.

STRENGTHS

- Public library governing boards – sort of.
- Libraries have highly intelligent/creative staff/volunteers!! Some need more open minds.
- Libraries have interesting programs.
- Provide a lot of value for the dollar.
- The library field has potential for growth when tied to technology and human (social) interactions. Okay, could be an opportunity.

- View of some local officials about value of libraries and their services. Sell yourselves.
- Established line in the budget.
- Great location.
- “Free” to users.
- New facilities – in some communities.
- We are unique entities/institutions.
- Libraries are a trusted “brand” in communities.
- So what?
- Many different “journeys” in workforce – lots of different backgrounds and experiences.
- Tradition.
- Outreach services to the community.
- US (duh).
- Technology to go where the customers are – if money.
- Understand the value of content.
- Passionate.
- You’ve (libraries) have evolved before – you are experienced.
- Libraries valuable for economic development.
- Provide technological access for “have not’s.”
- Failure is not fatal – try again.
- Technology can let libraries go to the customer.
- Have the tools.
- We are often only ones keeping users’ needs in mind ALL the time.
- Place for families to go for “free” entertainment in rough economic times.
- And “free” resources (cake pans!!).
- It may seem free, but someone has to pay for it.
- Children’s programs that encourage use by young people.
- We weed, evaluate, assess, teach – do the leg work – to bring trusted reliable resources.
- Also bring controversy and broad ideas to communities.
- World wide connections with a variety of resources producing a range of information – WebMD. Yes!
- NE public libraries champions/servers of the disenfranchised. How do we know?
- Public access to the internet, print and other media.
- Passionate staff – Yes!
- High return on investment.
- Networking capabilities – important.
- We know where to find information and its value to individuals and society.
- Patrons need to find it too.
- Still providing a human face – people talking to people.
- Value customer’s right to privacy.
- Usually very customer service oriented.
- We like to try new things....sometimes.
- Human element....face to face communication.
- Are seen as neutral setting.
- Partner in education/literacy – Yes!

- Willingness to learn and grow.
- Ruralness – ability to know our customers well.
- Creates unique opportunity to collaborate/cooperate on forward thinking projects.
- Open to new ideas and willing to take the risk.
- Not sure?
- Partnership with other institutions.
- A “place” to gather together, access resources, and get assistance.

WEAKNESSES

- Hesitant to build relationships outside of the library world.
- Only 24 hours in a day.
- Lack of high quality, “strategic”, and innovative technical expertise.
- Because of staff, equipment, funding? All of the above?
- Vision, planning, coordination.
- Fear of change.
- Arrangement awkward.
- Forgetting to focus on our strengths.
- Entitlement.
- Dependent on local/state funding.
- We don’t promote our full range of services – not proactive.
- Insularity of library profession – yes – get moving.
- Age of work force.
- Too territorial about information role, staff, etc.
- LC and other classification schemes....
- Lack of diversity in workforce and resources.
- Lack of rapidity of change.
- Includes slow response to environment changes or to capitalize on opportunities.
- Staff who refuse to change.
- Lack of recruitment of new staff and new ideas.
- Tradition.
- Prefer to let others lead.
- Afraid of making mistakes.
- Entrenched staff.
- Ignore trends.
- Bad delivery – yes.
- Willingness to accept “what we get.”
- Library hours.
- Difficulty in quantifying value, effectiveness.
- Library not seen as player in economic development – true (this can be an opportunity).
- Unwillingness/reluctance of libraries to consolidate.

- Inactive boards.
- Unaccredited public libraries.
- Strong community leaders not recruited to library boards – why?
- View of some local officials about the value of the library and its services – therefore?
- Need labels for non-fiction?? Marketing? This is our fault, sorry!
- Simplistic perceptions by public “libraries books.”
- Isolation – “hard to circle one wagon.”
- Library world does not always speak with one voice (lack of unity).
- Difficulty with change – stagnant model.
- Not understanding trends and keeping current with literature.
- Apathy.
- No elected officials or school administrators (ones not necessarily academics) with library/information backgrounds. No kidding!
- Will you run if nominated?
- Libraries have to sell themselves, lobby.
- Funding – not enough to start with and first to be cut. Therefore?
- Lack of marketing – expect people to “know” we are available to help.
- Failing to engage/tap into the baby boomer generation. Amen!
- Changing populations – always people moving into communities.
- Passive.
- Failure to tell our own story – brag about ourselves and to realize our own value.
- Reluctance to take the message of the library outside the library – Yes.
- We become defensive
- Libraries seen as stuffy places for old people.
- Poor connections between libraries across the state.