

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library in the Third Millennium

Vol. 1

The Library's Strategic Service Plan, 1999-2003

**Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd.
Croton on Hudson, New York**

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Overview and Acknowledgements

In 1997, the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) authorized the development of a long-range Strategic Plan that would recommend policies for the improvement of the Library System. To perform this task, the Board hired Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd. (ACA) of Croton-on-Hudson, New York to conduct a thorough analysis of B&ECPL's governance, finances, administrative practices and facilities.

This document is the product of the ACA planning team's yearlong study. It provides an objective, professional perspective linked to a thorough understanding of the principles of public libraries and appropriate "best practices," as recommended by the Public Library Association and other divisions of the American Library Association.

The purpose of this report is to provide a firm grasp of the future of B&ECPL in a fast changing information age. To be successful, the Library's collections, services and programs must be organized to serve the wants and needs of B&ECPL's boards, management and staff and, most importantly, the citizens of Buffalo and Erie County.

To create this plan, the ACA planning team evaluated current conditions, processes, practices, relationships and facilities within the System. Team members reviewed relevant documentation and information, visited every library in the federated system and met with the administrative staff and Board of Trustees multiple times. They conducted meetings with contract library boards, members of the community, B&ECPL line staff, representatives of Erie County government, and the Buffalo Common Council. The study also included focus group sessions and structured surveys of B&ECPL's urban and suburban residents, both conducted by Insight Associates, Inc.

Input from all of these sources has been incorporated into the findings.

The ACA planning team expresses its gratitude for the involvement and complete cooperation of the Buffalo and Erie County Library Public Library Board of Trustees, especially Chair **Rebecca L. Mahoney**, Planning Committee Chair **Annette Junczewicz** and the members of the Board's Planning Committee: **Frank Gist**, **Simone Mitchell-Peterson**, **Robert J. Plache**, **Daniel T. Roach** and **Judy Summer**.

B&ECPL staff, under the leadership of Director **Daniel L. Walters**, were instrumental in the development of this plan. The ACA planning team wishes to commend the Administrative Planning Team and Strategic Planning Task Force, under Deputy Director **Diane J. Chrisman**, for outstanding contributions. **Diane Bockrath**, **Lucille DeFranks**, **Sharon Edward**, **Robert Langowski**, **Ann Laubacker**, **Peter Losi**, **Jeffrey P. Mahaney**, **Susan Minekime**, **Kate Weeks**, **Claudia Yates** and Deputy Director **Kenneth H. Stone** provided insight and assistance throughout the process.

The ACA planning team is grateful for the participation and cooperation of the contract library boards of trustees, B&ECPL staff and management, and the people of Erie

County. Particular acknowledgement goes to the Central Library Subject Department staff, especially the Business, Science and Technology Department, for their data gathering.

The team expresses special thanks to B&ECPL's Coordinator of Service Evaluation and Planning **Peggy A. Skotnicki** and Assistant Deputy Director **Michael C. Mahaney** for their contributions to the success of the entire planning process. Their assistance in locating, processing and/or developing an impressive volume of essential data, their coordination of meetings and interviews, and their efforts in proofing and preparing the final report for production and publication were invaluable.

With the involvement of the preceding parties and the background information they helped to create, compile and synthesize, the ACA planning team derived a definitive portrait of the rapid changes occurring in Western New York and a reliable base from which to recommend adjustments in library services to meet those changes.

Planning Team Credentials

Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd. is one of the most experienced library consulting firms in the United States. Over the last thirty years, the firm has had extensive hands-on experience in library long range and strategic service planning, library building programs, library design, and library planning workshops. Major public library projects include: Jefferson Parish Library System (LA), Chicago (IL) Public Library's Harold Washington Center, Springfield (CT) City Library, the National Library of Singapore, and a host of university library projects. Among others, ACA has worked on the \$41 million East Michigan University Library (Ypsillanti, MI), Cornell (NY) Medical Library, University of Tampa (FL) Library and Carnegie Mellon (PA) University Holt Library.

The founders, present officers, and among the principal investigators for the B&ECPL project, **Elaine** and **Aaron Cohen**, have focused their talents upon the library/information science fields. They have written several books and numerous articles on library-related subjects. Together, the Cohens have led more than 300 library-planning workshops. Aaron Cohen is an Architect, registered in seven states and the District of Columbia. Elaine Cohen is a Management Consultant.

Also on the project team are **Richard Cheski**, former State Librarian of Ohio, and **Dr. Glen Holt**, Executive Director of the St. Louis Public Library. Both individuals have worked closely with ACA in the past.

Prior to his seventeen-year tenure as the State Librarian of Ohio, Mr. Cheski was State Librarian of Colorado. In each state, he developed state-wide library legislation. For Ohio, he developed the planning and evaluation process for public libraries and systems. He assisted in the development of the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN). Also, during his administration, the funding basis for Ohio's public libraries was revised. The Library and Local Government Support Fund (LLGSF) replaced the Intangible Tax.

Glen Holt was appointed Executive Director and City Librarian at the St. Louis Public Library in 1987. Under his direction, the Library has won two tax elections. Through tax increases, fund-raising and earned income, the annual budget through the past 11 years has increased from \$6.3 million to more than \$18 million. In the same period, the materials budget has risen from less than \$1 million to \$3 million; visitation increased from 800,000 to 1.75 million annually, and circulation has risen by 210 % to reach 8 circulations per resident, with 34 circulations per cardholder. All these increases have occurred while the St. Louis population has declined more than 10%.

Dr. Holt holds master's and doctoral degrees in History and Urban Studies from the University of Chicago. He is the author, co-author, editor and co-editor of more than a hundred reports, articles and books. His most recent publications include papers on the future of public libraries, rural libraries and library technical services. He is a regular columnist on financial subjects for the library journal, *The Bottom Line*. In his most recent major research, he is co-principal investigator on a project to apply economic measurements to value public investment in library services. This research was funded by a grant from the Public Library Association.

The partners of **Insight Associates, Inc.** of Getzville, New York have been involved in marketing research and marketing planning strategies for everything from grocery store chains and fast-food outlets to banks and Fortune 500 companies. The firm has investigated areas such as site selection, product perception, category competition, user/decider issues, spending alternatives, price/value trade-offs, advertising preference, ad pre- and post-tests, plus many other functions. Insight Associates holds five Gold Effies, awards presented each year by the American Marketing Association to the company producing the finest marketing/communications program in the nation.

Insight's **David W. Singer** is considered a "Master Moderator," a designation bestowed by the American Marketing Association upon individuals who moderate more than 100 focus groups a year. **Raymond D. Owczarzak** has won numerous creative and marketing awards including the coveted Effie. He is listed in *Who's Who In Business and Finance*, *Who's Who in Advertising* and *Who's Who in America*.



Executive Summary

America's public libraries have been changing faster than most people can imagine. The traditional paradigm of a cozy facility situated in a quiet neighborhood is no longer emulated. Today, successful city and suburban libraries tend to be large and multi-dimensional enterprises, similar to successful retail stores. Like successful stores, they can be located wherever consumer traffic dictates. Once, nearly everyone could walk to the local library. Now, in light of increasingly mobile American lifestyles, most people drive to the library or rely on public transportation. Furthermore, the thriving public libraries of this nation long ago expanded their emphases far beyond the circulation of books. Library personnel do their best to serve the information needs of individuals, businesses and government. Facilities function as community meeting centers, community computing centers, and visitor destinations. They are also virtual, that is, a portion of their information is available from users' homes, offices -- literally anywhere -- via phone, fax and networked computers.

Throughout the course of this study, nearly everyone involved shared this expanded service vision of what constitutes a state-of-the-art public library. "Everyone" includes the Aaron Cohen Associates, Ltd. (ACA) planning team; Erie County residents who were interviewed during the data gathering process; B&ECPL and contract libraries' trustees, library management and staff. The result: **an implied directive to provide expanded, improved and innovative library services delivered by an organization that is governed openly, operated efficiently, and driven by a determination to make B&ECPL more than it is today.**

As B&ECPL moves forward, the following pledges must be made:

Commitment to Change

As a service organization dedicated to improvement, B&ECPL must be committed to continuing change anywhere and everywhere within its sphere of activity. This is not an academic exercise. If the organization does not change, it has a dismal future. When it comes time to decide whether to conduct business "the same old way," the B&ECPL and contract libraries' boards, management and staff must pledge to attempt the necessary changes — political firestorms notwithstanding.

Commitment to Secure Resources

B&ECPL is greatly under-funded in light of its current service, staff and facilities commitments. Its economic situation is such that it cannot expect vast new resources to sustain current inefficiencies. Because it is a public-sector organization committed to improvement, B&ECPL's Board, management and staff must seek both new and renewed funding to stabilize, reorganize and, where necessary, expand library and information services. Should the System fail to secure appropriate financial support from the governments of Erie County and its municipal divisions, from donations secured by the Library Board, the Library Foundation and

other philanthropic sources, and/or secured through increased revenue streams from B&ECPL users/taxpayers, then all institutional change must rely on annual operating revenues. Exercising that option will result in personnel layoffs and inevitable facility closings. These are not threats. They are simple realities that cannot be avoided.

Commitment to Meet Professional Library Standards

So far as possible, B&ECPL Board, management and staff must move System operations toward professional library standards. For example, the Library System does not own a single building. Instead, ownership is divided among Erie County, the City of Buffalo and nearly two dozen other municipal or association entities. Too many of these buildings are marginal with bleak futures. The people of Buffalo and Erie County deserve better.

Commitment to Best Business Practices

Most people want B&ECPL to operate in the most efficient and effective manner possible. By necessity, that means the Library System should adopt and/or develop statistical and evaluative systems to provide the basis for sound decision making. One important reason for the System's current difficulties is that it has built its reputation on only one measure of service: book circulation. This does not begin to tell the story of a modern library's operations. Other verifiable measures of service outputs, of service relationships with constituents, and of benefits and effectiveness/efficiency must be put into place.

A "Shared Vision" – Critical Challenges to Be Faced Together

Individuals, families and groups who live and work in Buffalo and Erie County want their public library to recreate itself into a new entity that will provide high quality reading and information services. **This plan is their plan.** Its elements are derived from comments made by B&ECPL trustees; County, City and other elected officials; civic leaders; diverse groups of residents; library management and staff. It is derived also from focus groups and an extensive telephone survey conducted by Insight Associates, Inc.

ACA's principal investigators collected the desired elements and refined that vision within this report in the context of modern professional library standards. The B&ECPL "Shared Vision" has multiple dimensions. Here, in summary, are its elements.

High-Quality Library Services That Proactively Meet the Needs of the Individuals Who Live and Work in Buffalo and Erie County

A host of Erie County citizens want their library service to move from "just books" to "books *and* computers;" from "plain vanilla" library service to multi-faceted services that really meet the needs of diverse constituencies; from substandard buildings to attractive "family destinations." In short, these Erie County citizens want a library system that will

meet their changing personal, family and business lifestyles. Moreover, they want a System that helps to improve the regional economy.

The ACA planning team — four people who have consulted with a variety of not-for-profit institutions, including hundreds of libraries — has never studied a more troubled system than this. Four problems have created a stranglehold, restricting B&ECPL's ability to move forward in a dynamic fashion. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to move quickly toward a "Shared Vision" of the future without making headway in solving these:

- **Governance**

There is no centrally funded library system in the country that operates with so many boards, each one striving to divide a pie that is scarcely big enough to offer even minimal sustenance for its members. The strength of this bizarre governance structure is that articulate, active citizens who care what happens to their piece of B&ECPL are involved in governing the System and in raising money to support it. As evidenced in dozens of ways, their potential for doing good is one of the brightest spots in the ACA planning team's findings. However, only one board, **the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library**, has the ultimate responsibility for allocating B&ECPL tax revenue for System services and has the statutory authority to identify, express and advance the needs of the entire System. If this board does not operate with unity and vision, if this board vacillates and lets critical decisions slide, the System will continue an inexorable decline toward chaos. It seems unlikely, in the near future, that the New York State Legislature will revise the enabling legislation that created B&ECPL as part of the "library reform" of the 1950s. Hence, those who appoint B&ECPL trustees will do well to recognize that first-rate civic talents are needed. As the ACA planning team discovered during its study, Erie County's residents would like the library to be activist — to propel the region into the twenty-first century. The governance structure makes this task difficult.

Citizens want the B&ECPL Board to maintain the openness it has demonstrated through the planning process, a willingness to listen and consider what they have to say. Listening and open dialogue will go far in creating the spirit of "fairness" which citizens do not believe has been present in B&ECPL governance in recent decades. A specific recommendation later in this report describes the creation of Hub Services Advisory Councils that addresses this concern.

- **Hiring Authority**

Related to governance is the issue of hiring authority. Subject to prevailing civil service requirements, the contract library boards in Erie County hire and administer their local library employees, while their salaries and benefits are provided solely by B&ECPL. This means that B&ECPL management cannot shift staff from one contract library to another to promote efficient System operations. Within the System there are many different ways of performing even the simplest tasks, such as checkout and registration. As a result, B&ECPL suffers all the disadvantages of

a small-town operation while it enjoys few of the advantages associated with a large library system. Furthermore, this skewed hiring authority does not protect long-term contract library staffs in the event of layoffs. Problems have surfaced concerning the representation of contract libraries' staffs as part of B&ECPL for medical coverage and other insurance protections. This situation needs immediate remedy.

- **Finances**

Should the first two problems remain unresolved, even a large infusion of cash is going to function only as a short-term remedy. B&ECPL requires the addition of approximately \$1 million annually to provide only modest cost of living adjustments for its employees and to offset other inflationary increases (presupposing an inflation rate of approximately 4%). Because the System has so many facilities, it expends fully 72% of its annual operating budget to staff them. Compared with other libraries, that percentage is quite high. A more appropriate figure would be 60%. With so much money invested in staff compensation, there is not much left in the budget to deliver mobile services to the lightly settled areas of Erie County, to initiate outreach programs into daycare centers or to install the new technology that the public wants. The funding riddle must be solved either by securing additional income or by making cuts. Unfortunately, the only place within the budget where there is flexibility for reductions is in staffing.

More than 65 percent of Erie County residents hold library cards and consider themselves B&ECPL users. A large percentage of these people want improved library and information services. Some recognize and others do not that massive improvements in library system services cannot come without new public and private-sector investment and/or major reallocation of current resources. Quite sensibly, the Library must make the most specific case possible for new money. The B&ECPL Board must take the lead in finding financial solutions. Public officials must take part in the process. To discover new monetary resources, however, an aggressive development effort is essential. If private monies are secured, the System can pay part of its own way. In short, the new B&ECPL should be a modern cultural institution with a dynamic development program that works every day to increase System income from sources other than the taxes citizens pay.

- **Focus on Circulation**

B&ECPL is a high-circulation library system, in absolute and relative terms. The problem with this strong focus is that the Library ought to be offering other vital services. For example, many of the companies in Western New York are beginning to retool so that they can function within a global economy. Simultaneously, individuals need to upgrade their skills. Both groups want to attract businesses to the area, create more and better jobs, and simply compete. The Library needs to play a greater role in the region's economic vitality. Also, children rely on their public libraries to provide the extra materials they need to be successful in school. B&ECPL should be involved to a greater extent in providing homework help. New expenditures for kids' computers and more Internet access are required. This is

especially important for families without computers. Otherwise, the gulf between "haves" and "have-nots" will continue to grow. B&ECPL ought to be considering partnerships with cultural/arts organizations, service agencies and even for-profit corporations. Such collaborations are hard to undertake in a System that is primarily focused on serving traditional circulation demands.

B&ECPL in the Third Millennium: Rebuilding for the Future

Develop a Regional Funding Model

To make the transition to a modern library and information system will require both additional public and private-sector investment. As the principal mechanism for advancing B&ECPL quickly, the ACA planning team recommends that the Library, Erie County government and influential Erie County citizens work together to plan and support a **Third Millennium Fund** to build the future of library services throughout the region.

The infusion of capital generated by the Fund will be used to advance new programs, technology and facilities for the delivery of more relevant service to the citizens of Erie County and address the problems that beset the System. Funding plans to achieve these ends must traverse arbitrary geo-political boundaries and involve partnerships of local and regional governments in creative joint public/private fund-raising strategies.

Replace Current Inefficient Libraries with Improved Outlets

"Shoebox" libraries designed to serve only one neighborhood are a thing of the past and cannot be sustained with B&ECPL's limited revenue. New libraries must be designed to serve regions rather than municipalities. Very few library facilities in Erie County meet current professional standards of what constitutes a "good" library. Few are in better than average condition and few have the physical space to accommodate current technology with adequate collections of traditional library resources, meeting rooms, study space, etc. Better facilities translate to better service delivery.

Require that Future Expansion Be "Expenditure-Neutral"

Maintaining an inordinately large and unwieldy network of deficient facilities imposes excessive cost burdens on Erie County taxpayers who have requested not only more and better service but the application of better business practices in administering B&ECPL. New state-of-the-art facilities are needed to replace old, inadequate ones.

If sustaining the System as it is today requires an additional \$1 million annually, transforming the System to a higher level is sure to require an even greater investment. Necessarily, in Erie County's current fiscal climate, any replacement or improvement of existing libraries must remain expenditure-neutral, causing no increase in the operating revenue for the System. In

order to achieve this end, a host of alternatives must be explored, including the replacement of multiple units delivering basic services to one geographic area with a single, larger, more conveniently situated and better-equipped library capable of delivering outstanding services and resources to a broader geographic area.

B&ECPL is neither unique nor alone in its need to address issues of service delivery, institutional relevance, and fiscal accountability on a regional level in light of an overextended and aging physical plant. For years, Western New York's public and private enterprises have grappled with comparable challenges respective to their infrastructures, service missions and general viability. Consider the consolidation of Buffalo's fire stations and police precincts or the merger of parishes in the "regional" Roman Catholic Diocese. Reflect on the lessons learned by commercial banks whose unbridled proliferation in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in ruthless retrenchment in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Until now, B&ECPL has resisted the painful yet progressive transitions that many other community institutions have made over the last generation, but its time has come.



Draft Mission and Principles

Focus on Mission

B&ECPL must focus on embracing and advancing a new mission that is both activist in orientation and clear in its message.

As part of the planning process, the ACA planning team worked with B&ECPL and contract library trustees, management and staff to articulate this new mission and its related principles. The Draft Mission and Principles Statements that follow are currently under consideration by the B&ECPL Board of Trustees.

Once the B&ECPL Board adopts the Mission and Principles, they will become the basis for all decisions, especially those that move the institution forward. The Mission and Principles outline the library-to-be. Although the organization has already begun to change, more and even greater changes must be made so that B&ECPL can evolve into the library the people of Buffalo and Erie County really want. Some changes require hard decisions with which not everyone will agree. Some changes may even become political.

B&ECPL Mission Statement (proposed)

Our mission is to enrich the lives of the individuals of Erie County's diverse communities by creating and sustaining outstanding public library services through responsive staff, dynamic collections, appropriate technology and access to global information.

B&ECPL Principles (proposed)

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library will:

1. Listen and respond to the community.
2. Deliver timely, confidential and responsive customer service to meet the informational, recreational and educational needs of the community.
3. Provide open, equal and free access to information in accordance with the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights."
4. Promote lifelong learning by encouraging all children and adults in their enjoyment of reading and discovery.
5. Contribute to the region's economic vitality by assisting individuals, businesses and government as they pursue better jobs and economic growth.
6. Create and maintain an environment that attracts, develops and encourages a diverse and skilled staff.

7. Manage resources effectively and be accountable to its funding sources.
8. Pursue the private and public funding necessary to fulfill its Mission.

ALA Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948.

Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,
inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,
by the ALA Council.

History and Planning Environment

Analysis of B&ECPL

Erie County citizens get substantial library services for their money. Holdings within the System amount to 5,240,965 items in the form of books, periodicals, government documents, maps, audiovisual and electronic resources. Circulation of these materials is quite high. On the other hand, no system in the United States tries to staff and operate so many branches with the same amount of money. Unfortunately, B&ECPL is far behind the national curve in the delivery of modern library services. It operates against a backdrop of seething discontents since the area has seen the departure of many people and businesses. Because of the population and business decline, tax monies have eroded, and over the past two decades, citizens, users and staff have seen cutbacks of major governmental services. Some people are fearful that this long-range Strategic Plan will be the cover to dramatically slash library services, outlets and staff.

Community leaders, staff, administration and the Library's Board all agree about B&ECPL's problems. They want acrimony to end. They want fairness in allocations of limited System resources. They want good library service, which in Erie County almost always is defined as branches and books. But branches and books are only part of the equation, and very few people appear to have a sense of what modern services should be. To fulfill its roles, services at the Library should help the people of Buffalo and Erie County meet individual, family and community reading and information needs. This is an age in which information can be found in myriad sources: books, periodicals, print documents, electronic resources and online services, story hours, community programs and the like, special services for toddlers and school age children, young adults, adults, senior citizens and the disabled.

To achieve these ends, major changes within the Library System are necessary. Within this document, a bold new vision is outlined. The vision includes quality services for everyone as well as in-library access to networked computers and online information, service to entrepreneurs attempting to start or grow area businesses, homework centers for children, outreach or other types of innovative services for the underserved in rural Erie County, and a Virtual Library that furnishes essential information to residents via computers from their homes or offices.

There is much that needs to be done, and doing anything will require decision-making and cooperation in ways both large and small. B&ECPL's problems are not insurmountable, but they represent a gauntlet of challenges. They involve money, jobs, and expectations. Key policy choices and a critical path of decisions need to be made. To have a bright future, the System must focus on implementing an expansive vision.

The effort to face the System's realities appears to have begun only when the Board hired a new director in 1995. Decades of problems had accumulated. They now need

to be solved – and many at one time. Only in this way can B&ECPL move forward into the twenty-first century, and toward a successful future.

Regional Demographics¹

Erie County and its Library System have experienced dramatic changes in the past three decades. Both the County and the City are part of the so-called “industrial-belt” that has lost substantial jobs and population. The region was quite healthy in the 1960s, but by the middle of the 1970s that was no longer the case. Decline came with the relocation of heavy industry and large manufacturing corporations to other parts of the country and, for that matter, the world. This, in turn, caused the county’s population to drop from 1,113,491 in 1970 to 1,015,472 in 1980 to 968,534 in 1990. The population of the county has continued to drop, now estimated at 910,354.

The City of Buffalo has shown an even more drastic population decline. In the 1950s, approximately 580,000 people lived within its limits, while today fewer than 328,000 do, a 43% reduction. However, it is still the most populous area in the county.

Not everyone who left the city necessarily moved away. At first, most suburbs showed steady population growth as a result of flight from Buffalo. Over the last four decades, the population outside the city has more than doubled. In recent years there has been a perceptible movement between suburbs or from places outside the county altogether. Similar to other areas in the nation, large declines have been occurring in the first ring suburbs that were also part of the industrial belt, while the outer suburban and rural areas are experiencing some population growth.

Statistics indicate that between 1970 and 1990, 11 of the 27 suburban cities and towns and 14 of the county’s 16 villages lost population. Major losses occurred in the industrial-belt communities: the Towns of Tonawanda (-23.1%) and Cheektowaga (-12.8%), and the Cities of Tonawanda (-19.8%) and Lackawanna (-29.1%). The Town of Amherst had the greatest absolute gain (18.8%), even though four other towns -- Evans, Orchard Park, Grand Island and Marilla -- experienced greater relative rates of growth (between 20 and 62%).

Although movement toward certain types of rural areas is a national trend, the population of Erie County is still geographically clustered. Eighty-two percent of County residents live in the City of Buffalo and 8 nearby municipalities. Jurisdictions tend to be small: only 6 cities, towns and villages surrounding Buffalo have populations exceeding 25,000. Fourteen of the 25 towns have fewer than 11,000 residents, and 12 of the 16 villages have populations under 7,000.

¹ This section is a summary of the findings reported in: *Governance in Erie County*. The Governance Project, State University of New York at Buffalo: January 1996, pg. 29-48. This comprehensive analysis forms the general basis for the ACA planning team’s review of shifts in population.

Within Erie County, the fastest growing age group is people over 64 years of age. The median age of residents is projected to increase to 43 years by the year 2010. The most dependent members of the county population -- children under 18 and elders over 65 -- now equal 39% of all residents. The group most likely to leave has been persons between 18 and 24 years of age.

The county population is also divided along class and income lines: one-quarter of Buffalo residents live below the poverty line compared to a little over 5 percent of the suburban and rural residents. There are, however, discrete pockets of poverty in the first suburban ring and several small, rural villages. Five jurisdictions have non-family median incomes at or below the City of Buffalo: the City of Lackawanna, the Villages of Farnham, Angola and Gowanda, and the Town of Brant. Three towns, Clarence, Elma and Grand Island, have median household incomes at least 50% higher than the Countywide median of \$28,500. The highest median incomes are found in the Village of Orchard Park, and the Towns of Clarence and Amherst.

Additionally, county population is divided along racial or ethnic lines. About 25% of the county's white population live in Buffalo, compared to 92% of African-Americans, and 73% of Hispanics. Initially, many African-Americans settled in the City of Lackawanna where they worked in the steel mills. Another cluster migrated to the Town of Lancaster. In the decades after 1940, discrimination sorted the population by race. As a result, the suburbs today are largely white and the City of Buffalo houses almost all of the county's African-Americans and Hispanics. The major exceptions are the Towns of Collins and Alden that house correctional facilities. Because of disproportionately high levels of minority inmates, both towns show relatively large minority populations. The racial composition of non-prison groups in these towns is similar to that of other suburban areas.

As the overall population of the county declined, the number of households increased by 9% between 1970 and 1990. Rather than being a local phenomenon, this was and continues to be largely due to major changes in the composition of the American family. The implication is that the traditional nuclear family, best characterized by the married couple household, is receding as the dominant household type throughout the nation as well as in Erie County. In 1990, single parent households accounted for 16% of the households, up from 12% in 1970, and non-family households grew to almost one-third, representing the fastest growing household type in the County.

As already noted, more people are living in the suburbs surrounding Buffalo than ever before. Vehicle trips indicate that people are more mobile than in the past. A survey prepared for the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee indicated that the greatest growth to the year 1994² was in trips occurring to the north and east, within Buffalo's first ring of suburbs, and especially into the Amherst/Lockport corridor. Vehicle miles of travel in Erie County per day reportedly increased from 11 to 17.6 million from 1973 to

² 2010 Transportation System Plan for Erie and Niagara Region. Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee: December 1994, pg. 20-2.

1992, an average of 1.9% per year over the 19 year period. Surprisingly, the growth rate for the period from 1990 to 1992 was 3.7%, or nearly double the average growth rate of the previous 16 years. The growth continued in the 1992 to 1994 period, with the average at 19.5 million.

Within Erie County, it is likely that pressure to develop rural/agriculture property will continue, unless other factors such as traffic congestion, travel costs or governmental policy change this market demand. It appears that the County would prefer to restrict development of such property and, instead, re-use underutilized acreage, but it has few tools to do so.

Insight Associates, Inc. – Study of Erie County Residents

During the spring of 1998, Insight Associates, Inc. of Getzville, NY conducted a telephone survey and four focus groups of Erie County residents. Library users and non-users in urban, suburban and rural areas were interviewed. Much of the report is a glowing evaluation of library performance, but there are areas of concern especially in terms of growing importance, hours of operation and technology. References to conclusions of the study appear throughout this report. A detailed analysis of its findings can be found in Volume III; an executive summary is included in the Supplemental Information section.

History of B&ECPL

Although many people in and around the Buffalo area are familiar with B&ECPL's history, it bears retelling for the purposes of the long-range Strategic Plan. To some extent, its past is the source of the difficulties it faces today.

February 1836 marked the beginning of continuous library service in Western New York when the **Young Men's Association** (YMA) was created to acquire books of permanent or lasting value for its members. Although the YMA admitted its first female member in 1857, it was not until 1886 that it became the **Buffalo Library**, and in 1897, the **Buffalo Public Library** -- as a result of a contractual agreement with the City. In exchange for sufficient funds to support its varied operations, the new institution transferred ownership of its books to the City of Buffalo, and was re-established as a free circulating and reference library open to all city citizens. Ownership of the building, however, remained with the Library.

A second library, the **Grosvenor Library**, had been operating within Buffalo as a non-circulating public reference library since 1871. As the years progressed, the Grosvenor established a host of noteworthy collections including patent information and military and legal documents. It also became a depository of the U.S. Circuit Court and Department of Interior publications.

In 1947, yet another library, the **Erie County Public Library**, was created. It essentially provided bookmobile service to rural towns and villages, offered outreach service to the confined, and instituted centralized support services -- e.g., book ordering, cataloging,

book preparation and consulting -- for the county's independent, autonomous community libraries, each with its own Board of Trustees.

Soon, the City of Buffalo faced difficult financial times while the County's finances continued to be sound. In an effort to protect the two city libraries and provide better library services for the entire county, the three library institutions were merged by special State legislation in 1954. The merger created one federated organization: **Buffalo and Erie County Public Library**. Ownership of the Buffalo Public and the Grosvenor Library buildings and their respective book collections was transferred to Erie County, and, in 1963, their collections were integrated on the shelves in the partially completed east block of a new Central Library building.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as the Erie County economy remained strong, a total of 25 buildings were constructed in Buffalo and surrounding towns. Then, in 1976, the County had to cut back. For B&ECPL, County revenue problems took the form of service and personnel cuts, although the next year small restorations occurred and most of the furloughed staff were recalled. Since then, as the county's industrial base continued to shrink, B&ECPL's Board and administration struggled to maintain services, gain adequate materials budgets, and provide reasonable staffing levels.

In 1992, the Library won a three-year lawsuit to secure administrative and financial authority that had been usurped by Erie County officials. In that same year, the Library Protection Act was enacted. The Act dedicates a portion of the real property tax for Library purposes and guarantees that funds appropriated by the Erie County Legislature cannot be re-appropriated to cover mid-year shortfalls elsewhere in the Erie County budget. The Library Protection Act, however, does not guarantee a stable or escalating level of funding and does nothing to address the mixed heritage of governance issues.



Governance

The Importance of the Governance Issue

An unparalleled and unwieldy governance structure is one of the three paramount issues affecting B&ECPL's ability to deliver efficient services. Unresolved governance conflicts drain the energy of the B&ECPL Board and the contract library boards. The System's legislated governance inadvertently emphasizes conflict and deadlock. No one — not staff, Board members, contract library trustees, or B&ECPL users — wants this indecisive stalemate to continue. The implementation of this Strategic Plan offers the B&ECPL Board of Trustees an opportunity to exert its considerable authority to the best advantage of the Library System and, in so doing, build confidence and optimism through informed, non-partisan leadership.

B&ECPL's Current Governance Structure

As it exists today, B&ECPL is an example of default regionalism. As specified by the 1953 Law, B&ECPL is a legally constituted, federated system serving both the City of Buffalo and Erie County. It is governed by 15 trustees: at least 8 of whom are electors of the City and at least 5 of whom are electors of the county outside the city. These trustees have legal oversight over the B&ECPL budget and the authority to set operations and service policies for the System as a whole. The B&ECPL Board also has the fiscal authority over how its funds will be expended. The Board, for example, has the power to determine the proportion of funding it allocates for staffing or for materials, for networked computers or for additional mobile services.

New York State grants B&ECPL's Board of Trustees considerable authority under the law. Historically, the Board has been restrained in its exercise of that authority, perhaps because it was not until 1992 that the State Court of Appeals issued a definitive ruling on the matter.

Within the federated system, however, B&ECPL's Board of Trustees does not have authority over any of the buildings the System uses for library service delivery. It does not control the interior or exterior conditions of those buildings, except for the furnishings and collections it puts into them, although it pays the salaries of the staff who may or may not be in the direct employ of the B&ECPL Board. Even the Central Library building is owned by Erie County, and the branches within the City are owned by the City of Buffalo.

Thus, in a very real sense, B&ECPL shares divided authority with the contract libraries over responsibility for the quality of service delivery at those sites. However, the authority is **not** split over who controls the B&ECPL operating budget. A county-wide tax levied on all real property produces B&ECPL's operating revenue — to underwrite all staff salaries and benefits and to purchase all materials and services for the System as a whole.

Governance Conflicts Heightened by Demographic and Economic Changes

Like all American regions, during the last half century Erie County has experienced dramatic shifts in its economy and its population. Unfortunately, both the economic base and the population of Erie County have declined over the last two decades, from 1,113,492 in 1970 to 968,584 in 1990. Between 1990 and 1997 the Buffalo area lost 4,200 jobs and 24,619 residents³. One result is that the City of Buffalo with 328,123 people now constitutes only one-third the population of Erie County. By way of comparison, taxes collected on City of Buffalo properties currently produce about 20% of B&ECPL's revenue. Because of the low-income levels of many of the city's population, a good number of people have no alternative other than to use the public library for reading and information resources. How to mitigate the extent of poverty and still give the larger population a fair deal is an open policy issue that needs to be faced by the B&ECPL Board.

Second, Erie County does have some areas that are gaining population. Much of this growth can be attributed to out-migration from the city and its first ring suburbs. Residents of these new-growth areas are demanding improved bookmobile service and, in some cases, the construction of new, fully-staffed library facilities to meet their reading and information needs.

Third, established areas in Erie County want higher service levels than they now receive. The towns in which they are located are the source of most of B&ECPL's operating income. Through the independent library boards and their elected political leaders, the residents of the contract library municipalities demand library services more directly proportional to the tax dollars they contribute.

Governance Effects on Staffing

These conflicts are heightened because library staffs serving their various communities tend to become in-system spokespersons for the constituencies they serve. The members of the ACA planning team have never witnessed a library system with so many different sets of supportive constituents, each working to get the most for a particular B&ECPL service outlet. The effect mirrors the governmental divisions rampant in New York State. In meetings, the staffs of various libraries and departments articulate these divisions openly in discussions over whether "other units" are getting more resources than "my unit." This situation breeds conflict over simple administrative decisions involving intra-system cooperation. Reflecting their varying governmental and service units, the staff tends to be locked in lobbying rather than decision making that tries to isolate new revenues or new service options in an effort to break or circumvent the deadlock. This dysfunctional situation undermines the B&ECPL Board's and the

³ 1998 Erie County Executive's Budget Message and Summary: Erie County, New York. Adopted as Amended December 8, 1997. Page 66

administration's ability to operate the system to deliver maximum library services in the most cost-efficient manner.

This dispute over resources is made even more bitter by the System's lack of sophisticated service-performance measurements. The Library's present administration has just begun to implement alternate measurement methodologies. With few reliable service measurements in place, however, the System relies primarily on materials circulation to determine the quality of its services. (See Output Measures in the Supplemental Information section.)

Modern library managers recognize the need for a variety of accurate, verifiable service measures — visits, reference questions answered, program attendance, persons participating in outreach activities, number of computer utilizations, etc. — to fairly gauge the successes of their system operations. This variety is needed especially when a library system serves a diverse racial and ethnic population group where families vary widely in their income levels and patterns of use.

Governance and Resource Allocation

In cities, counties and metropolitan districts with a single library board, the members of that board recognize in their budgeting for service delivery that older and less wealthy sections of their districts require different services from newer and wealthier sections. They recognize that some library facilities have high attendance and low circulation. They know that some neighborhoods, towns and subdivisions need different-sized facilities and different reading and information services than other locales.

Because of the governance issue at B&ECPL, these sophisticated policy issues have been largely ignored. Instead, most persons still seem focused in a simplistic dispute over the resources that will be needed to sustain high materials circulation in their communities. In the end, the governance situation tends to make the library a mirror of the region's chaotic local and regional politics. Rather than serving to bring the region's citizens together, as many libraries systems do through their consensus-building services, B&ECPL tends to be another arena where there is a constant fight over the allocation of limited government resources.

Governance Options

Alternative 1: The Status Quo

Throughout the planning process, no citizen, staff member, Board member or elected or appointed official expressed a wish for the current situation to continue. In spite of governance conflicts, there is unanimity in support for improved library services. There is some disagreement on how to achieve that improvement, but there also is a desire to proceed to a different solution than the one that exists.

The current situation has some positives built into it. Where library constituents are well organized, as they tend to be in the contract library communities, they have built strong

support for "their" library. That support includes the organization of Friends' groups, volunteer services to help the library operate effectively within a limited budget, and a surprisingly high and sometimes quite effective level of fund-raising.

Even the most avid of these supporters, however, joined City and County public officials in asking the ACA planning team to help the B&ECPL Board, their boards, and the Library System's staff to obtain improvements in operations and services. The general consensus is that everyone wants "good" library service, which they almost always define as branches and books. A growing number want more and different services than B&ECPL currently provides. The most frequently cited desires are more services for children and more computers, including networked computers tied into the Internet.

The principal themes of the planning discussion were the desire for "fairness" in the allocation of limited System resources and an end to the continuing acrimony over a service that is supposed to improve the lives of all citizens and their families. In short, there is no great interest in keeping the current governance system. There is general interest in developing a de facto governance structure that works better than the current one.

Alternative 2: Contract Library Independence

In an age in which nearly every kind of business — banking, health care, grocery stores, department stores, etc. — are consolidating to achieve economies of scale, a decision to create small, independent library systems seems absurd. Materials and other purchasing discounts will decline. Operational costs will rise. In general, fund-raising opportunities will be minimized. There is reduced ability to share in some state and federal grants, including the new Federal Library Services and Technology Act, and less expert staff who can write such grants. Library staff will have even fewer promotional opportunities than they do now and there will be fewer professional library operations for the money expended.

Alternative 3: Amend New York State Law

An effort could be made to amend New York Law to make Erie County's contract library boards advisory. In this scenario, B&ECPL would be made the sole employer of all library staff in the System. It might also be made a policy board with taxing authority.

This alternative is particularly attractive if anyone is really interested in the hiring and retention of outstanding employees even in times of financial downturns. As the System is currently constituted, the B&ECPL employment structure is one of the most complicated elements in the complicated library governance picture.

The B&ECPL employment structure is one in which the B&ECPL Library System cannot hire or reward its best employees through System promotion. For many of its employees, B&ECPL is little more than a payroll agency, paying "library staff" hired by other local governments and supervised by those same governments. It is a very inefficient public-sector employment system, with inherent cruelties that are not immediately apparent — until there is a major sexual harassment suit or an insurance

situation in which different B&ECPL employees will be paying different rates for the same coverage. It will also become visible should a financial downturn require across-the-board cuts. The longest-serving or the highest producing staff will be unprotected in their tiny-staffed work units.

More than any other issue, the "multiple hiring authority" problem cries out for a change in legislation or an alternate solution that achieves the same result. Until one library board and one library administration can operate as a single effective entity, B&ECPL's libraries will have many standards of service, numerous management idiosyncrasies, and varying levels of service delivery that will try the patience and credulity of sophisticated library users who seek service at more than a single location.

While well-intentioned, well-crafted amendments to New York State Law might benefit B&ECPL, re-opening the Law in an effort to realize those changes is a two-edged sword. Once opened for amendment, other special interests might take advantage of the opportunity to introduce revisions that could, for instance, abridge the authority or independence of the Library Board as sustained by the Courts in 1992. For years, B&ECPL's Board of Trustees fought to establish this independence and authority under the Law, affirming that the Library is more than a mere department of Erie County government. The risks and the inevitable investment in time, energy and funds required to affect positive legislative reform bring the merits of this approach into question.

Thoughtfully negotiated contractual agreements between B&ECPL and the contract library boards offer, perhaps, the best means to achieve the benefits of the single hiring authority without sacrificing the safeguards contained in the current law.

Alternative 4: B&ECPL Board Leadership in Cooperation with Communities

Throughout the planning process, it became increasingly clear that leadership and the efforts at cooperation of the B&ECPL Board were creating more successes than failures. City and suburban residents alike have strong representation on the B&ECPL Board. Through self-education and exercise, the Board continues to become more cognizant of the extent of its legal authority and of its responsibility to serve all of Erie County rather than individual or parochial special interests. One important alternative is for the B&ECPL Board to enhance and extend its recent efforts to make the current System work.

To pursue this alternative, the B&ECPL Board should:

1. Enhance formal communication efforts with Erie County citizens through regular communications channels, utilizing print and electronic media outlets, the Library's home page, and public meetings.
2. Conduct formal public meetings and discussions with elected and appointed officials to develop (and build consensus for) a new B&ECPL Services Plan. One consideration in this plan might be building on the current concept of regional libraries to establish hub services hierarchies where regional managers could tailor services exactly to constituent users.

3. Explain to participants in these meetings and to the public generally how the Board is allocating funds for services. Such a process implicitly carries a definition of "fairness." For example, it needs to make a public decision on how much the System can and will do to mitigate poverty and serve the underserved rural areas when most of the taxes come from the property in relatively few towns in Erie County.
4. Provide education for contract library trustees so they will increasingly recognize their rights and their responsibilities in the current process. This effort needs to deal with the various myths about what the contract library trustees can and cannot do and — legally — what they should and should not do.
5. Conduct formal discussions with all the governments that own library buildings about the conditions of their facilities. Minimal building health, safety, ADA and library-convenience standards need to be maintained if B&ECPL is to continue operating in any current or future building.
6. Utilize the annual contracts between B&ECPL and the contract libraries to establish one hiring authority for the entire System.

The Governance Ideal: Libraries and the Commonwealth

One of the most important reasons that local governments exist is to allocate resources. Ideally those decisions are made to benefit the commonweal (i.e. the public interest) as a whole. That means making optimum use of public resources, i.e. spending efficiently (with due speed) and effectively (maximum benefits from taxpayer investment).

Citizens generally do not worry very much over the structures in which their local governments operate so long as those governing units operate effectively and, so far as they can tell, in their best interests. If the B&ECPL Board exercises the full measure of its legal authority with fairness and vision in a concerted effort to benefit the commonweal, it can overcome the fragmented and dysfunctional conditions that exist today, and the Library System can have a bright future.



Finances

Budget Perceptions and a Dose of Reality

The ACA planning team's first and continuing perception is that B&ECPL's Board, management and staff feel "strapped" for operating income. Staff is the most articulate on this issue, believing that System finances are stretched to impossible levels, resulting in compromised service delivery in nearly all units. Moreover, they say that good service for customers generally is achieved only through personal and professional sacrifice. The System, they state, does not offer them any monetary rewards for good performance, only an oral "thank you."

The staff's general impression is that the System's resource allocations in the past have been highly political. Several staff managers told the ACA planning team how experienced staff has to "work the system" to get a few resources to make even modest changes. Those people who do not have influence in the System are believed to have to do without.

Because staff share this perception, so do many residents, including those who use the contract libraries in relatively affluent communities and those who use the facilities in older inner-city neighborhoods. In both cases, the users' tales include anecdotes about good service that always seems to be delivered against great odds.

In meetings with ACA planning team members, many users offered specific examples of how the System suffers from lack of resources. Most frequently they listed decrepit facilities, lack of parking, too few new books, no CDs or videos, no computers and a lack of sufficient special services for the elderly and for children. Among staff and users alike, there is a general perception that a lack of money is the principal problem retarding system development.

This perception feeds a general conspiracy theory among staff, namely, "If we're not getting ours, somebody else must have a lock on the B&ECPL Board and is making out like a bandit." Different members of many work units offered example after example of the unfairness of the B&ECPL resource-distribution system. Associated with this mythology is another perception: that things can't change because it takes money to change, and there is no money to be had.

B&ECPL's financial reality is much simpler. The System is not poor. It is relatively affluent. Its financial problems stem from the fact that it is a library system that is trapped in its past, and that trap results in the System needing about \$1million more every year just to keep up with the present rate of inflation.

Compared with many other North American libraries serving populations over 700,000, B&ECPL is comparatively well funded. The following chart shows that with an annual

income of \$26 million⁴, the library's per-capita tax support is \$27.05 while the average of its comparison libraries is only \$22.41.

Expenditure per Capita⁵

(Libraries Serving Populations Over 700,000)

Library Name (State)	Expenditure Per Capita
Columbus Metropolitan Library (OH)	\$49.85
Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library (OH)	48.33
San Francisco Public Library (CA)	45.55
Hennepin County Library (MN)	37.80
King County Library System (WA)	34.54
Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (IN)	34.49
Montgomery County Dept. of Public Libraries (MD)	32.66
Enoch Pratt Free Library (MD)	31.37
Queens Borough Public Library (NY)	30.91
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library (GA)	27.88
Chicago Public Library (IL)	27.51
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (NY)	27.05
Detroit Public Library (MI)	26.45
Brooklyn Public Library (NY)	25.51
San Jose Public Libraries	23.88
St. Louis County (MO)	23.60
Free Library of Philadelphia (PA)	23.37
Broward County Libraries Division (FL)	22.74

⁴ This amount includes \$23.9 million from local property tax and \$2.0 million in State operating aid.

⁵ From *Statistical Report '98*, Public Library Data Service. Public Library Association: Chicago 1998.

**THE BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:
THE LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN, 1999-2003**

Library Name (State)	Expenditure Per Capita
Orange County Library System (FL)	21.73
Prince George's County Memorial Library System (MD)	20.68
Fairfax County Public Library (VA)	20.62
Calgary Public Library (AB)	20.39
Los Angeles Public Library (CA)	19.82
Montreal, Bibliotheque de (PQ)	19.39
Jacksonville Public Library (CA)	19.05
Miami-Dade Public Library System (FL)	18.95
Dallas Public Library (TX)	18.12
Hawaii State Public Library System (HI)	17.75
San Diego Public Library (CA)	17.68
Houston Public Library (TX)	17.51
Memphis and Shelby County Public Libraries (TN)	16.99
Los Angeles Public Library, County of (CA)	16.93
Rochester Public Library (NY)	15.57
Phoenix Public Library (AZ)	15.19
Sacramento Public Library (CA)	14.88
Contra Costa County Library (CA)	14.80
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (PA)	14.41
Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library (FL)	13.32
San Antonio Public Library (TX)	12.01
San Diego County Library (CA)	9.99
Riverside City and County Public Library (CA)	9.89
San Bernardino County (CA)	7.38
Providence Public Library (RI)	6.58

Library Name (State)	Expenditure Per Capita
Macomb County Library (MI)	3.68
Average Per Capita	\$22.41

B&ECPL's revenue can be seen as even more substantial when it is realized that only the Central Library's major capital costs have to come from its operating revenue. Most library building construction costs are paid for by other government entities. In effect, B&ECPL does not pay much of the land or building rental costs that other large systems have to pay as part of their regular operating budgets. B&ECPL does have to pay, however, the operating costs of these installations. Further, B&ECPL does pay, through debt service, the costs of major capital projects supporting the Central Library building, mobile libraries and system-wide automation. Annual debt service for those items approaches \$1 million. However by any gross comparison, B&ECPL enjoys access to a relatively healthy operating budget.

The Effects of Erie County's Changing Demographics

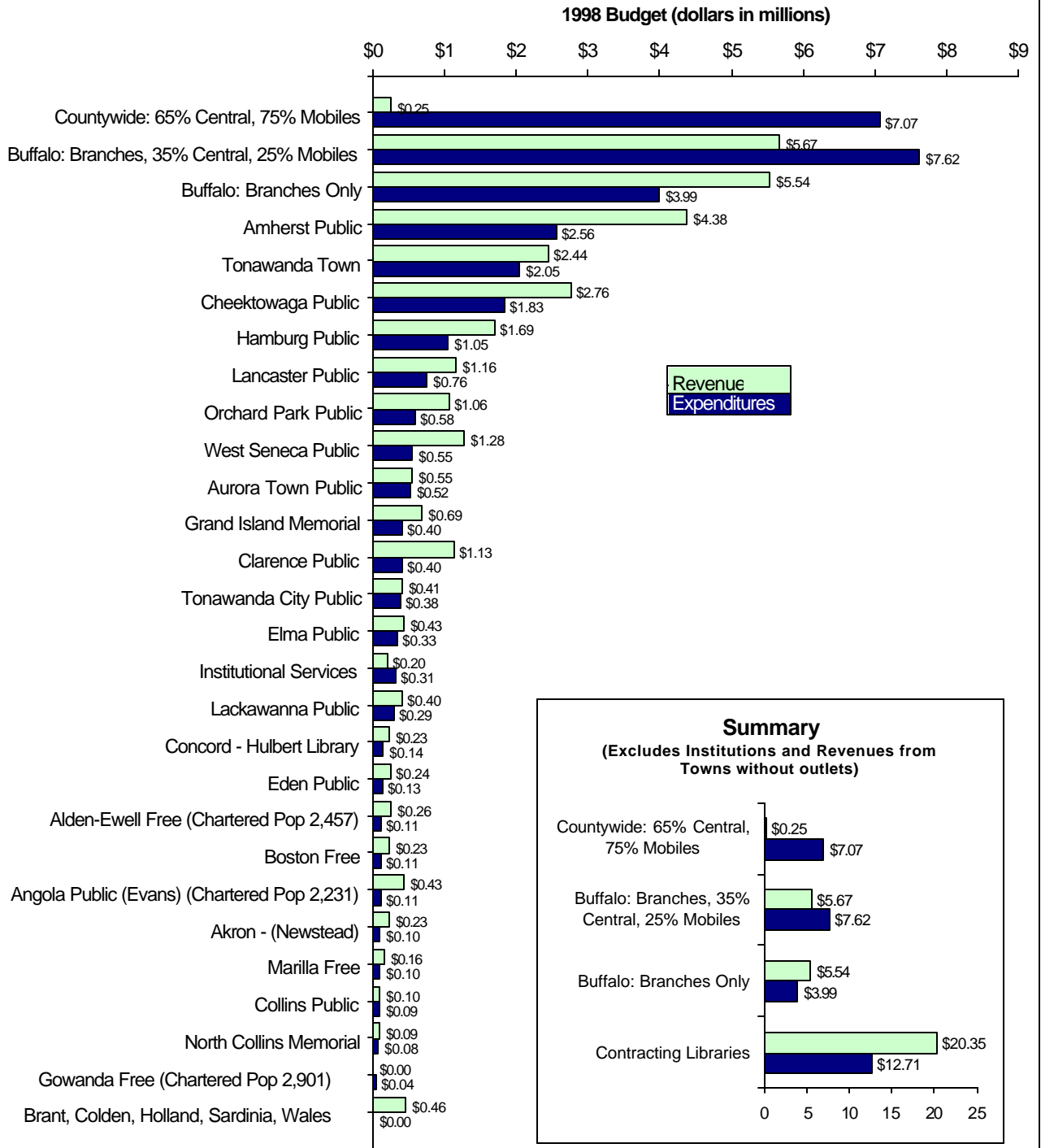
Erie County's changing demographics have had a profound effect on overall revenue growth and from where that growth is generated. The gradual decline of the county's population acts to minimize growth and, in some years, reduce the countywide tax base. Population shifts from the urban core to outlying communities are followed by a shift in the tax base, with urban valuation declining as outlying valuation increases. These shifts create a dilemma posed by increased demand for public library facilities and services in the outlying areas and increased need for services targeting the urban poor while the overall ability to generate revenues countywide to pay for these services is stagnant.

The effect of these trends can be seen in the following chart, "B&ECPL Revenues & Expenditures, Including Support Costs," which shows the fully allocated costs of operating the libraries within B&ECPL based upon the 1998 Budget. It also displays the revenues that support those costs.

As the tax base in the City of Buffalo has declined, an increasing portion of the county-wide property tax for library purposes, which provides over 87% of 1998 operating revenues, is being derived from property located outside the City. Other revenues have paralleled the shift in population, be they population-based state aid or library fine revenue attributed to individual libraries.

The chart shows that revenue supporting Buffalo branch libraries exceeds expenditures, \$5.54 million vs. \$3.99 million. The revenue-expenditure difference for libraries outside the city limits, contract libraries, is much greater with \$20.35 million in revenues vs. \$12.71 million in expense. These additional revenues support the operations of the system's Central and mobile libraries which provide services countywide.

B&ECPL Revenues & Expenditures (Including Support Costs)



However, both the Central Library and mobile libraries serve dual roles. The Central Library, located in the heart of downtown Buffalo, provides local library services to the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. Mobile libraries provide outreach services in the urban area. If we assume 35% of the Central Library and 25% of mobile library services directly benefit City residents, expenditures then exceed revenues \$7.62 million vs. \$5.67 million.

Should these trends and their resulting service pressures continue, the System's ability to provide library services to its urban, suburban and rural residents using existing facilities and methods will continue to erode.

Governance, Facilities and Financial Issues

B&ECPL's financial problems arise from its governance. Erie County owns the Central Library building and the City of Buffalo owns the city branch buildings. The twenty-three towns, cities, villages and free library associations individually own and maintain the library buildings in which their libraries are located. On the upside, the construction and maintenance of these facilities are contributions to the System's operations. On the downside, the facilities often are burdens; most are too small to meet modern standards for library buildings in a system of any size.

The fiscal responsibility and the governance of these buildings (as opposed to the federated system governed by the Board of Trustees of B&ECPL) are in the hands of 23 separate, independent, autonomous agencies in various governments and associations. Each has its own Board of Trustees. Although staff salaries, materials acquisitions, electronic services and the like are paid for by B&ECPL, hiring is performed and library services are modulated by the independent boards.

The result of this dispersed authority to erect facilities is an overabundance of library buildings. For nearly the last half century, one structure after another has been opened while hardly any have been closed. All of these buildings have absorbed staffing, materials and support expenses. **Indeed, B&ECPL operates more branches per average population than any other U.S. and Canadian library system serving total populations of 700,000 or more.** The following chart illustrates this fact.

Each B&ECPL branch serves an average population of 18,626 compared to a chart average of 43,137. No other large library system in the United States or Canada serves so few residents per outlet. Only Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library (OH) comes close and its annual per-capita library services expenditure of \$48.33 is in marked contrast to B&ECPL's \$27.05. After the few systems whose average population per branch is between 20,000 and 29,999, the average starts to climb. Many branches are in the 30,000 to 70,000 arena. The large urban systems with many branches tend to have large average populations per branch, skewing the average somewhat, but the list tops out with the Providence Public Library with an average of 111,496 people for each of its nine branches.

Average Population per Library Branch⁶

(Libraries Serving Over 700,000 Population)

Population of Legal Service Area	Library Name ⁷ (State)	Number of Branches	Branches Average Population
1,003,464	Providence Public Library (RI)	9	111,496
1,217,345	Phoenix Public Library (AZ)	12	101,445
1,310,500	San Antonio Public Library (TX)	18	72,806
713,968	Rochester Public Library (NY)	10	71,397
1,336,449	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (PA)	19	70,339
744,506	Orange County Library System (FL)	11	67,682
1,709,909	Miami-Dade Public Library System (FL)	30	56,997
790,498	Calgary Public Library (AB)	14	56,464
3,681,708	Los Angeles Public Library (CA)	66	55,783
1,140,590	Sacramento Public Library (CA)	22	51,845
868,000	San Jose Public Libraries	17	51,059
1,822,989	Houston Public Library (TX)	36	50,630
843,000	St. Louis County (MO)	17	49,588
932,000	Fairfax County Public Library (VA)	19	49,053
910,855	Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library (FL)	19	47,940
1,047,350	Dallas Public Library (TX)	22	47,607
779,534	Jacksonville Public Library (CA)	17	45,855
1,423,729	Broward County Libraries Division (FL)	32	44,492

⁶ From *Statistical Report '98*, Public Library Data Service. Public Library Association: Chicago 1998.

⁷ Macomb County Library (MI) did not report number of branches and is not included here.

**THE BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:
THE LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN, 1999-2003**

Population of Legal Service Area	Library Name ⁷ (State)	Number of Branches	Branches Average Population
799,375	Tucson-Pima Public Library (AZ)	18	44,410
773,810	Prince George's County Memorial Library System (MD)	18	42,989
1,016,367	Montreal, Bibliotheque de (PQ)	24	42,349
1,027,974	Detroit Public Library (MI)	25	41,119
1,090,600	Riverside City and County Public Library (CA)	27	40,393
873,458	Memphis and Shelby County Public Libraries (TN)	22	39,703
3,370,340	Los Angeles Public Library, County of (CA)	85	39,651
2,300,664	Brooklyn Public Library (NY)	59	38,994
828,000	Montgomery County Dept. of Public Libraries (MD)	22	37,636
743,640	Columbus Metropolitan Library (OH)	20	37,182
1,218,700	San Diego Public Library (CA)	33	36,930
770,684	Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (IN)	21	36,699
3,070,302	New York Public Library (NY)	85	36,121
975,000	San Bernardino County (CA)	27	36,111
779,900	Contra Costa County Library (CA)	22	35,450
2,783,726	Chicago Public Library (IL)	79	35,237
1,952,000	Queens Borough Public Library (NY)	62	31,484
1,585,577	Free Library of Philadelphia (PA)	52	30,492
778,100	San Francisco Public Library (CA)	26	29,927
946,340	San Diego County Library (CA)	32	29,573
711,658	Hennepin County Library (MN)	25	28,466

**THE BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:
THE LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN, 1999-2003**

Population of Legal Service Area	Library Name ⁷ (State)	Number of Branches	Branches Average Population
1,087,393	King County Library System (WA)	40	27,185
717,500	Enoch Pratt Free Library (MD)	28	25,625
780,694	Atlanta-Fulton Public Library (GA)	32	24,397
1,108,229	Hawaii State Public Library System (HI)	49	22,617
857,616	Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library (OH)	41	20,917
968,532	Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (NY)	52	18,626
AVERAGE			43,137

Granted, branches are supposed to be located in logical service areas and not based on average populations. Thinly populated areas may require branches located in destination points such as villages or town centers. However, the Tucson-Pima Public Library has a 9,240 square mile service area that stretches from an urban center to a very rural periphery with an average population per branch of 44,410.

There are at least two serious conclusions to draw from so many independently owned library buildings. First, not all of the governments/associations that own and maintain the 52 B&ECPL branches are good landlords. As the detailed Facilities Study that is part of this plan indicates, many of these branches are very small, inadequately maintained, badly designed, poorly-sited buildings with very limited or no parking. Most are not the spacious, multiple-service, community meeting places that Erie County residents say they want or need. Too many B&ECPL libraries do not meet minimum space standards for modern libraries.

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of these facilities are set up to serve a single purpose: to promote circulation of materials. In the circulation of library materials - somewhere in the neighborhood of 9 million items per year, or about 9 circulations per capita - B&ECPL makes its case for continued funding. Even in this service category, there is considerable weakness. Many of the smallest of the system's 52 branches circulate only enough materials to be thought of as "placeholders" in B&ECPL's total operations.

The second implication of a large number of branches is reflected in the organization's salary and benefits line, comprising 72% of the budget. Operating so many branches requires a large staff, still spread so thin as to compromise service in an increasing

number of locations. The situation of too many small branches and increased staff costs inhibits the addition or expansion of other desired library services.

This has resulted in a "buildings and books" operating style, recognized by Erie County residents as B&ECPL's dominant image. In the spring 1998 telephone survey and focus groups, users and non-users alike demonstrated that they regarded the library first and foremost as a book place, not as an information source or a community resource. This book-dominant theme has facilities-related limits. When asked to compare their perceptions of area bookstores and libraries, B&ECPL libraries nearly always came off second best in regard to current books or family events related to books.

To sum up, within its current operating budget, B&ECPL is "**facilities-poor.**" The system is locked into providing mostly traditional library service in too many outlets. Too many facilities mean high staff costs in proportion to the total budget, eliminating the capacity to provide anything except "facilities-poor" services. Other service needs go wanting.

Funds Needed to Bring Desired Changes

The Board of Trustees of B&ECPL wants change. It contracted for this planning study because its members wanted to find mechanisms and strategies to bring about change. Management wants change. Library personnel want change. Most important, B&ECPL users and non-users alike want change.

In a series of focus groups and a telephone survey conducted in the spring of 1998, Erie County residents indicated the changes they would like to see in the Library System they support with their taxes. The changes most wanted include more children's services, additional hours and computers.

In short, nearly everyone associated with the B&ECPL System wants to see it change. Without any room in the operating budget, how can the System find funds to make the desired changes?

Future Revenue Realities

These desired changes will have to be paid for in a very constrained financial situation. Standard & Poor's (S&P) economists remain pessimistic about New York's economy⁸. The state's annual employment growth is expected to be only 0.4% from 1998 to 2002 –or the lowest in the nation. Indeed, New York is rated as the worst of the 50 states in which to locate a business.⁹ In addition, its credit rating ties for last place with Louisiana.

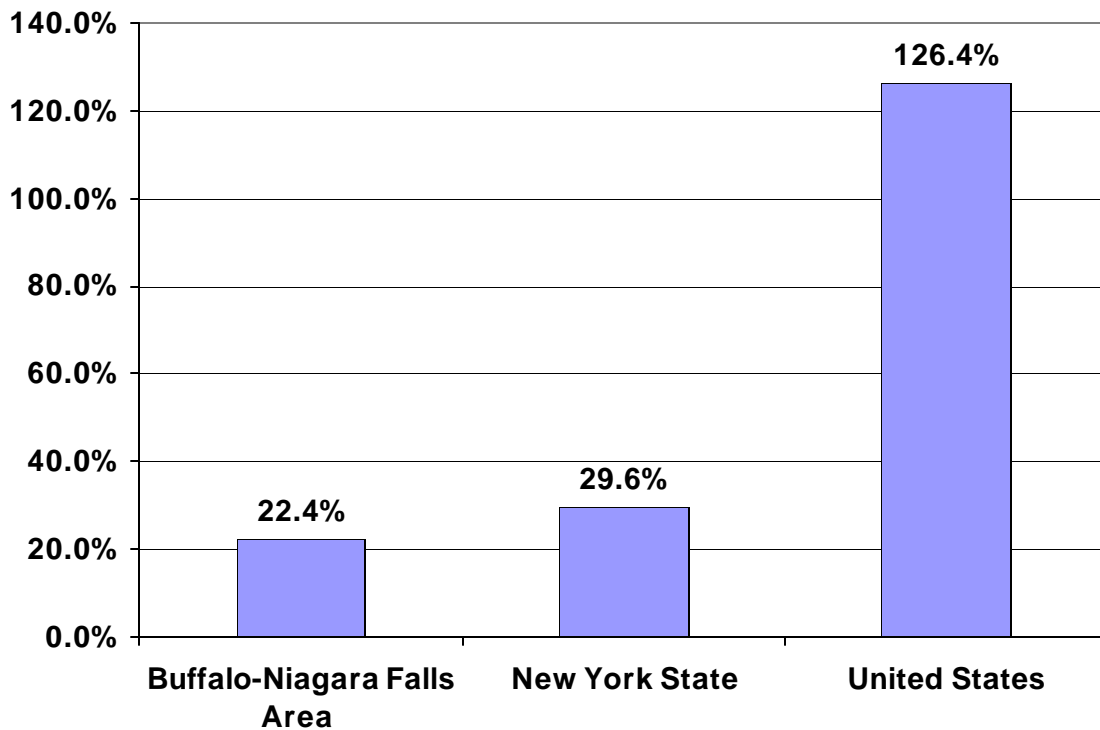
⁸ "New York Economic Growth Outlook." Standard & Poor's *DRI /U.S. Markets Review*, 1998.

⁹ *Financial World*, November 1997, pg. 44.

According to S&P, the 8-year boom on Wall Street has masked an underlying weakness in New York's economy. Today, the thriving financial services market accounts for nearly 30% of New York's gross state product, but the overwhelming majority of such companies are concentrated in New York City and Long Island. Although the state has a diverse economy, its dependence on one location in one geographical area constitutes a major risk.

For the entire state, long term problems tend to be structural. High taxes and noncompetitive costs have been driving out businesses. For example, Xerox and IBM recently laid off thousands. In the past four years, while 300,000 jobs were created, 500,000 jobs were lost, amounting to a net decrease of 200,000. The state is losing market share in every sector of the economy. Most of the state, except for Manhattan and Long Island, has not kept pace with the growth seen in other parts of the country.

Increase in Non-Farm Jobs from 1960-1997¹⁰



To make matters worse, wage and salary income per employee is the second highest among all 50 states, 27% higher than the national average. The state has the second highest state and local tax burden in the U.S., 34% above the national average, and \$34 billion a year in debt services. Energy costs are very high.

¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics; N.Y.S. Department of Labor.

In 1997, Buffalo had the dubious distinction of paying the highest state and local taxes of 100 U.S. metropolitan areas surveyed by *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*.¹¹ For two years in succession Buffalo has led the way with the chief culprits being property taxes, state business taxes and utility rates. The *Buffalo News* article, in which this information appeared, cited a federal government report released early in 1998 that would have placed upstate New York 49th in private-sector growth if the region were considered a separate state. If a solution is not found for the high local tax burden, the economy in the area will continue to struggle.

The Economic Situation in New York, Western New York and Erie County

Although the economy of Western New York can be characterized as anything but vibrant during this national economic boom, there was some alleviation in the past few months. Unemployment rates for the area were projected to be 6.6% in February (not seasonally adjusted). This reflects some expansion in the labor force: people are looking for work that have not looked before.

For Western New York, the big issue is trained labor to support manufacturing. Skilled workers are needed for any economic expansion. Systems analysts, computer engineers, and computer programmer aides are among the occupations that lead the list of the projected fastest-growth occupations¹². However, service industries employ the largest number of people as cashiers, home health aides, cooks, etc. Unfortunately, any economic slowdown will sharply reduce the State, Erie County and Buffalo's job growth rate over the next five years¹³. Western New York would immediately feel any downturn in the economy. This will further exacerbate the growing income disparity between upstate and downstate.

To stimulate the economy, there are a number of large public sector-driven construction projects proposed for the Buffalo area¹⁴. They include a convention center downtown and a zoo on the waterfront, as well as a few large renovation and redevelopment projects. Altogether, an estimated \$580 million in public funds are expected to be used, but these projects remain in the proposal stage at this time.

The message is clear, however. Because of New York State's and, particularly, Western New York's present difficulties, the economy will not be able to provide the additional revenues needed for B&ECPL to address its service needs.

¹¹ *The Buffalo News*. September 11, 1998, pg. A1.

¹² "Occupational Outlook through 1999." New York State Department of Labor, 1996.

¹³ "Federal Reserve Bank Representatives Present Economic Outlook for New York State at Rockefeller Institute." Richard W. Peach and Rae D. Rosen. June 19, 1997.

¹⁴ "Federal Reserve Districts, Second District – New York." Federal Reserve Board, December 3, 1997.

B&ECPL Budget

The 1998 budget for library operations and grants totals \$28,153,024, a modest increase of \$477,000 or 1.7% above last year. It is funded by local property tax revenue and augmented by state and federal grant funds:

Library operating fund	\$27,412,531
Library grants fund (state/federal)	740,493
Total Library Budget	\$28,153,024

The budget does not include County Capital Project funds of \$1 million that have been approved as part of the County's Bonded Capital Budget for the Central Library's roof. The funds will not be available for expenditure until early 1999. Debt service, paying back the bondholders, will also impact the operating budget in 1999.

System revenues derived from the countywide property tax levy for library purposes increased 3.7% over 1997 and constitute 87% of Library operating revenues. State operating aid, which had remained flat for many years, increased a modest 1.62% in 1997. Subsequent to adopting the 1998 budget shown above, the State Legislature adopted full funding of Chapter 917 state aid for the first time since the legislation was adopted in 1990. This increased state aid by 6.4% over 1997, but future growth in state revenues cannot be counted on. Even with the recent increase, state aid constitutes less than 10% of Library revenues. Federal grants are awarded on a project basis and the Library received three LSTA grants of \$98,058. Other revenues include \$243,224 billed to contract libraries for the employer's share of New York State's retirement costs for their eligible employees (paid by the System).

These figures underline the fact that new public allocations to improve the B&ECPL System may be hard to find and it would be unwise to count on these revenues to rectify B&ECPL's organizational and governance problems. Even worse is the possibility that should the economy turn down, Erie County's revenue situation will deteriorate. If funding drops, staff layoffs would be difficult to avoid. Should this situation occur within the current political context, the layoffs would only compound the System's problems, not make them better.

Development of a Financial Plan

Whether an individual, a family or a library, one important tool for moving ahead is a financial plan. This Strategic Plan forms the basis for such financial planning. Through the course of the current planning process, staff in the B&ECPL Finance Office has created a detailed analysis of the System's annual income and expenditure patterns.

Making use of this data, the B&ECPL Board should charge the Library's administration with the development of explicit five-year and ten-year financial plans based upon the strategies the Board adopts as a result of the current planning process. Following up on

promises made during discussions over the past year, this plan should be developed in concert with elected and appointed officials in Erie County, contract library trustees, input from additional organizational, corporate and civic leaders, and with wide public discussion.

Legislative Alternatives

An aspect of this plan should include an examination of legislative alternatives. It is essential to make the Library Protection Act permanent. The act provides protection from cutbacks once the Erie County Budget process has been completed. For the Library, this serves to ensure short-term (one-year) stability, a worthwhile goal for library officials who have known previous times where "take-backs" eroded annual revenues after service improvements were scheduled. This alternative provides no new funds, only stabilizes what is granted annually.

Increased Public Funding

Although B&ECPL is comparatively well funded on a per capita basis, successfully addressing the problems resulting from its "facilities poor" status will require increased funding. Throughout the December 1997 community meetings, the need for more funds continually reappeared as a theme in the discussions. In public and staff meetings alike, there were individuals who stepped forward to suggest that B&ECPL needed and deserved more public funds than it currently is receiving. Not surprisingly, those closest to operations were most in favor of higher public funding. If the public wanted expanded services, new facilities and more library access to networked computers, then they wanted the opportunity to make the case for higher public funding. Thus, the B&ECPL Board should not hesitate to consider advocating either greater revenue increases or some form of dedicated revenue with which to support the system. This could be accomplished through either general operating funds in the long term or some special transitional fund in the short run.

As might be expected, the strongest expressions of support came from the Library's most dedicated users, contract library trustees, friends and other volunteers, particularly those who worked in close contact with Library employees. This group, in general, saw the funding situation in terms of both need and possibility. Legitimate needs were greater than current public funding, and they saw the probable high returns to specific user groups with expanded services and better facilities.

The ACA planning team was not charged with a formal assessment of whether more public funding is viable, but we recommend that this possibility be considered. The team has been made aware of the general anti-tax sentiments in Buffalo and Erie County, but such sentiments exist all over the United States. In the face of these sentiments, through the past decade, hundreds of library systems have gained increased tax support.

Would a majority of Buffalo and Erie County voters pay increased tax support to make specific improvements in library services or to refurbish or build new library buildings in

their neighborhoods and suburban communities? Will they pay more to get increased collections and more computers, CDs, audio and video cassettes? One cannot know until they are asked.

The survey conducted by Insight Associates, Inc. in the spring of 1998 was not charged with ascertaining the answers to funding questions. The survey, however, did find a great store of public support for the B&ECPL System, its services and its staff. Using this support, the Library can develop a solid case for increased public funding. It needs to give public officials and the voters of Buffalo and Erie County the opportunity to help one of their most respected and used institutions provide them with improved and expanded services.

Institutional Development

Along with governance and finance, the third institutional area that needs major repair is B&ECPL's capacity for institutional development. This term includes all those activities related to an institution's external relations: organized friends groups, docent and volunteer programs, special events planning and execution, expanded marketing both to enhance the image of the institution and to promote the use of library programs, plans to earn income, and a greatly enhanced program to assess, plan, cultivate and solicit partnerships, monetary and in-kind grants and gifts. The latter category includes coordination with the Library Foundation, which now carries on fund-raising independently of the Library organization.

Some components of this external relations effort already exist. A percentage of these organizational pieces serve the whole System, while others have been developed independently around the operations of one or several libraries. A big library system, as much on the move as B&ECPL, needs to develop all of these elements as part of its coordinated administrative capacity. Examples include the following:

1. Friends, docents and volunteers add capacity and often help set a welcoming tone in central and branch libraries. In libraries throughout America, examples abound. "Computer buddy" volunteers offer every aspect of instruction from "mousing" to "how-to" courses on jobs and business-information searching to people of all ages. Docents give orientation tours and answer directional questions, getting library users more quickly to exactly what they want or need from library services. Volunteers help with a still greater variety of tasks. Some help marketing departments prepare large mailings, others provide assistance during special events, and still others – like retirees with specialized knowledge – work under the direction of library professionals to add identifications to archival collections. Friends groups exist in infinite variations. Some B&ECPL library units, especially those among the contract libraries, have friends groups that improve the institutions in ways both small and large. And "friend-raising" is just one step removed from fund-raising, as many B&ECPL units already have found. All these programs deserve expansion - to strengthen relationships with the families who reside in Erie County and to help the institution move forward.

2. Help with planning and carrying out special events would extend the institution's cultural influence in the community, weaving an enhanced pattern of relationships with regular users and creating attractions that would draw non-users to visit the library. These events were suggested by non-user focus-group participants as one kind of activity that would induce them to visit a library.
3. Expanded marketing is another way to attract non-users to the library and to encourage users to enlarge the pattern of their library relationships. Current library marketing includes special events, public relations, an institutional communications program and, in some cases, even the purchase of advertising. Few modern libraries the size of B&ECPL have so small a marketing department.
4. Partnerships are a modern way for libraries to share their resources with other educational and cultural institutions. One section of the legislation creating the Institute for Museum and Library Services is devoted exclusively to providing funding to encourage partnerships between museums and libraries. With its rich museum tradition, this partnership avenue should be an attractive one for B&ECPL, as should partnerships with organizations like the YMCA and dozens of other philanthropic and care-giving agencies. Public-private partnerships are still another avenue. In many U.S. cities and to an extent here in Erie County, local sports teams provide free tickets and merchandise to encourage summer readers, and businesses of all kinds can frequently be partnered with the library in support of events like Black History Month and Women's History Month.
5. Individuals representing B&ECPL users and staff were quick to differentiate between "fees for service" and "earned income." Many (including those from higher-income levels) expressed reservations over any fees that might deter library use by those who do not have even moderate family incomes. There is strong sentiment on the part of the public, Board and staff against fees for basic services. This contrasts with what might be called "fees for convenience," e.g., small fees to make a copy of a document on a library copy machine or to pay for the post card letting them know that a requested book was now available.
6. Earned income is something else. Earned income programs are growing in libraries across America. B&ECPL has some obvious earned-income opportunities. For example, the Library has many unique special collections that present opportunities for saleable graphic reproductions and the re-issuance in more accessible formats of scarce or rare materials with regional, national and international significance. The Mark Twain Collection and the local history collections offer excellent earned-income opportunities, as do facilities, particularly the Central Library (discussed in another section of this report).

In addition, there are opportunities to enhance System income from the Library's bookstore and perhaps ancillary food service opportunities as well. Rental fees for facilities represent an increasing source of income for many library systems, although museums are still way ahead in this category. Staff and library users alike

demonstrated a great openness to entrepreneurial innovations, asking that the Board and System officials explore every earned-income possibility.

Examples of Earned Income Opportunities

Staff and users suggested the following earned-income opportunities for consideration by the Board:

1. Selling B&ECPL publications and unusual reprints, especially those from unique rare books collections.
2. Expanding the hours and publicity for the book store and gift shop at the Central Library.
3. Attempting subscription publishing.
4. Distributing publications from other libraries and library-related publications.

Fund-raising

Fund-raising has become a way of life in most of America's public libraries. This fact is widely recognized by Erie County residents and B&ECPL staff. Frustration over lack of effort in this area runs high, especially among the boards of the contract libraries and much of the staff.

Born within a framework of high hopes and expectations of big results, the independent Library Foundation is the object of this frustration. When the Foundation was created more than half a decade ago, many staff, trustees and government officials knowledgeable about the Library thought that it would become an aggressive philanthropic arm for the institution. B&ECPL Board actions to make the Foundation independent from B&ECPL were seen at the time as a mechanism to further strengthen the Foundation's ability to undertake major philanthropic initiatives.

After five years in which the Library and its Foundation ran on parallel-but-never-intersecting tracks, the rebuilding of the relationship between the two entities is only now just starting. There is much to rebuild. Library trustees and staff are disappointed over what they regard as a lack of Foundation effort to raise funds that are critical in creating a reasonable future for the Library. Library Foundation activities and priorities are seen to be narrowly focused on Buffalo, the Central Library and rare book services. Library Foundation directors, meanwhile, have not been able to establish the kind of donor-grantee relationship which they appear to want. The Foundation Board seems to see its role as an intermediary with potential Buffalo donors, a relationship not unlike a specialized United Way agency. In examining a considerable body of documents and during a series of meetings with the Library Board, Foundation directors, Library management and staff, the ACA planning team concluded that the Foundation Board expects its relationship with the Library to fall into two patterns, both of which are problematic.

In the first pattern, the Foundation Board expects that the Library will articulate specific needs. Should the Foundation approve the request, its members will solicit funds to meet that prospect. If that solicitation is successful, the Foundation Board will set the conditions under which the Library will expend the grant funds. As can be seen from this assessment, this relationship is one in which the private-sector Library Foundation Board exercises considerable control over a public institution that currently obtains more than 85% of its funds from County tax sources.

In the second pattern, the Library Foundation Board decides upon a project that the Library should undertake. It seeks the Library's concurrence that this project is useful and will move the Library forward. Foundation members then raise the funds. The Foundation Board thus serves as the donors' representative, setting the conditions under which private-sector funding will be spent by the public Board of Trustees.

Looming over this relationship is the Library's need for major private-sector funds and state/federal-grant funds to help move the institution forward. A recent Gates Library Foundation Grant, given to the Library, and a grant from the Oishei Foundation for a rare books program, given to the Library Foundation, show that each entity is capable of creating an appealing proposal to a funding agency. Such grant-making activities should be better coordinated. Such effort ought to be accomplished in concert, not in quasi-competition.

Fund-raising is a necessity in the modern world of big libraries. It seems that the only way to improve this relationship is for the B&ECPL Board to hire professional development counsel or to appoint a new Deputy Director or Assistant Deputy Director to coordinate the fund-raising interests of the whole institution, and to cultivate and work out a harmonious relationship with the independent Library Foundation. The result will likely be increased fund-raising capacity, and the full support of the independent Library Foundation.

Rare Books: The Library's Treasures

The B&ECPL Board, the Library professional staff and certain members of the public share a sense of the extraordinary value of the items held in the System's Rare Books and Special Collections. They want to see those collections preserved, exhibited and marketed. They also believe that the Library should make a focused effort to find private funding to support the institutional rare books effort. Based on findings of the Insights Associates, Inc. telephone survey and focus group sessions, the general public assigns a low priority to rare books.

Given the Library's many other priorities, it is not feasible to increase public expenditures or to focus a substantial proportion of the Library's private fund-raising effort on rare books. One recommendation is to have private benefactors, who want to see progress in the rare books area, advance that cause through private fund-raising -- but only if that fund-raising does not distract the institution from pursuing its larger funding needs.

Develop Fund-Raising Capacity for B&ECPL

As part of its institutional development and the requirement to increase sources and amounts of funds, B&ECPL needs enhanced fund-raising capacity. The ACA planning team believes that this capacity needs to be part of the Library's administrative framework. The hiring of development counsel, either on a contract or salaried basis, or newly appointed staff would provide the Library Board and administration with expertise that is badly needed to move the institution forward.

Recent programs - the Library Services and Technology Act, various state and corporate grants, the Gates Library Foundation - demonstrate current fund-raising opportunities for which the B&ECPL System has competed successfully in the past and will compete in the future. Projects such as these "add value" to the public investment made by taxpayers. To move forward, B&ECPL needs an office devoted to institutional fund-raising.

This fund-raising office must have three functions.

1. In cooperation with the staff, prepare grants to national and regional foundations and government agencies that require applications directly from public libraries, not from their philanthropic arms.
2. Coordinate and assist in the fund-raising activities of individual System libraries which have demonstrated, or which can demonstrate, significant fund-raising capacity within their various communities.
3. Formally coordinate activities to cultivate and solicit gifts and grants with the Library Foundation to maximize that agency's unique network of established contacts and to ensure that the Foundation and B&ECPL development efforts work in harmony, not at cross purposes.

Among both the public and staff, there is a wide base of support for increasing this capacity. Two lists of funding priorities appear below. The first was compiled in discussions with contract library trustees and from survey materials. The second was compiled in discussions with staff. Both lists illustrate current or recent fund-raising successes as well as projects or capital expenditures seen as appropriate for fund-raising. The lists are extensive, but, in general, involve adding value to the Library expense paid for by local taxes.

Funding Priorities of the Contract Library Trustees and the Public Generally

1. Facilities improvements, including parking
2. Service innovations that are new to a branch or to the system generally
3. Training of staff and volunteers to provide better service (One example of existing training is through the Gates Library Foundation grant.)

4. Increased open hours (One contract library already has a grant from a coalition of donor agencies to provide open hours on Sundays.)
5. Special programs/events for both adults and children, such as support for Black History Month or year-round black history programs
6. Collection development
7. Technology advances in both hardware and software
8. Funds to develop and administer docent and volunteer programs that add to the richness of the library visiting experience

Funding Priorities of the Staff

While less experienced with fund-raising than many contract library trustees and members of the public, many staff have strong and often quite useful ideas about library fund-raising. They see the following as a partial list of potential fund-raising targets.

1. Marketing the entire institution, including the development of partnerships, a strategy that has proved successful for other cultural and arts institutions
2. Extending library services through capital donations for buildings or bookmobiles
3. Soliciting support from established community resources such as an arts council, the United Way, and company matching-grant programs
4. Working systematically to obtain foundation and government grants
5. Dovetailing the efforts of library friends groups, enabling them to learn from each other's experience

During several discussion sessions, the ACA planning team asked staff what donations, of any size, would "make a difference" in the quality of their operations or services. Here are the responses.

1. Technology investments to put all units on line
2. Computer furniture
3. Library furniture generally, especially good chairs for staff and for library users
4. Bookmobiles, to enhance and/or replace current vehicles in Mobile Services
5. In-house audio-listening machinery
6. Bookdrops to make it easier for customers to return materials
7. Telephone system that really meets the needs of constituents and staff

8. Unified external signage program
9. Special programming for children and adults
10. Refreshments for programs now funded entirely by private staff donations
11. Staff training, especially technology training
12. Conservation of rare book materials
13. Facilities remodeling to expand, redesign and increase floor space
14. Renovation of the Central Library auditorium

At one time or another, in libraries across the United States, donors have paid for all or part of every item on these wish lists. It is a realistic list of possibilities that B&ECPL ought to be pursuing.

The Third Millennium Fund

To make the transition to a modern library and information system will require both **additional public and private-sector investment**. The ACA planning team has ascertained that the Board, staff, and the user public all want B&ECPL to move quickly toward becoming a modern, multi-dimensional, books-and-technology oriented library system. The sooner that investment is made, the faster Erie County citizens will obtain modern library and information services that meet their individual, family and community needs.

B&ECPL needs to obtain substantial financial resources in a fairly short time span. The Library would use those resources with maximum impact to transform and upgrade System services. Funds should come from both public and private sources, because there are both direct benefits to all library users and secondary or societal benefits to Erie County as a whole.

It is imperative that the B&ECPL Board and Erie County government leaders act boldly to move the institution forward, which is essential to the economic, cultural and educational health of the region.

As the principal mechanism for advancing B&ECPL quickly, the planning team recommends that the Library, Erie County government and influential Erie County citizens work together to plan and support a Third Millennium Fund to build the future of library services throughout the region. The ACA planning team working with the B&ECPL Board and the administration's planners estimate that this development fund should be \$45 or \$50 million separate from annual operating revenues.

This new fund, raised over two to four years and expended over the next five years, would transform B&ECPL into a modern library system capable of delivering state-of-

the-art reading and information services that would vastly improve the quality of life through the whole region.

Planning and carrying out the work covered by the **Third Millennium Fund** should be accomplished through open discussions occurring across the county. Each step of the Third Millennium program will be articulated through the process of financial planning. In other words, this is not a plea to create a new general public-works fund. Rather, as part of the System's financial planning, the Library will articulate specifically how the money will be spent - whether on efficient new facilities, on improved children's services at specific locations, on networked computers, etc.

In short, the **Third Millennium Fund** is B&ECPL's way of creating a financial mechanism by which it can solve its own problems before those problems overwhelm the Library System. Through the fund's limited life, taxpayers and donors alike can monitor the System's progress. Contingencies will be established so that smaller, less expensive problems will be solved before the funding is consumed by more expensive efforts.

When the fund's life ends, the people of Erie County will have a Library System ready to carry out the people's work in the twenty-first century.

The majority of the proposed **Third Millennium Fund** (\$37.5 million) will be spent on new model libraries to replace outmoded facilities and provide modern library services for the residents of Erie County. The model library concept is at the heart of the Strategic Plan's reconfiguration of B&ECPL into regions containing complementary unique destination libraries providing a variety of services. Detailed aspects of the realignment are found in the Services section. For the purposes of outlining the **Third Millennium Fund**, discrete project estimates are included here. The balance of funds (\$7.5 – 12.5 million) will be allotted to the following projects.

1. Facilities Master Plan
2. Updated collections at larger libraries
3. Upgrades for specialty libraries
4. Increased parking at the Julia Boyer Reinstein Library
5. Computer workstations/software
6. Children's zones and homework centers in existing larger libraries
7. Adult and children's programs
8. Telephone system
9. Central Library study and improvements

10. New delivery and mobile services vehicles

While possible, raising \$45 to 50 million may not be realistic in the present fiscal climate of Western New York. With that in mind, a smaller **Third Millennium Fund** will be insufficient to complete all of the proposed projects. The money remaining after construction of the model libraries would then be apportioned accordingly.

Project Estimates

Project estimates for the model libraries proposed in the Services section are found on the following pages. Any cost estimate has an underlying logic, comprising assumptions and choices. Many design options are involved in developing cost estimates for library buildings. The general trades, as represented in the preliminary cost estimates, involve exterior and interior elements such as a structural system, walls, etc. Unit cost estimates reflect a low maintenance library building of quality construction. Separate estimates for plumbing, heating, ventilating, air conditioning, electric and telephone are included to provide more detail.

Although building construction represents a major cost, it may not approach the total cost of a particular project, necessitating estimates for site development, landscaping and parking. Furnishings and interior signage costs also should be considered separately as it might be possible to attract donors to underwrite these items.

Design fees must also be included. Each is listed separately in the cost estimates.

A contingency allowance is an essential element in any cost estimate. It is usually 15%, but can be lower or higher as the situation warrants. Prices may rise between the time that the project is estimated and when it goes to bid. Funding approvals may take time. Unanticipated delays may occur.

Preliminary Cost Estimates

Hub Libraries

Hamburg
Town of Tonawanda
King/North Jefferson
Upper West Side

	Area (sf)	Costs/sf	Cost
General Trades	20,000	\$ 95.00	\$ 1,900,000.00
Plumbing	20,000	\$ 2.75	\$ 55,000.00
HVAC	20,000	\$ 10.75	\$ 215,000.00
Electric	20,000	\$ 10.00	\$ 200,000.00
Telephone	20,000	\$ 0.65	\$ 13,000.00
Building Construction Cost			\$ 2,383,000.00
Cost for Site Development, Landscaping, and parking for 100 cars @ \$10,000 per car			\$ 1,000,000.00
Building Construction and Site Development Cost			\$ 3,383,000.00
Construction Management Fee (5% of Bldg. & Site Cost)			\$ 169,150.00
Furnishings	20,000	\$ 20.00	\$ 400,000.00
Interior Signage	20,000	\$ 0.22	\$ 4,400.00
Building Furnishing Cost			\$ 404,400.00
Pre-design			\$ 10,000.00
A/E Fee (8% of Bldg. Construction Cost)			\$ 190,640.00
Interiors Fee (8% of Bldg. Furnishing Cost)			\$ 32,352.00
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect Fee			\$ 20,000.00
Professional Fees			\$ 252,992.00
Contingency - 15% of all of the above			\$ 631,431.30
Total Project Cost			\$ 4,840,973.30
Cost of Land (on different site)			Unknown

Preliminary Cost Estimates

Hub Library - Aurora

	Area (sf)	Costs/sf	Cost
General Trades	20,000	\$ 95.00	\$ 1,900,000.00
Plumbing	20,000	\$ 2.75	\$ 55,000.00
HVAC	20,000	\$ 10.75	\$ 215,000.00
Electric	20,000	\$ 10.00	\$ 200,000.00
Telephone	20,000	\$ 0.65	\$ 13,000.00
Building Construction Cost			\$ 2,383,000.00
Cost for Site Development, Landscaping, and parking for 100 cars @ \$10,000 per car			\$ 1,000,000.00
Garage for Bookmobile	5,000	\$ 100.00	\$ 500,000.00
Building Construction and Site Development Cost			\$ 3,883,000.00
Construction Management Fee (5% of Bldg. & Site Cost)			\$ 194,150.00
Furnishings	20,000	\$ 20.00	\$ 400,000.00
Interior Signage	20,000	\$ 0.22	\$ 4,400.00
Building Furnishing Cost			\$ 404,400.00
Pre-design			\$ 10,000.00
A/E Fee (8% of Bldg. Construction Cost)			\$ 190,640.00
Interiors Fee (8% of Bldg. Furnishing Cost)			\$ 32,352.00
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect Fee			\$ 20,000.00
Professional Fees			\$ 252,992.00
Contingency - 15% of all of the above			\$ 710,181.30
Total Project Cost			\$ 5,444,723.30
Cost of Land (on different site)			Unknown

Preliminary Cost Estimates

Hub Library Orchard Park Renovation and Addition

	Area (sf)	Costs/sf	Cost
Renovation of Existing Building	14,000	\$ 80.00	\$1,120,000.00
New Building:			
General Trades	6,000	\$ 95.00	\$ 570,000.00
Plumbing	6,000	\$ 2.75	\$ 16,500.00
HVAC	6,000	\$ 10.75	\$ 64,500.00
Electric	6,000	\$ 10.00	\$ 60,000.00
Telephone	6,000	\$ 0.65	\$ 3,900.00
Building Construction Cost			\$1,834,900.00
Cost for Site Development, Landscaping, and parking for 44 cars @ \$10,000 per car			\$ 440,000.00
Building Construction and Site Development Cost			\$2,274,900.00
Construction Management Fee (5% of Bldg. & Site Cost)			\$ 113,745.00
Furnishings	6,000	\$ 20.00	\$ 120,000.00
Interior Signage	6,000	\$ 0.22	\$ 1,320.00
Building Furnishing Cost			\$ 121,320.00
Pre-design			\$ 10,000.00
A/E Fee (8% of Bldg. Construction Cost)			\$ 146,792.00
Interiors Fee (8% of Bldg. Furnishing Cost)			\$ 9,705.60
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect Fee			\$ 20,000.00
Professional Fees			\$ 186,497.60
Contingency - 15% of all of the above			\$ 404,469.39
Total Project Cost			\$3,100,931.99

Preliminary Cost Estimates

Community Libraries

Southeast

North Buffalo

	Area (sf)	Costs/sf	Cost
General Trades	10,000	\$ 95.00	\$ 950,000.00
Plumbing	10,000	\$ 2.75	\$ 27,500.00
HVAC	10,000	\$ 10.75	\$ 107,500.00
Electric	10,000	\$ 10.00	\$ 100,000.00
Telephone	10,000	\$ 0.65	\$ 6,500.00
Building Construction Cost			\$1,191,500.00
Cost for Site Development, Landscaping, and parking for 50 cars @ \$10,000 per car			\$ 500,000.00
Building Construction and Site Development Cost			\$1,691,500.00
Construction Management Fee (5% of Bldg. & Site Cost)			\$ 84,575.00
Furnishings	10,000	\$ 20.00	\$ 200,000.00
Interior Signage	10,000	\$ 0.22	\$ 2,200.00
Building Furnishing Cost			\$ 202,200.00
Pre-design			\$ 10,000.00
A/E Fee (8% of Bldg. Construction Cost)			\$ 95,320.00
Interiors Fee (8% of Bldg. Furnishing Cost)			\$ 16,176.00
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect Fee			\$ 12,000.00
Professional Fees			\$ 133,496.00
Contingency - 15% of all of the above			\$ 316,765.65
Total Project Cost			\$2,428,536.65
Cost of Land (on different site)			Unknown

Preliminary Cost Estimates

Community Library

South Buffalo

	Area (sf)	Costs/sf	Cost
General Trades	13,000	\$ 95.00	\$ 1,235,000.00
Plumbing	13,000	\$ 2.75	\$ 35,750.00
HVAC	13,000	\$ 10.75	\$ 139,750.00
Electric	13,000	\$ 10.00	\$ 130,000.00
Telephone	13,000	\$ 0.65	\$ 8,450.00
Building Construction Cost			\$ 1,548,950.00
Cost for Site Development, Landscaping, and parking for 85 cars @ \$10,000 per car			\$ 850,000.00
Building Construction and Site Development Cost			\$ 2,398,950.00
Construction Management Fee (5% of Bldg. & Site Cost)			\$ 119,947.50
Furnishings	13,000	\$ 20.00	\$ 260,000.00
Interior Signage	13,000	\$ 0.22	\$ 2,860.00
Building Furnishing Cost			\$ 262,860.00
Pre-design			\$ 10,000.00
A/E Fee (8% of Bldg. Construction Cost)			\$ 123,916.00
Interiors Fee (8% of Bldg. Furnishing Cost)			\$ 21,028.80
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect Fee			\$ 12,000.00
Professional Fees			\$ 166,944.80
Contingency - 15% of all of the above			\$ 442,305.35
Total Project Cost			\$ 3,391,007.65
Cost of Land (on different site)			Unknown

The Financial Alternative: No New Funds and No Changes in the Way the Library Operates Financially

Within its current context of operations, should there be a downturn in Erie County revenues and those cuts are passed on to the Library, services will have to be curtailed. The Board and administration will plan the cuts to minimize their impact, but the reductions will be obvious throughout the System. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid layoffs.

Should B&ECPL have to make all the changes necessary to modernize the Library System using current operating revenues, again the Board and management must be prepared to make difficult decisions. As suggested previously in this section, that exercise has to begin with a financial plan that will prioritize operations, seeking activities that can be eliminated, streamlined or combined. These statements are not inserted as a "scare tactic," but as a reminder of the economic and taxation trends that characterize Buffalo and Erie County. B&ECPL cannot continue to offer the level of library service that it does currently without receiving significantly more new funds each and every year. Moreover, without the investment of new funds, the Board and administration cannot provide the citizens of Erie County the library that they want. Without such funding, the Library System will be on its own and will have to solve its problems purely within the resources it is allocated.



Improving Library Services: Strategies for a Services-Oriented Future

B&ECPL Goal for Services Delivery

The primary thrust of the entire Strategic Planning process is to create a services-focused Library System, one that uses all of its resources effectively and efficiently to deliver varied, high-quality, customer-driven services.

Population Groups to Be Served

The Library's Mission is to enrich the lives of the individuals living in the diverse communities throughout Erie County. There should be something for everyone in the many services offered by the Library.

Throughout this study, staff and users alike identified a number of groups whom they felt deserved more extensive library services than they are currently receiving. This list is a long one, including but not limited to:

1. Students of every age including adults working on their first certification or degree
2. The poor, people without financial options except the public library
3. Senior citizens in residential settings
4. Senior citizens who could easily get to libraries
5. Persons with disabilities
6. Adults working on specialized research topics, writing books, or doctoral dissertations

One group above all others was mentioned for special attention. Services to children topped nearly every list of the spring 1998 focus groups and telephone survey. The tone was clear: **for B&ECPL to have a bright future, it must review and expand its services to children.**

Children

B&ECPL has a proud history of service to children. In 1896, it created one of the first Children's Departments in American libraries and became an active force nationally for the development of children's services in public libraries. Today, the tradition continues but under altered circumstances. Many talented children's librarians provide a highly praised service to the community. However, children's services are hampered by the difficulties arising from the System's governance and financial troubles. In effect, the 24 different hiring authorities that appoint and manage staff isolate children's librarians and make it difficult to establish and follow system-wide standards and guidelines. A sense of constantly "reinventing the wheel" led to the formation of the Children's Services Group in the 1990's to encourage children's librarians to share ideas and break down the feeling of isolation. This independent body, formed by the children's librarians, is a

good first step to enhancing the services provided to those who are the future of Erie County.

The mandate to enhance children's services is coming from parents, caregivers and the frontline staff. These people deal with children on a day-to-day basis. They share the worry about a generation being raised by adults who are frequently shorter on time than they are on cash. Parents and caregivers are looking everywhere for service institutions that will help them raise their children. In Erie County, to the great credit of the B&ECPL System, they are looking to the Library as one of their sources of help. They want B&ECPL to become a proactive provider of children's services.

Their list of needs is a long one and involves the following:

1. B&ECPL needs to develop system-wide children's programming guidelines so that staff know what is expected of them in youth programming and services. This is a request from library personnel, and it comes because staff know that different libraries with equal resources for children's programming offer quite different levels and quality of programs.
2. Children's librarians or youth-service providers trained in children's services should be working at all larger libraries. B&ECPL comes close or does fulfill this expectation right now.
3. Abundant children's collections should be established, with appropriate space to display them so that kids can enjoy the materials selection. To lower acquisition costs and still be effective, more purchasing of children's materials can be done on a centralized basis, especially in classic fiction, non-fiction and homework-help materials, including electronic materials.

Unfortunately, children's collections are deficient throughout the System, especially in the City of Buffalo. Steps need to be taken to limit high loss rates while the materials allocation committee should designate more for children's resources. Criteria should be developed for beefing up children's collections. With these increased collections, team weeding should be considered.

4. Enhanced parenting collections should be placed in close proximity to children's collections. This strategy helps parents and increases circulation.
5. Appropriate "children's zones" should be created in most B&ECPL facilities, with programming areas that are sized for kids of various ages. The facilities need spaces like toddler areas, distinct young adult areas and multi-purpose programming areas. Many large urban library systems self-consciously devote 20% of all gross facilities space to children's collections and activities.
6. A substantial budget for children's programming ought to be established so that quality, pro-active programs for kids of all ages can be developed and presented, including everything from reading readiness programs for pre-school children to homework-help centers with older students serving as volunteer helpers.

7. A team-programming model for children's services should be initiated. There is a good basis for this in the current RAM Van programs and some multi-branch contract libraries.
8. B&ECPL management and staff should recognize and organize the opportunities to enhance children's services through partnership programs. Many partnerships that already exist might be expanded.
9. The installation of children's technology centers appears to be another essential item. Children like their own computing areas, especially in busy libraries where adults tend to crowd out their computer use.

Parents and staff alike expressed frustration at not being able to offer children age-graded electronic-learning environments. Those with computers and the Internet at home want B&ECPL libraries to have youth electronic environments at least as good as those in their children's bedrooms. People who do not own computers want B&ECPL to furnish them with the computer environments that will help them catch up with an electronic world they cannot afford to install in their homes.

10. The Library should provide instruction for children in using computers. This can range from basic "mousing" to advanced searching, especially when such instruction helps kids be successful in school. Many children need training in computer use that goes well beyond what little they have learned in schools, by their own experimentation and from friends.
11. Proactive summer reading clubs with real incentives are another suggestion. Some city and suburban public library systems in this nation have one-third or more of all the children in their districts involved in summer reading programs. B&ECPL's participation varies from unit to unit. Staff has suggested that a good first target for summer reading participation might be 20 percent of all Erie County children.
12. Expansion of the training of daycare providers in reading readiness would be particularly positive. The influence of the Library can thus be further extended into instructional and care-giving settings.
13. Many staff members, especially those in the Buffalo branches, want to see the Library more engaged in outreach to children. Taking the Library to children, whether in vans, bookmobiles or in the form of programs, is an idea nearly as old as the idea of the public library. In poorer neighborhoods short of support services of every kind, public library outreach programs and deposit collections make a vital difference in the quality of learning for large numbers of children.
14. A variety of people believe that the Library should develop model homework-help centers at Central and in the System's hub libraries. Older children could be used as homework helper volunteers to aid younger ones.
15. The Library lacks "problem-reader" programs for children (and adults) of any age. Some staff thought this children's service specialty ought to be strengthened.

16. Finally, there is the imperative stated strongly by the focus groups and in the telephone survey: B&ECPL ought to use strong children's services as a way to promote use of the whole library. In writing the conclusions of the survey and focus groups, Insight Associates, Inc. reminded the Library that children decide the malls their families visit, the stores in which they shop and the franchise food outlets where they eat. If the Library is not on children's destination agendas, it will be used far less than it is. Insight Associates, Inc. concluded that B&ECPL needs to appeal to children, first, to get them to use the Library; second, so they will bring their parents to the Library. Libraries without strong children's services and aggressive children's services marketing are not looking after their own institutional futures.

Young Adults

Almost all of B&ECPL's current children's programming effort is focused on children up to age six. Young-adult services and programs are lacking, and parents are concerned about that gap, especially since it is often in the middle school through college years that library users disappear, not to reappear until these now grown-up children have children of their own. Young Adults (YA) constitute a group that needs special emphasis. Examples include development of a strong summer reading club, a computer club, and homework help centers for young adults. Programs should not duplicate what is available elsewhere. B&ECPL also needs to develop program partnerships and cooperative ventures with other agencies.

Adults

Time, or the lack of it, is very important to most adults. They generally need:

1. Convenient locations that save them time
2. A 24-hour catalog
3. The ability to place reserves and pick them up conveniently (Expand on the success of the Request Plus system.)
4. Rapidly delivered reserves (Consider mailing reserves for a fee.)
5. Staff at all locations that can handle reference and are trained in using technology, phone and fax to deliver information quickly and efficiently
6. An electronic Question and Answer service on the Library's homepage
7. Staff that are cross-trained to strengthen adult services

Senior Citizens

Erie County mirrors the rest of the nation with the increase in the number of senior citizens. It behooves the Library to provide an environment that is conducive to seniors using its facilities. They are typically strong library supporters. Providing large print collections of relevant titles in areas of good lighting and with shelves at appropriate height (neither too low nor too high) is the least that can be done. Another suggestion is to publicize the already strong programming done by other agencies and work in

tandem with them to include the libraries as venues for seniors' events. Library service to seniors in limited-mobility residential settings is discussed in the Outreach section.

The Disabled

For years, B&ECPL has recognized its role in delivering library services to persons with disabilities. Large print materials and talking books in various formats are a staple. The Library also provides radio reading receivers, print/Braille books, descriptive videos and electronic and telecommunications aids for those with visual and hearing impairments. Such efforts should continue and be further developed, e.g., making them available at more locations.

All libraries should be in compliance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, initially making sure that the hub libraries are ADA accessible. Expansion of the Library's outreach services to the disabled is discussed in that section of this report.

Business

Reference is usually the focus with business people. Indeed, they want knowledgeable, convenient and immediate reference. The Business, Science & Technology Department at the Central Library has worked hard at delivering good reference service to the business community. Its efforts were consistently praised at the community meetings in December 1997.

The Library must recognize that business service demand is changing and work to build on the success at Central and expand upon it there and elsewhere in the System. B&ECPL ought to focus on business development, including anticipating demand for certain types of resources by printing and assembling them in advance. Examples include materials on how to write a business plan and where to go to get needed licenses or permits. More business databases, like those already provided at Central, either on LAN or on the System network, would be popular.

A System of Complementary Unique Destinations

Great library systems use library buildings not as political placeholders but to optimize the delivery of desired public services. For a variety of reasons, many of which cause replication in other local divisions of the county, B&ECPL has too many library branches performing the same "general" library functions.

As part of this pattern, at libraries large and small, in rural, suburban and city locations, there is a tendency to focus heavily on traditional reader's advisory and book-oriented services. Focus groups, conversations with users, trustees and staff, and the results of the survey performed by Insight Associates, Inc. have all suggested that B&ECPL needs to offer a broader range of services far removed from "plain vanilla" book check-outs.

B&ECPL should take advantage of its current situation to create a complementary system of unique family destinations. Some basic library functions can be replicated at

most locations. Many activities need to be refocused. Facilities should be tailored within a region to meet the needs of the constituent groups who use them. The availability of electronic information reduces the need for every location to retain an extensive print collection.

Service Tools

Buildings, collections, staff, technology and materials delivery are all tools that the Library can utilize to provide relevant, exciting service at unique destinations throughout Erie County. Efficient use of staff, collections, technology and materials delivery hinges on the configuration of B&ECPL's buildings. Facilities organization, in turn, is dependent on a shift to one employer for the System, which should be negotiated through the contracts with each independently chartered library.

Organization of Facilities

In developing a system of unique destinations, the ACA planning team recommends that B&ECPL divide the county into service regions and adopt a hub services hierarchy for each. Again, the aim is to deliver the best services to the people of a region. Because of its large geographic extent, the Library must overcome service inefficiencies involving distance. The System also needs to make the best use of limited resources and create efficiencies of scale when it is possible to do so.

The county could be divided into 8 regions. In each region, one library should be designated as the hub, a full-service library that provides back up and a wide range of services to the public libraries in its area. Other libraries in the region would serve either as community libraries or specialty libraries, depending on their size and location, whose staffing, open hours and activities are coordinated through the hub library.

Hub libraries are determined by their location in relation to other libraries in the System, with the goal of efficient delivery of good service to **all** Erie County residents. Definitions and examples of each type of library are found below.

Hub Libraries to Support System Services

In addition to the Central Library, eight libraries will operate as hubs within Buffalo and Erie County to provide back up and a wide range of services to those public libraries within their regions. These libraries would have:

1. Large collections of non-fiction and fiction, along with specialized collections built and/or tailored to the needs of that particular region. The ability to provide delivery to libraries in the region within 24 hours of a request is a goal to be pursued.
2. Trained professional staff for reference, children's and adult services. Technical staff for automation and Internet services within the region could also be available depending on the results of a cost/benefit analysis.

3. Professional oversight of specialty libraries in the region, in particular collection development.
4. Specialized reference and information services, both print and electronic, to provide back up for libraries in the region.
5. Expert staff to provide assistance to the libraries in the development and presentation of public programs (i.e. children' story hours, adult discussion groups, etc.).
6. A van or bookmobile housed for outreach services, if located in a rural area. A feasibility study would have to be conducted before implementation.
7. Continuing staff training and development for libraries in their region.
8. Space that is physically adaptive to address the needs of children as well as senior citizens.
9. The technology to provide the information connections to the libraries it supports. All hub libraries need to be interconnected to reinforce their respective strengths.

When the System has one employer, the director or manager of the hub library could be responsible for ensuring staffing for each day's operation throughout the region. As discussed below, serious consideration should be given to the designation of hubs as points of first delivery within their clusters and as coordination points for team programming.

Regional Collection Hierarchies

Erie County covers a vast distance with many different constituencies. The ACA planning team has examined several options to overcome service inefficiencies involving distance while, at the same time, tailoring services to meet the needs of many diverse communities. This must be accomplished in the most efficient manner possible within the constraints of limited resources. The recommendation outlined here is designed to ensure that all materials in the System are moved to where they are wanted and needed as quickly as possible.

The ACA planning team has suggested the reorganization of B&ECPL services into a series of functional regions. These regions are bound together by similarities in the type of collections they deliver to constituents who have many of the same population characteristics and who want the same materials and materials-related services.

The Library may want to consider adopting a system that moves materials in heavy demand to the locations where they would circulate the most. B&ECPL should determine if the computer system can be instructed to fill reserves first from libraries within a designated region, then from other nearby regions and finally from regions farther away. This minimizes stock movement and allows the setting of material-delivery speed goals.

This suggestion is provided as a seed to induce discussion of what would best suit B&ECPL. Increasingly, the Library has the networked automation capability to operate a

stock control system of this type, covering high circulation books, videos, CDs and audio tapes. Issues related to governance and the delivery infrastructure should be considered.

Region Based Team Programming

In public sessions and in focus groups and surveys, users and non-users alike wanted B&ECPL to do more programs of high quality, especially programs for children. In their survey and focus-group responses, non-users stated that special programs and events might increase their interest in the Library. This practical proposal, for the development of in-region team programming, is one response to a widely expressed request.

Again in reaction to distances to be covered and the need to make best use of staff resources to meet customer needs, B&ECPL should consider developing in-region "team librarianship," a variation of "team teaching." This is a staff time-management system that recognizes that a librarian in one library that organizes a successful program ought to be able to deliver that same program at more than one location. A variation of this method is to have librarians from two or more locations share training and planning time to develop a program that they deliver not only at their library but at others as well. Appropriate back-up staffing has to be in place to allow this kind of programming effort, but the pay-off is big as quality programming is aimed at and delivered to diverse population groups at the library locations they use most. Such programs will serve as models for efficient programming for distinct population groups throughout Erie County. Governance and funding must be considered in implementing this suggestion or a variation thereof.

Community Libraries to Serve Community Needs

Fifteen to twenty libraries should be designated as one of two types of community libraries depending on their location: those serving urban/suburban areas and those serving rural districts. These libraries must be in accessible, high traffic locations, with a minimum of 5,800 square feet (10,000 square feet is ideal and should be the minimum for new library construction), have a meeting room that satisfies ADA requirements and meet the parking needs of a mobile society. In reality, these facilities are scaled-down versions of hub libraries that work in close concert with the hub library in their region.

1. Urban/suburban community libraries would be serving a larger and more concentrated population within a limited geographical area. These libraries should have in-depth non-fiction and fiction materials collections reflecting the interests of the community. An in-depth reference collection in both print and electronic format would be available along with trained, professional staff to offer personal assistance. Computer access for customers should coincide with demand. Specialized staff for adult and children's services would be available and would assist the hub library staff in the development of programs to be offered within the region.
2. Rural community libraries would be located in more sparsely populated areas with greater distances for people to travel. They would meet the same requirements as

an urban/suburban community library. With a smaller population to serve, the library would be limited in both size and collections.

Specialty Libraries

The remaining smaller facilities would become specialty libraries. All would become better libraries in some way; each would have a limited supply of best sellers, CDs, video and audio tapes, a core reference collection and a basic collection of children's materials. Beyond that, each facility would have staff, collections and/or computers that are tailored to provide a special focus to the community in which the library is located. Full-time professional staff would not be allocated to a specialty library. Librarians from the hub or a community library would oversee the center's operations and provide selected programming and staffing. A part-time librarian may be assigned if needed. Examples of possible specialty libraries include: a "hot" books location with a bookstore ambience, a youth focused branch, a senior citizen reading room, a jobs/career library and a neighborhood computer center. Specialty libraries in rural areas would be computer/delivery centers with full access to on-line databases and printing, and daily deliveries of requested materials.

Model Libraries and Best Practices

The citizens of Buffalo and Erie County need to see working examples of what outstanding library locations can offer them. The B&ECPL administration and its professional staff must help the System's trustees put into practice the service vision articulated in this document, one that is beyond the current limited "books and buildings" idea of library service. This vision demonstrates how the System will use modern library services to help people meet their individual, family and community reading and information needs in the twenty-first century. A portion of the **Third Millennium Fund**, which is outlined in the Finances section of this report, should be utilized primarily to develop model libraries and institute best practices.

The new model libraries ought to be appropriately sited, state-of-the-art facilities. Their creation must be expenditure-neutral, causing no increase in the operating revenues required of the System. To do this, it will be necessary to replace at least 2 to 3 current facilities for each new or expanded library, moving collections, computers and staff to the new facility. The location of the model library and of the replaced libraries must be carefully considered. The new site should be optimal for the greatest number of residents.

Hub libraries should be a minimum of 20,000 square feet, hold "regional" collections of materials and have numerous computer workstations set up in clusters. The workstations should be configured with software that features the Library's adult and children's websites, links to the Internet, electronic research collections, the materials catalog (OPAC), children's software and selected productivity applications. Each needs ample parking and a meeting room large enough to hold major programs on culture and learning and topics of popular interest to the community.

A model community library should not be less than 10,000 square feet. It should have the feel of a mini-hub library, appropriately designed and stocked to meet the needs of the community it serves.

The idea behind the model libraries program is to demonstrate what the results can be if B&ECPL overcomes its inefficient small-library service model. These facilities can show Erie County citizens how the Library is moving to solve its own problems, the service vision it is going to implement, and the impossible costs of continuing to do things the old way.

If B&ECPL solves its governance and finance problems, the development of best practices service initiatives will result in new service possibilities. These service initiatives must be carefully planned and set up with concrete goals and service expectations. Beneficiaries must be labeled. Each project will have to be evaluated to determine its success and usefulness in meeting the System's service goals.

Hub Services Advisory Councils

To demonstrate its intent to deliver services that meet the individual needs of the citizens of Erie County's diverse communities, the B&ECPL Board of Trustees should create Hub Services Advisory Councils of citizens to work with it and management staff to promote two-way communication about library services. It is essential to build knowledge of and support for library operations and ensure that the System is meeting community needs. Contract library trustees, friends' groups and influential community leaders from city neighborhoods and suburban communities should be included as members of the advisory groups.

The B&ECPL Board and administration must communicate regularly with the Hub Services Advisory Councils. The members of the Councils should be the eyes, ears and most articulate advocates of the B&ECPL organization and its Mission. They should be in a position to help the System ascertain the reading and information needs to be fulfilled during the planning of the System's service delivery. The Councils should help develop timelines for service improvements so the public comes to recognize that B&ECPL keeps its word. They should also help the public recognize that problems will not be solved all at one time. It took years for B&ECPL to arrive at its current state of affairs, and with budget resources limited, it will take years to resolve some of the more serious service issues that confront the Library today.

B&ECPL Proposed Service Regions

The number, location and type of buildings in the System can be characterized as a latter-day version of "Topsy" – "they just grewed!" Since the Library does not own the buildings, there has been no system-wide planning as to the number and siting of libraries. The result is 52 buildings (plus the Central Library), each serving an average population of 18,626. The national average, for library systems serving a population greater than 700,000, is 43,137. This is not an endorsement for reducing the number of B&ECPL facilities by 60% to 22, which would bring the System in line with the national

average. However, the development of the **Third Millennium Fund** makes possible the creation of model libraries to begin the process of replacing facilities with optimally located, state-of-the-art libraries. A more reasonable 5-year goal would be 39 libraries, building the new model libraries to replace outmoded facilities as outlined in the "Model Libraries and Best Practices" section. Ultimately, the System should operate about 30 libraries, increasing the average service area of each to approximately 33,000 people. In keeping with the migration to one employer, staff and collections will be shifted as needed among hub libraries and facilities with longer hours and extended services.

In the table on page 71, the ACA planning team proposes eight regions for B&ECPL with a hub hierarchy in each. All proposals are just that, proposals, and subject to review and negotiation with the owning agencies. Remember that the goal is better library service.

The new Town of Tonawanda hub library will anchor the northwest region of the county. As a model suburban hub library it will replace the small Brighton, Kenilworth and Sheridan Parkside branches. The Kenmore Library will become a community library along with Grand Island and the City of Tonawanda libraries. The Greenhaven Branch will serve as a specialty library.

The Audubon Library in Amherst will be the hub library for the Northeast corner of the county. In this region, Clearfield, Clarence and Eggertsville-Snyder will function as community libraries. The Denio Memorial Library in Akron and the Williamsville Library will be specialty libraries.

The Julia Boyer Reinstein Library in Cheektowaga will function as the hub library for the middle northern portion of the county. Its collections and parking will be expanded. This enhancement will replace the nearby South Cheektowaga Library as its collections and computers will be moved to JBR to partly provide the needed increase. The Lancaster, Reinstein Memorial Library and West Seneca libraries will act as community libraries in support of the region. The Ewell Free Library in Alden, the Depew Library and the North Cheektowaga Library will be specialty libraries.

Three libraries will serve as hub libraries for the southern half of the county. They were chosen to provide service for the residents living along the three main corridors of southern Erie County, taking into account geography and major transportation routes.

The new hub library in Aurora will serve the southeastern areas of the county, replacing the East Aurora and West Falls libraries. The Elma Library will function as a community library. The Marilla Free Library will become a specialty library. To provide better library value to the underserved areas in this region, a bookmobile will be housed at this hub, reducing drive time and creating more efficient mobile service to the area. If population densities increase in the Holland/Sardinia area, construction of a new library building in this region should be reevaluated.

The Orchard Park Library will be expanded to 20,000 square feet. This hub will serve the Routes 219, 240 and 277 corridor along with a community library in Springville (the Hulbert Library of the Town of Concord) and a specialty library in Boston.

A new Hamburg Library will serve as the hub for the southwestern sector of the county and its communities along Routes 5 and 62. The model hub will replace the Hamburg and Blasdell libraries. A new community library is proposed for the extreme southern area of this region, combining the North Collins, Collins and Gowanda libraries. Lackawanna would serve a community library while Angola, Eden and Lake Shore would operate as specialty libraries.

The City of Buffalo, accounting for one-third of Erie County's population, would have three hub libraries, including the Central Library, which is discussed separately.

A model hub library would replace the North Jefferson, King and Kensington branches. In this region, a new 13,000 square foot community library would be built in South Buffalo, replacing Cazenovia, Dudley, East Clinton and Mead. The East Delavan and Fronczak branches would operate as specialty libraries.

A new hub library in Buffalo's upper West Side would replace Crane and Northwest. North Buffalo would see a new community library replacing the Fairfield and North Park branches. Niagara and Riverside would function as specialty libraries.

In cases where an individual library is replaced by another library to deliver regional services, vacated buildings in good repair may continue to serve a variety of useful functions, including expansion for local municipalities or centers for seniors, youth or community based organizations. Some may benefit the community if they are liquidated and returned to the tax rolls for commercial or even residential purposes.

The above changes are proposed to bring about better service in exciting facilities to the residents of Erie County. All changes hinge on the success of the **Third Millennium Fund** and the shift to one employer in the System. Alternatives to this plan are discussed in the section "Service Changes or the Status Quo."

**THE BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:
THE LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN, 1999-2003**

B&ECPL Proposed Service Regions						
Name	Bldg GSF	Parking	Site GSF	ADA	Mtg Rm	Hub Hierarchy Designation
Audubon	22,206	103	412,500	YES	YES	Hub Library
Clearfield	12,150	72	58,206	YES	YES	Community Library
Clarence	8,200	32	25,300	YES	YES	Community Library
Eggertsville	8,550	40	35,200	YES	YES	Community Library
Akron	3,546	0	5,250	NO	YES	Specialty Library (Computer/Delivery)
Williamsville	6,300	30	22,500	YES	YES	Specialty Library
Aurora (New)	20,000	100		YES	YES	Hub Library (+ bookmobile & garage)
East Aurora	7,520	21	18,760	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by new Aurora Hub Library
West Falls	2,754	1	18,960	NO	YES	Replaced by new Aurora Hub Library
Elma	6,049	24	64,605	PARTIAL	YES	Community Library
Marilla	5,824	20	52,481	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library (Computer/Delivery)
Hamburg (New)	20,000	100		YES	YES	Hub Library
Blasdell	3,414	17	23,000	YES	YES	Replaced by new Hamburg Hub Library
Hamburg	10,700	66	21,780	YES	YES	Replaced by new Hamburg Hub Library
Lackawanna	13,700	20	38,750	PARTIAL	YES	Community Library
Southeast Library (New)	10,000	50		YES	YES	Community Library
Collins	1,174	21	84,740	PARTIAL	NO	Replaced by new SE Community Library
Gowanda	3,700	10	4,800	NO	YES	Replaced by new SE Community Library
North Collins	675	0	17,600	NO	NO	Replaced by new SE Community Library
Angola	3,000	5	5,445	YES	NO	Specialty Library (Computer/Delivery)
Eden	7,616	23	61,750	YES	YES	Specialty Library
Lake Shore	7,194	27	26,796	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library
Julia Boyer Reinstein	20,000	100	111,000	YES	YES	Hub Library (Expanded collection/parking)
South Cheektowaga	7,819	26	31,668	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by expanded JBR Hub
Lancaster	17,512	22	28,400	PARTIAL	YES	Community Library
Reinstein Memorial	14,827	99		PARTIAL	YES	Community Library
West Seneca	8,328	34		YES	YES	Community Library
Alden	6,900	0	22,304	YES	YES	Specialty Library (Computer/Delivery)
Depew	5,850	42	80,000	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library
North Cheektowaga	11,942	16	30,720	NO	YES	Specialty Library
Orchard Park (Expanded)	20,000	100	108,000	YES	YES	Hub Library
Concord	5,840	28	60,000	YES	YES	Community Library
Boston	3,000	16	18,960	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library (Computer/Delivery)
Town of Tonawanda (New)	20,000	100		YES	YES	Hub Library
Brighton	3,494	12	22,545	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by new Tonawanda Hub
Kenilworth	3,684	19	22,632	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by new Tonawanda Hub
Sheridan Parkside	1,905	Shared		PARTIAL	NO	Replaced by new Tonawanda Hub
Grand Island	12,342	67	188,250	YES	YES	Community Library
Kenmore	16,000	24	17,835	YES	YES	Community Library
City of Tonawanda	7,270	24		YES	YES	Community Library
Greenhaven	7,190	21	35,100	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library
King/North Jefferson (New)	20,000	100		YES	YES	Hub Library
North Jefferson	7,220	2	7,488	NO	YES	Replaced by North Jefferson Hub
Kensington	6,927	0		NO	YES	Replaced by North Jefferson Hub
Martin L. King	2,234	Shared	3,190	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by North Jefferson Hub
South Buffalo (New)	13,000	65		YES	YES	Community Library
Cazenovia	8,900	2	28,900	NO	YES	Replaced by S. Buff. Community Library
Dudley	6,762	23	24,112	YES	YES	Replaced by S. Buff. Community Library
East Clinton	4,500	4	7,320	NO	YES	Replaced by S. Buff. Community Library
Mead	5,225	2	10,080	NO	YES	Replaced by S. Buff. Community Library
East Delavan	10,300	20		NO	YES	Specialty Library
Fronczak	12,400	17		NO	YES	Specialty Library
Upper West Side (New)	20,000	100		YES	YES	Hub Library
Crane	7,800	4	13,500	PARTIAL	YES	Replaced by Upper West Side Hub
Northwest	9,604	13	16,200	NO	YES	Replaced by Upper West Side Hub
North Buffalo (New)	10,000	50		YES	YES	Community Library
Fairfield	6,228	0	10,000	NO	YES	Replaced by N. Buff. Community Library
North Park	6,400	2	22,419	YES	YES	Replaced by N. Buff. Community Library
Riverside	7,800	23		YES	YES	Specialty Library
Niagara	13,650	22	42,120	PARTIAL	YES	Specialty Library

Central Library

The Central Library is unique in the System and has many functions. It serves as a hub library for the City of Buffalo; it is a public service facility for other B&ECPL libraries; it houses Administration and Support Services for the System and it is an important component of downtown Buffalo. Each function is significant; each function has its strengths and weaknesses. There needs to be a study of Central services, including staffing and services load. It is possible, even probable, that there should be a reorganization, accomplished through redeployment and reclassification, to create a streamlined, efficient, user-friendly destination library optimally performing a variety of roles.

Central Library as a Hub Service Facility

The public service departments at Central operate as a hub facility for the City of Buffalo. In this capacity, Central chiefly serves two distinct populations: the downtown Buffalo daytime workforce/businesses and the many city residents of all ages who use Central as their branch or library of choice for answers to difficult or important questions. Results from the Insight Associates, Inc. telephone survey and focus groups indicate that regular suburban users constitute a minority of Central customers. Concerns about parking, security and hours are the limiting factors in suburban usage. The Central Library should focus on serving its two predominant customer groups.

The businesses and daytime workforce are, by-and-large, 9 to 5 customers on Monday through Friday. City residents might use the library at any time, but are the chief users during late afternoon, evening and weekend hours. There is a substantial difference in the socio-economic status of these two groups. City dwellers within a one-mile radius of Central have the highest poverty level in Buffalo, according to the 1997 American Library Association Survey of Library Outlets and Poverty. Staffing, collections, displays, department arrangement and programs should address these service patterns and groups.

As a multi-faceted library, Central should give reference priority to its walk-in clients. The present layout of the departments is confusing to the average user of both predominant groups. To answer questions more efficiently and to reduce customer bewilderment about where to seek answers, a prominent one-stop ready reference center should be established. Routine, easily answered questions could be dispatched promptly at this desk while the more difficult and/or lengthy questions would be referred to appropriate subject specialists. Better signage and lighting would also reduce patron confusion and lessen the intimidation factor of the building.

Central Library as a System-wide Public Service Facility

The Central Library is a resource for the entire B&ECPL, both customers and staff. Its collections supply the majority of requested materials. A portion of the unit libraries' circulation can be attributed to the collections of Central. Use of this service will

increase as the Library's web-based catalog is introduced and extended throughout the System.

In the Central Library's role as a system-wide public service facility, subject department personnel are an underutilized resource. Steps should be taken to increase the use of Central staff expertise throughout the System by making it a convenient and responsive service.

A mandated reference protocol should be developed through the Assistant Deputy Director for Central Library Public Service. It should be a reliable plan by which librarians throughout the System, and the customers they serve, personally get quick access to needed in-depth reference information and service from the subject specialists at Central. The protocol should make use of e-mail, telephone, fax and a staff Intranet.

A remote-access reference center should be established that would be staffed with librarians to answer questions sent via telephone, fax, and e-mail. This would replace the phone desk service points in the departments and avoid the present situation where patrons can be bounced from one reference queue to another in answering a single question. Hours of this operation should be extended beyond the open hours of the Central Library and the present telephone reference hours, with particular emphasis on evenings and weekends. This center will open up Central's subject expertise to those residents, mainly suburban and rural, who do not use this library because of distance, security concerns, lack of free parking and inconvenient hours. The present Erie County network telephone system would need to be upgraded for this to succeed. In particular, it would have to be more responsive to voice mail and queuing.

Materials Delivery Infrastructure

Couple Central's enhanced role as system-wide public service facility with increased requests for materials resulting from more libraries going on-line with a web-based catalog and the strain on the delivery system will reach the breaking point.

B&ECPL lacks the delivery capacity that it needs now and will need in the next millennium. It has been consistently underfunded, operating as efficiently as possible through the diligence of Shipping Department personnel. Improvement of the delivery infrastructure - involving vans, drivers and appropriate, timely routing schedules – is a key component in moving this System forward, both literally and figuratively.

With a 24-hour request response as a goal, there needs to be a routing study and a substantial increase in delivery capacity, both staff and vehicles. The number of available vehicles is not realistic given the age of the existing fleet and the average mileage logged for each one annually. In addition, a regular replacement schedule is needed.

Currently materials move via an in-out Federal Express-like operation with limited cross-town activity. As the hub system emerges, the possibility should be explored of re-orienting the delivery mechanism with more hub focus to increase speed of deliveries.

Increased cooperation from the contract libraries is needed to expedite materials delivery. This includes an element as basic as delivery staff having keys to all libraries.

In addition to the Shipping Department, the Stack Department at the Central Library requires attention. Materials handling at Central has improved with recent procedure and automation system changes, but further review and assessment is needed. The page (minimum wage labor) situation, both at Central and throughout the System, should be a high priority, with goals of hiring high quality pages and a reduced turnover rate. Increased base wages for pages must be considered.

Central Library Building

The ACA planning team was not contracted to do a space study of the Central Library or to map its future. However, Central's potentials and problems are - like the building itself - so big that they invite comment within this Strategic Plan. With approximately 400,000 square feet of space, Central is a very large library and its operations must be both effective and efficient. Excluding public services support costs, its direct service expenditures alone require more than 25% of the B&ECPL operating budget.

The Central Library has a long and distinguished history. Like most central libraries in large public library systems, it is at a critical point in its existence. In an age in which the very essence of libraries is changing and in which old ways of doing things may no longer be valid, the role of a central library must be redefined. To the most casual visitor, it is obvious that Central could be so much more. A declining significance can be predicted if it is left just as it is: fewer users and probably fewer library uses until its very future is called into question.

At the outset of this analysis, it should be remembered that the building was designed to be a collections warehouse for millions of books, magazines and manuscripts. The entire building is organized around this storage function. The departments radiate from the stack access points into various rooms and corridors, but the major building theme is for all staff and public rooms to have relatively easy access to storage.

In short, the Central Library is a building in which public functions were seen as secondary to materials access. With a few modifications through the years, some of which interrupt traffic patterns, exterior light and sight lines, the building is essentially the same as the day it opened.

The Central Library deserves a different future from the one it will have if nothing is changed. As it stands now, it is expensive to operate, wasteful in its use of space, and, because of its fortress-like architecture, creates negative perceptions about personal security inside and out. In addition, it is compromised by a lack of parking. In conjunction with the realignment of its service roles, there must be a complete reconfiguration of Central's public areas to reduce the number of service points. The ACA planning team believes implicitly that a well-done Central Library space analysis and redesign would increase visitation commensurate with the size of the building, its valuable collections and current levels of staffing. It should be noted that its rare special

collections are neither well exhibited nor very accessible. Valuable though they are, they currently do little to build the future of the institution.

Central Library as Unique Destination

There is the opportunity to use the Central Library to develop significant activity in a dormant downtown. Real opportunities include making use of: its location for special events; its spaces for exciting co-tenancies; its specialized staff as programmers and regional reference specialists in ways yet untapped; its special collections to develop quality programs that create reasons to visit the facility.

As with many central libraries in America's older cities, B&ECPL's Central Library will have a future as the Board of Trustees wills and circumstances permit. The first decision to be made concerns what level of activity should be induced at the Central Library: either maintain it at the current level or build its future as a downtown center of study, culture and programming. The possibility of co-tenancy must be explored.

Even without substantial renovation, there are major ways in which increased traffic can be encouraged at Central. These include:

1. Establishing more face-out merchandised materials (including best sellers, videos, and CDs) to attract greater use from regular and new users.
2. Locating computers in high-visibility areas and equipping them with Internet access and appropriate reference software, including specialized applications that reflect collection emphases. This will be initiated in late 1998.
3. Creating an active docent program to help people quickly find what they need.
4. Re-lighting to better illuminate the building's interior, a serious problem now.
5. Advertising major special events designed to attract users.
6. Promoting Central's rich collections and services to attract new users.
7. Expanding the Children's Department services, including regular, vital programs directed to children, their caregivers and parents.
8. Making Central a key regional location to obtain business-development services.
9. Making Central the main city location from which to provide library services for those people who have no other place to turn. These services can include basic education sources, literacy providers, etc.

Over the long-term, with appropriate investment, Central presents other opportunities. These include creation of:

1. A destination gift shop and bookstore - far more attractive than the current store - and perhaps a coffee shop.
2. A venue for special events that contains, in addition to the auditorium, a large open space for receptions, perhaps supported by a full catering kitchen.
3. A family literacy center, with programs and collections designed to attract regular, large audiences of users.
4. An electronic information center with networked computers, instruction in networked computing and specialized reference assistance to both help individuals and promote the region's economic growth.
5. A "Center for the Reader" where those who appreciate popular materials will find recreation and enlightenment.
6. A personal information "ready-reference center," a one-stop location that specializes in helping individuals answer questions important for their lives.
7. A secure parking lot controlled by the Library.

Central can have a bright future, if money and careful planning are invested in it, and if future options are selected that integrate with the revitalization of downtown Buffalo.

Outreach Services

Outreach is a many-faceted operation, composed of both Mobile Services and efforts from stationary outlets. B&ECPL outreach services should be expanded and redirected to underserved areas in the county. The approach should be flexible enough to meet current library service needs but capable of adapting when demographics shift. To oversee this expansion, the System needs a full time outreach coordinator. As in Children's Services, the wheel is being reinvented in too many locations throughout the Library, resulting in efforts that are uneven and not always effective.

The outreach coordinator would reduce redundancy and streamline efforts from the stationary outlets and the mobiles division. This office would make sure, among other things, that all school classrooms are visited once or twice a year and that licensed daycare centers, the disabled and limited mobility senior citizen populations are served regularly and in the most effective manner. In addition, the coordinator would work with other agencies and develop outreach partnerships, expand efforts to train day-care providers in pre-reading and reading skills, explore and implement new outreach possibilities like traveling computer labs and the delivery of deposit collections.

Mobile Libraries

Some areas of Erie County do not have stationary libraries. Over the past generation, there have been significant population shifts from established suburbs into smaller, more remote communities, primarily in the eastern and southern portions of Erie

County. Like other areas, these need and deserve library service. At present, and by prevailing standards, these communities are too small or too lightly settled to qualify for library buildings of their own. Mobile services should be modified or expanded to become more receptive to the needs of such communities.

Currently all mobile units are housed at the Central Library, necessitating a long drive before most service delivery can begin. If B&ECPL adopts the hub services hierarchy model, a hub library could provide a better jumping off point for some mobile services as this would place them in closer geographic proximity to the areas they serve. Numerous factors must be examined before such deployment can be considered. An analysis of population and use trends can determine the number of vehicles and service routes needed to meet the library requirements of the far-flung areas of rural Erie County.

Mobile services (in particular, "specialty van" services like those provided by the RAM Van and Lookie Bookie) remain an important outreach function, especially to daycare, Head Start and senior centers, the homebound and other groups with special needs. These services are supplementary to those offered by neighborhood branches or hub libraries. The rationale for regular bookmobile stops in proximity to branches must be scrutinized to determine optimal deployment in light of limited resources. Target groups should be identified and their situations evaluated to define the best type and level of services for them.

Virtual Services

With the help of a Gates Library Foundation grant, other grants or gifts from both public and private sources, the investment of its own operating income, and Erie County capital funds spread over four years, B&ECPL is now gaining the networked computing technology which most other large library systems have had for years. The public and the staff have strong interests in seeing many improvements in the Library's electronic environment. With the release of its "Technology Plan" in December 1997, B&ECPL identified and prioritized the tasks and goals ahead. Vital electronic improvements identified by B&ECPL's own "Technology Plan" and ACA's investigators include the following:

1. Completion of the Library's basic electronic network so that all locations have equal access to the electronic catalog. Through use of this electronic catalog, staff and patrons alike can determine 1) if the System holds the book or material, 2) exactly where it is located and 3) if it is available. Patrons will also be given an option to place a reserve for the holding if it is not available at their location or if it is available at another site and they do not wish to travel.
2. Networked computers in all libraries so that patrons and staff can have access to the Internet and its vast collection of reference resources.
3. Expansion of the availability of a periodical database with full-text articles to all B&ECPL locations.

4. Addition of more electronic reference databases, ranging from encyclopedias for children to highly specialized databases used most often by college students pursuing advanced or graduate studies. Such requests reflect the System's heavy use by children and by students.
5. The use of LANs and WANs to access the expanded portfolio of electronic resources at lowest possible costs.
6. Children's computer areas housing PCs configured with software that is age-graded to help students become more successful in school. The programs will be selected to help kids improve motor (manipulation of the mouse and keyboard), pre-reading readiness, reading and math skills.
7. Formal technology training for staff, emphasizing the core competencies necessary for a person to do his/her job, prior to the introduction of public access computing. The training must provide a framework for B&ECPL's standards for public service and expectations for staff and public. It should include all aspects of computer and network use, including 1) basic computer familiarity, 2) B&ECPL catalog access, 3) Internet navigation and reference skills, 4) use of electronic reference and children's programs and 5) application operation.
8. Organized training in computer and network use, including Internet training, for children and adults of every age. The staff and the public requested that computer labs be maintained at the Central Library and hub libraries.
9. Development of a true B&ECPL Virtual Library built around access from homes, schools and offices to the Library's catalog and its electronic reference materials via the Library's World Wide Web home page. The home page will be operational before the end of 1998, providing extensive reference resources and full catalog access. The citizens of Buffalo and Erie County eagerly await the web site introduction, especially those who have visited other libraries in person or virtually on the Internet.
10. Establishment of an Intranet to improve staff communications and information sharing. Through networked access, staff members will be able to assist colleagues in answering reference questions or clarifying policy to patrons. Staff also hope that the Library's administration will make use of the electronic network as a reliable and regular form of communication with them. This latter desire is especially profound in a system where, despite many recent and concentrated efforts, a great number of constituents believe they are overlooked when communications regarding policies and operations are disseminated.
11. A positive public relations campaign to promote the newly available modern information technology. As one staff member told planning committee members in a meeting, "Technology can help us skip generations that we never experienced." Such staff see the arrival of the computerized environment as the most immediate and cogent method to provide greater information equity among customers.

12. Installation of a modern, reliable voice-communications system capable of delivering customer-service features that many residents already enjoy in their own homes.
13. Introduction of "smart cards" to enhance customer ability to use services of the Library (copiers; ordering materials; obtaining account information; customer tracking; reliable data). Many of this country's leading libraries are now in the process of adopting the new "smart cards" as an essential tool for developing a new kind of customer relationship with widely differing individual users.

Service Changes or the Status Quo

The choice for B&ECPL is that there is no choice. The ACA planning team believes that if change is not embraced and actively planned from within, then eventually it will be forced from without. The result will be Draconian cuts leading to a System that is a faint shadow of its former self. Establishing one employer, converting to a streamlined hub services hierarchy and building model libraries via the **Third Millennium Fund** are crucial for a relevant and vital B&ECPL in the twenty-first century. The System cannot thrive by allowing some Buffalo branches and contract libraries to operate in library buildings that resemble run-down tenement housing, all offering the same "plain vanilla" services. The Library cannot thrive with 24 different hiring authorities and staff expenses consuming 72% of its operating budget. B&ECPL needs a strong commitment to the System, not individual libraries. Failure to act signals that B&ECPL is unwilling to solve its own problems and will fall victim to the austerity measures imposed by outside forces as outlined in the Facilities section. Ultimately, there **is** a choice: fewer outlets that provide good library service or fewer outlets that do not.

Operational Elements to Sustain the Third Millennium Library

Human Resources

Staff Morale

The strength and future of the Library System rely on its dedicated staff. The residents of Erie County gave library personnel high marks for capability and friendliness in the telephone survey and focus groups conducted by Insight Associates, Inc. Despite decades of funding difficulties, there exists among the ranks a strong desire to achieve excellence — but an underlying doubt and growing cynicism that this can be achieved. Without exception, the ACA planning team sensed that B&ECPL staff believe “my work unit does not have the resources it needs” to achieve its promise. Whether meeting with Central Library department heads, Buffalo branch managers, or contract library directors, the team encountered an unequivocal belief that the System works unfairly.

In fact, that is hardly an inaccurate assumption given the human resources environment dictated by:

1. Restrictive civil service mandates
2. The varying rules and regulations of three collective bargaining units, two which fail to negotiate with B&ECPL
3. A large number of staff not covered by any of these three unions
4. The absence of consistent personnel policies and procedures resulting from the existence of 24 administrative Library Boards

The result of these factors — this governance structure — is a sense of hopelessness that change is possible. Although individual staff members expressed a conviction that management is trying to achieve equity, the overriding impression is that the odds of success are remote given these seemingly immutable conditions. As a first step to improving staff morale, B&ECPL must be able to address the perceived and real problems of staffing allocation and deployment.

Staff Allocation and Deployment

Staffing levels are inconsistent for libraries with equivalent service situations. Throughout B&ECPL, certain job classifications are over- or underrepresented when related to service activities and community needs. While some facilities appear overstaffed for the amount of business they do, others appear understaffed, especially for measurable activities such as circulation or shelving.

The ACA planning team could not explain the discrepancies in both numbers and classifications of staff among the B&ECPL outlets in terms of their level of activity except to note that deep budget cuts decades ago resulted in massive personnel

reductions by geographical units. These have never been addressed. The nature of the governance structure, with its 24 independent boards, is to pit one division of the Library System against the other. This has hampered System administration's ability to adjust staff allocations, apply a staff sharing strategy, or shift staff as circumstances require for increased efficiency.

Too many libraries within the System do not have a secure set of service roles or service responses to guide them in deploying their staff. In some areas, while the emphasis has been to do the **job right**, there has been little attention to determining if the **right job** is being done. For example, an individual unit manager's or staff member's concept of service importance does not always reflect the service roles established by the System, or for that matter, by local boards.

Efficiency in using staff resources varies widely throughout B&ECPL. For example, most patrons want weekend hours, yet many contract libraries close on summer Saturdays and most contract libraries and all city branches have no Sunday hours at all. This inconveniences patrons and motivates many to go elsewhere for their reading and information needs, e.g., to large bookstores.

A system-wide approach to library hours and service provision is key. It must put the staffing where it is needed, when it is needed. More creative weekly scheduling of staff and assignments to the various work tasks, i.e., desk scheduling, collection development, programming, etc. could then result. This too requires a centralized approach to management that does not exist under the current structure.

B&ECPL must correct these difficulties related to staff allocation and deployment. To accomplish this, standardized and objective data are required. System level administration needs more statistics that consistently and verifiably track types and volume of use and patron satisfaction at each of the service outlets. These can supplement information already being gathered to help determine appropriate staffing levels. In tandem with this, B&ECPL needs to put into place one system-wide hiring and managing authority that will enable efficient and effective use of the staff to meet its Mission.

Recruitment, Selection and Performance Improvement Issues

Management leadership is critical to the success of any organization. At the senior management level, B&ECPL's administration has undergone a major overhaul in the past three years to develop a competency-based, team-oriented approach to System operations.

This must be extended to the intermediate levels of management and the organization as a whole. A combination of civil service vagaries and union mandates pose significant challenges to candidate selection and overall management of the organization. It is difficult to place the appropriate people — those who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the work and who reflect the diversity of the communities served — in both management and rank-and-file positions. However,

B&ECPL has not consistently pursued available options either to improve the recruitment or selection process or to address performance deficiencies through training and development.

Civil Service

The 1953 statute that created the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System requires that all but the director and deputies be subject to civil service jurisdiction.

The cornerstone of civil service law is to enable public entities to hire on the basis of "merit and fitness" rather than through political patronage. Persons who are most qualified for positions are determined "wherever practicable" through competitive examination. While the philosophy is certainly commendable, the reality is that there are many qualities necessary for effective public service and leadership that the written examination process does not effectively evaluate. Another component of the civil service selection process that is available to the employer, the probationary period, often has not been used to "weed out" those who are not suited to the position. This speaks to the need for a unified approach to human resources management for the entire B&ECPL and better training of intermediate management in the evaluation and reporting of performance. This is true of the initial hiring situation as well as promotional opportunities and periodic performance review of permanent employees.

In a civil service environment, other facets of the recruitment and selection process require centralized planning and coordination. For example, the need for a more culturally diverse professional staff requires a creative approach to attract members of underrepresented ethnic/racial groups. One approach might include incentives to enable page and clerical staff to obtain necessary education and certification. In the 1960s and 1970s, the B&ECPL Board of Trustees used private funds to underwrite scholarships. The Grosvenor Society and later the Library Foundation made available tuition reimbursement for part-time B&ECPL staff matriculating to library school. Perhaps the Foundation should be approached to resume such efforts. Another approach might be a partnership with the local School of Information and Library Studies to attract minority students from B&ECPL paraprofessional ranks by offering tuition discounts or assistantships.

New job-specific titles that better reflect the work being done must be fully explored with local civil service officers. The recent reclassification of the generic clerk typist title to "library clerk" (at the Central Library) signifies that B&ECPL administration has begun the type of restructuring of titles necessary to attract service-oriented staff. There are other areas that can be identified for which it may be useful to have a specialized title, requirements and examination, e.g., children's librarian, computer operator, rare book librarian.

Unions

Compounding the problems associated with the administration of personnel under the complicated civil service system is the confusion created by the Library's unusual

collective bargaining configuration. Although funding for the System is derived from one source, the full time "city" (Central Library and Buffalo branches) staff are **all** represented by one of three unions, while in the 23 contract libraries only the librarians are governed by a union.

The State Law that empowers each of the 24 boards to bargain with employees is at the heart of the System's difficulty to manage its staff uniformly.

Historically, while unionization of "city" staff was in place before the creation of the federated system, staff in the individual contract libraries were not unionized, probably because the numbers were too small to make this practical. When the librarians split from CSEA in the 1960s to form their own professional association for collective bargaining purposes, librarians in the contract libraries were included, and the boards of those libraries agreed to have the B&ECPL Board serve as their agent. The white-collar and blue-collar staffs of the contract libraries remain outside the union environment to this day.

Within the "city" libraries, three different unions — with three different sets of rules for white-collar, blue-collar and librarian employees — govern the management of full-time staff for purposes of wages and benefits, hours of work, scheduling, promotion, overtime, job assignments, discipline and discharge, to name just a few of the mandated bargaining issues. The result is an administrative nightmare. To further complicate matters, union rules do not apply for most part-time employees, forcing management to deal with this group separately.

The provisions of the annual agreement between B&ECPL and the 23 contract libraries require conformity with the salary scale and selected benefits established through negotiations with CSEA and AFSCME. Generally, the contract libraries do not apply other contract provisions related to working conditions.

The result of such divergent requirements of management between the "city" and the contract libraries undoubtedly promotes inconsistency if not inequity among like staff groups. In addition, the decentralization of the responsibility for interpretation of collective bargaining agreements has a host of implications, not the least of which are budgetary accountability and control.

To bring order to this chaos, the B&ECPL Board must exert its authority under the Law to bargain with all of its employees. Within the "city," this would mean that the B&ECPL Board, not Erie County, would negotiate to set the salaries and working conditions of white-collar and blue-collar workers in addition to the librarians. Ultimately, the move to one employer will foster equity among employees and improve fiscal monitoring by centralizing personnel data for all employees in one location.

Personnel Policy & Procedures

In light of the fact that each of the 24 "systems within the System" are independent entities for human resources administration, it is not surprising that there exists no system-wide, consistently applied set of library-specific personnel policies and

procedures. Although *Personnel Policies and Procedures for Erie County Government* has served as the de facto guidebook applied in the absence of a Board-adopted alternative, its contents are not well-known, understood, or universally applied.

During the last three years, the need for development of library policies, separate from those for County employees but consistent from library to library, has been acknowledged. To carry out its Mission, the Library requires the ability to deviate from policies that essentially make sense only in a traditional office (Monday to Friday, 9 to 5) environment. It is equally important that service requirements, which transcend geographic/political boundaries, are not subjugated by variable personnel management constraints.

Labor Law / Human Rights Legislation

While the Central Library and Buffalo branches have a full time Human Resources office that has access to multiple sources of legal counsel, i.e., the Library's Attorney, the County Department of Law, and the County Office of Labor Relations, the contract libraries have no such legal "safety net." When it comes to matters of labor law compliance, especially in the fertile area of human rights, this is a potentially explosive situation. Contract library trustees and their directors are at significant risk of damaging litigation.

Part-time Staff

Part-time or temporary staff, i.e., those who work fewer than 20 hours per week, pose a unique management challenge since there is no consistency in civil service treatment among titles. Union status does not apply, or differs between "city" and contract libraries, and there is no umbrella personnel policy to cover the gap.

Generally, part-time employees (who account for almost half of the B&ECPL workforce) are not subject to civil service testing. While this permits flexibility in hiring, there are recruitment and retention difficulties that need attention in certain classes of positions, especially pages. The average turnover rate for this minimum wage title has approached 100% for several years at locations within the "city." Although actual statistics are not available for the contract libraries, it is commonly understood that turnover is high, as well, in the suburban units. Traditionally the page classification employed high school and college students; today pages must be recruited from other demographic groups. New markets must be tapped (seniors, mothers returning to the work force) since there is a general shortage of youth to fill minimum wage jobs. Consideration must be given to a revised wage structure in order to attract and retain high quality workers since prompt restocking and order in arrangement of shelves is of fundamental importance to accomplishing the Library's Mission.

Framework Changes to Address HR Challenges

One Hiring Authority

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, the problems of staffing allocation and deployment, as well as recruitment, selection and performance issues can be addressed best through a move to one system-wide hiring authority. Any solution short of the centralization of human resources administration for the Library System would fail to address these and other significant fiscal and legal concerns.

A tremendous cost-savings opportunity would result from eliminating the duplication of 23 of the 24 cost centers for payroll and benefits administration. From a budgetary control standpoint, there would be better monitoring capability for adherence to salary and benefit rules for the various employee groups.

From a legal perspective, the current governance structure increases the potential of HR-based legal problems. Multiple human resources management practices will ultimately bring difficulties resulting from varying degrees of expertise in the interpretation or handling of situations involving civil service law, union regulations, policy variations, state and federal labor laws, and especially, human rights law compliance.

Library board members are individually liable, under State Law, for any actionable decision that they, or their delegates (directors), make in human resource matters, e.g. discrimination in hiring or firing. The potential for mishandling personnel situations and the resultant costly penalties are serious and very real. Contract library directors are ill equipped by virtue of education, training or sufficient experience to handle correctly the vast scope of human resources matters or complaints.

Centralizing these functions and removing them from the contract library directors' duties would also afford directors increased time and opportunity to deliver more creative service to the public. Correspondingly, the System HR office would require additional staffing to accommodate its expanded responsibilities.

Staffing Utilization Models

A priority for the future must be the establishment of staffing standards or guidelines for allocation and deployment based on service priorities and objective statistical measures of activity by type of location.

Staff Performance Issues

In an organization as large and complex as B&ECPL, effective communication mechanisms must be in place. A revamping of formal in-house communications is necessary. It should make appropriate use of available electronic and print methods to disseminate information to staff in a timely manner. Intermediate managers must be held equally accountable across the System for relaying good and bad news to staff

and for funneling back to senior management staff's observations of both service successes and impediments to the provision of quality service.

Staff training and development can be one of the most powerful methods to build morale as well as to upgrade skills, and thus performance, in the library's workforce. A strong program of training and development will be crucial in equipping managers to prepare staff for the massive changes the System will undergo in the next five years.

B&ECPL has made progress in furnishing various types of training opportunities for staff. To maximize results, a formal plan should be developed that addresses the needs of the entire staff. The following is a synopsis of selected strategies to include in any formal plan.

1. Management training is of utmost importance in improving the performance of intermediate managers by strengthening their abilities in supervision and team-building. Competence must be developed in the area of evaluating and counseling subordinates, i.e., skills related to assessing and communicating performance deficiencies, setting goals for individuals, establishing a performance improvement plan, coaching and re-training, creative problem solving.
2. Technology training should be provided in the use of application software for personal computing, reference and information databases, and statistical reporting.
3. New employee orientation and mentoring programs are important for development of a "corporate culture" that supports the Library's Mission.
4. Cross-training is important as a development tool and a strategy to deal with shifts in circumstances (illness, emergencies, revised priorities, new opportunities, variation in volume of business, inclement weather).
5. Managers and staff need training in customer service skills to create a welcoming environment similar to retail bookstores and to learn strategies for handling difficult interpersonal situations with a diverse public.

Recommendations for Staff Utilization and Performance Improvement

1. Work to achieve one hiring authority to allow more efficient and effective use of personnel.
2. Initiate bargaining by the B&ECPL Board with all units representing Library employees.
3. Design and implement creative strategies for recruitment, particularly page and culturally diverse professional staff.
4. Adopt service roles and/or service responses for each individual library so that staffing resources can be allocated and deployed to support these.
5. Create staffing models to correspond with the roles and activity level of each unit, i.e., System workload standards and formulas for calculating appropriate allocation (numbers and classifications).

6. Develop guidelines for effective and equitable scheduling of library staff for public service desk duty.
7. Outline important off-desk responsibilities and workload measures; recommend staff scheduling of these to accomplish the work.
8. Require all managers to maintain current, firsthand awareness of conditions during all public service hours so that adjustments in staffing are accomplished to meet activity demands.
9. Establish systems of coordinating/sharing staff specialties among the many B&ECPL units, e.g., team programming and cross training for shifts in circumstances.
10. Generate a set of library-specific policies and procedures that will be consistently applied across the System.
11. Review the table of organization and job descriptions for reclassification opportunities.
12. Strengthen internal communication mechanisms, e.g., making best use of technology.
13. Develop a formal training program for intermediate managers focusing on areas of effective supervision, including communication, staff evaluation, performance counseling and team building.
14. Determine core competencies for all library jobs to identify areas for inclusion in the training plan, e.g., technology, customer service.
15. Allocate a percentage of the library personnel budget for staff development, i.e., to allow the hiring of outside consultants to supplement internal trainers and to encourage staff to attend state and national library conferences.

Marketing

The magnitude, diversity and complexity of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library contribute to its lack of a coherent and effectively transmitted identity in the community. One of the foremost tasks confronting the Library at the conclusion of this study is to redefine, in a thoughtful and constructive manner, how B&ECPL as a System wishes to be perceived by the community. In return, B&ECPL must assess how well it communicates its Service Plan, Mission, Principles and ongoing accomplishments in light of the recommendations contained in this study.

In its broadest sense, "Marketing" is a process that identifies products or services that consumers want or need and packaging and promoting those products or services to the best advantage of both the consumer and the producer.

During the course of this study, the ACA planning team has engaged in a variety of "marketing" tasks: moderating community meetings and conducting interviews or open forums with public officials, contract library trustees, B&ECPL's Board of Trustees, staff,

the Library Foundation and others. In all of these activities, the ACA investigators gathered oral or written information that contributed to a number of perceptions and conclusions. Telephone survey responses and focus group analyses provided by Insight Associates, Inc. revised or reinforced many observations with statistically valid data.

Marketing tasks and strategies, then, are the threads that unite various elements of this study. References to them appear throughout the document. To transform these data-gathering tasks and strategies into beneficial results, a rigorous public relations campaign must be developed during the final months of the planning process and activated upon release of the Strategic Plan.

The proposed campaign must resemble those of performing arts enterprises (i.e., theatre, music, dance, etc.), museums, galleries or other cultural/arts institutions that have managed to flourish, despite economically challenged circumstances, in periods of dramatic social change.

The Library must change because the world is changing. It is essential to create and establish a vibrant new corporate image, one that respects the traditional roles and resources of the Library while embracing all of the exciting innovations that the Library promises in the Third Millennium. The publication and distribution of the Strategic Plan is an ideal time to advance this objective.

This campaign must publicize B&ECPL's "Shared Vision" and, concurrently, disseminate details about the major innovations that already are occurring and will occur within the realistic and measurable timeframe of the strategic planning period. For the "Shared Vision" to be successfully integrated into public awareness, an understanding of its benefits for consumers/patrons and policy-makers — especially legislators and other public officials — are necessities. Although it is important not to lose the sense of individuality of the local libraries during the campaign, it is even more important for the public to understand and remember that B&ECPL must function as a unified System rather than a cobbled-together federation united only by a single revenue source. Here, it is essential to outline the hub services hierarchy concept and the role that the new hub libraries will play in efficiently delivering service across the breadth of Erie County.

This campaign must be aggressive, exploiting all forms of media: newspapers, television, radio, print, the Internet, etc. Initially, it may be advisable to retain a public relations or communications consultant or firm, as the current staff of B&ECPL's Office of Community Relations is too small to undertake so ambitious a campaign in the time allowed. In tandem, the Office of Community Relations, which is devoted to marketing, promoting and publicizing B&ECPL, should be expanded, as was recommended in 1994 in "Leadership's Opportunity" (a.k.a., the Dubberly Report). The ACA planning team has never encountered a library system of B&ECPL's size and complexity where there are so few employees dedicated to these functions. Also, staff and any consultant(s) should work closely with B&ECPL's development/fund-raising offices to

devise mutually beneficial opportunities to generate revenue as well as public awareness and advocacy.

The following is a synopsis of strategies, some of which are suggested elsewhere in this document.

Identity

1. Introduce B&ECPL's new identity or corporate image into the public's awareness. The image must reinforce the concept that B&ECPL is one library system. This oft-repeated message must confirm that B&ECPL has a coordinated, clearly articulated, consumer-oriented philosophy of operation.
2. Outline the changes integral in a new hub services hierarchy — exciting special programs, enhanced services and materials delivery, partnerships with other agencies (i.e., corporations and government) and new model libraries. Special programs should highlight current technologies (including computer laboratories), family literacy centers, homework help centers, and the ambitious series of public events that showcase what is unique and meaningful about B&ECPL in the Third Millennium.
3. Continue to publicize grants and gifts. Recent newspaper articles about the Gates Library Foundation and Oishei Foundation grants illustrate in real terms what outside grants can mean to the community. Such promotion encourages further, even competitive, giving.
4. Communicate the importance of the **Third Millennium Fund** — i.e., construction or renovation for new model libraries, deploying new information technology, redefining services and delivery infrastructure for better results, sharing B&ECPL's historic treasures and unique services with broader audiences.
5. Encourage the formation of Friends groups where they do not exist and stimulate existing groups to become even more active than they are today. Whether through book sales, public performances, fund-raising dinners or something as simple as underwriting refreshments at special events, Friends can help transform communities as well as libraries. Larger facilities might also consider leasing space for civic events, receptions, weddings or social activities of outside organizations.

Customer Services

1. Use every means and every opportunity to promote the Library's electronic network, i.e., the Virtual Library. Within months, patrons will be able to view the System's collective holdings and access them at any B&ECPL library or from home, office or classroom via the Internet 24 hours a day. The unveiling of B&ECPL's home page and Central Library training facility offer tremendous promotional opportunities that must be exploited. Both of these projects address specific needs expressed at every community and staff meeting and all focus group sessions.
2. Educate the public about additional electronic databases — newspapers, magazines, etc. — available throughout B&ECPL, and that many of these same databases are available in full-text format.

3. Acquaint the public with the concept of new technology areas complete with multifunction PCs for adults and for children. Make the community aware that, where children's designated PCs are available, they will be configured with age-appropriate software and a pre-selected array of Internet links.
4. Introduce new or re-invented services with suitable fanfare; i.e., homework and adult literacy centers, or "centers for readers" at the hub libraries and Central, each stocked with the latest, most useful resources.
5. Coordinate all publicity and promotion of children's programs/services, including outreach activities, special collections and unique "children's zones." Indeed, a public relations campaign aimed strictly at children and parents of children is recommended. The object is to get children to want to use the library and, of course, bring their parents with them. Libraries with strong children's services are not only looking after consumer needs but after their own institutional futures.

As a corollary to the above, announce the new system-wide team-based approach to children's programming. Emphasize that these programs will be pro-active and include everything from pre-schoolers' reading readiness to homework help, perhaps, with older students assisting as volunteers.

6. Develop a seasonal calendar of reading clubs for adults (similar to B&ECPL's very successful Bistro Bookers series) and summer reading clubs for children. Disseminate these broadly in printed form through all locations and appropriate community agencies. Mount them prominently on B&ECPL's web site.
7. Appeal directly to young adults, a group that needs special emphasis. Exploit the media that young adults use: Internet, radio and television. Besides current youth-oriented reading, popular music CDs and videos that emphasize teens and teen interests, young adults tend to enjoy computer clubs, homework help centers and summer reading clubs designed specifically for them.
8. Continue to devote attention to areas where customer satisfaction is high, but concentrate new service development and promotional efforts on those areas identified as deficient by the Insight Associates, Inc. survey and focus groups.

User Orientation

1. Publicize B&ECPL's new hub services hierarchy and uniform patterns of hours, especially the addition of consumer-friendly Saturday and Sunday access.
2. Publish a comprehensive and attractive calendar of events in print and electronic form.
3. Promote Library-based instructional opportunities in computer applications and Internet access.
4. Identify schools and other community agencies that do not already visit the Library on a regular basis and provide orientations about technology and other service upgrades and how to take advantage of them.

5. Promote homework, ready reference centers and specialty libraries— one-stop locations that specialize in helping individuals answer a wide range of questions quickly, easily and accurately.
6. Highlight the Central Library's rich collections and unique services to attract new users. Redefine the Central Library as an exciting destination and promote its image as a resource for entrepreneurs and other business clientele. For B&ECPL to prosper, business people must perceive it as useful — if not essential. Provide regular orientation programs for businesses. Identify corporate non-users and invite them to participate. Become the "broker" that community leaders and successful professionals visit for vital and valuable information services.
7. Offer outreach services and promotional information to daycare and Head Start providers. Assist them in training their younger charges with reading readiness. This approach will also help to extend the influence of B&ECPL into instructional and care giving settings.

Promotion to the Public and In-House

For the Public

1. Create and publicize opportunities for capital donations from the public to support model libraries, efficient state-of-the-art mobile/delivery service infrastructure and advances in technology.
2. Develop additional programs for financial support from agencies like the United Way and form fund-raising partnerships with community agencies whose goals parallel B&ECPL's.
3. Seek regular underwriters/sponsors for system-wide programs for children and adults. Support might include honoraria, refreshments, supplies, advertising, etc.
4. Actively encourage companies to participate in matching grant programs, and solicit funds from businesses in a more aggressive way via B&ECPL's newly created development office.
5. Coordinate fund-raising efforts between the Library Foundation and the new B&ECPL development office.
6. Coordinate efforts between local library fund-raisers and B&ECPL system-wide fund-raising programs. Coordination is virtually non-existent at present, and some large-scale gifts to the System will be jeopardized if local fund-raisers approach donors in unintentional competition for limited dollars.

For the Staff

1. Articulate to rank-and-file staff in real terms the rationales and benefits of "Shared Vision", the hub services hierarchy and other substantive changes that will affect them in their workplace. If staff members fail to comprehend the plan and appreciate its necessity, they cannot convey its merits to the community and build support for vital changes. Committed and informed personnel remain integral to the attainment of all planning objectives.

2. Aid the staff in efforts to create a Third Millennium Library System. Communicate regularly about activities, accomplishments and pending goals via meetings, web postings and widely distributed progress reports.
3. Provide clear and attainable methods for staff to upgrade their skills and rise within the System, taking further advantage of B&ECPL's new single employer status. On-going staff training and motivation of quality personnel through attractive career opportunities are necessities.
4. Coordinate the efforts of **Third Millennium Fund**-raisers, the Library Foundation and the staff who interact with local Friends groups, so that these groups can learn from each other's experiences and avoid inadvertent competition, misunderstandings and resentment.

Policy, Procedural and Measurement Tools

Through the course of this planning study, it became apparent that one of B&ECPL's greatest weaknesses is its lack of substantive operational reports, evaluative instruments and formally adopted policies to guide the Board and administration in managing the Library. Documentation, measurement tools and quantitative reports should serve as the infrastructure on which objective management and rational institutional change can be advanced. Because the System lacks so much "hard information," mythology and opinion too frequently have been the basis of decision making.

Within the limits of the resources devoted to this planning exercise, and to meet the terms of its contractual obligations, the ACA planning team spent most of its time and effort helping B&ECPL Board and staff work through all the dimensions of their major problems: Mission, Facilities, Governance and Finance. As this planning exercise ends, the team would be remiss if it did not suggest the extent of the statistical gathering, planning and policy making that still has to be done for the B&ECPL System to operate in an effective, businesslike way.

B&ECPL needs standards for what constitutes quality services for various library operations - facilities-based, outreach-based and in the growing category of virtual services. The development of the System's new Mission and Principles, and the goals and objectives statements that accompany them, will guide this benchmarking effort.

As soon as possible, B&ECPL should begin a system-wide re-registration of all borrowers to purge the patron database of inaccurate information and provide useful data for future planning and decision making.

To create a modern library system, B&ECPL needs to collect or develop the following infrastructure documents to serve as policy and procedure manuals to guide the System through a period of dramatic change.

A new **Mission Statement** is incorporated into this document. It is accompanied by a list of Principles that support the B&ECPL Mission and clarify areas of key service emphasis.

This document constitutes B&ECPL's new **Strategic Plan**. No doubt, as the organization changes rapidly, other strategic, short-range and long-range plans will be developed and implemented.

Institutional Goals and Objectives should be articulated clearly and specifically each year for the organization as a whole. Goals and objectives define the budgeting priorities for the annual fiscal cycle.

Unit Operational Plans articulate the goals and objectives of the operating units, demonstrating how each unit's annual activities will help the institution achieve its Mission.

Unit Staffing Guidelines must be established for facilities of various types and service-delivery specialties. The B&ECPL administration needs to work with mid-level managers to develop the guidelines, taking into account the service needs of unique communities.

Training Guidelines for All Positions must be formalized and implemented. B&ECPL is so large, so complex and so dispersed that training takes on special significance. It is essential to reorient and retrain staff to meet community and System requirements.

A library needs to regularly update its **Collections Development Policy**, which is generally a Board-approved document. This is especially true for libraries like B&ECPL, serving populations that are shifting in numbers and composition while continuing to respond to heavy demands from specialized user groups. Any new collections development policy for B&ECPL needs to:

1. Address issues for the collection as a whole. Collections need to be viewed as one of several System resources.
2. Set the collection size, strength and specialization at all current and proposed locations, recognizing regional and community differences. The Central Library is currently the great storehouse for the System's rich collections, but when seeking more efficient and effective use of collections, one must ask whether that building is still the appropriate storehouse for so much of B&ECPL's collections assets.
3. Take advantage of the System computer's ability to manage stock and the ability of B&ECPL's delivery infrastructure to move materials quickly from one location of the System to another.
4. Recognize the growing importance of electronic collections. One major area to address is how to include the electronic reference collections produced by national and international vendors. "Will electronic collections replace or supplement paper/print collections?" is a question that all collections development policies must address. Even more important, for a library like B&ECPL that holds rich local and regional collections, what role will the Library's own digitization and/or optical imaging projects play in changing the pattern of collections holdings and preservation?

Another significant electronics collection issue is the perceived deficiency of CDs, video cassettes, audio cassettes and even computer program software that the public wants. Among users, this apparent lack of electronic and/or audiovisual resources is considered one of the System's most significant weaknesses. Some see this on the same level as not having enough new books. In large public libraries throughout the United States, collections are growing increasingly electronic. B&ECPL needs to devote major attention to this "media migration" in the next revision of its Collections Development Policy and in any ensuing selection and management of material resources.

5. Identify older collections that are no longer heavily used. B&ECPL must decide whether to maintain certain "research levels" of collecting, raise or lower those levels, or de-access certain material groups from the collections. Given the magnitude and complexity of B&ECPL's historic collections, this task is a monumental one. B&ECPL's ongoing RECON (Retrospective Conversion) project is addressing the first phases of this challenge, but it will take several years to complete the work.
6. Establish clear guidelines for the handling of those special collections of high value, including such collections that require financial investment to preserve and to restore them. In setting these special collections guidelines, sustainability of funding needs to be considered. What special collections within the totality of collections can be or should be retained and favored through extensive preservation, careful storage and potential displays for decades to come?
7. Consider more extensive cooperative collecting and holding agreements with other institutions to minimize cost and maximize resource accessibility within the region. B&ECPL has already made inroads in this direction. Area museums and educational institutions offer opportunities for cooperative collection arrangements.
8. Set weeding goals as part of the collections development program.
9. Integrate B&ECPL's growing ability to participate effectively in worldwide electronic Interlibrary Loan through programs like OCLC FirstSearch as part of the System's collections development program.

Collections at each location need to address specific constituency needs both at that location and within the surrounding region. Growing electronic capabilities make it possible for all collections to be seen as part of the whole and to be accurately tailored to meet the needs of discrete diverse populations. These same electronic capabilities make it unnecessary to retain generic, redundant holdings at every outlet when those holdings are available within a defined region of B&ECPL.

Many **General Policies** are needed to efficiently manage a library system. Since 1997, B&ECPL's Board of Trustees has adopted various new or revised policies governing Conduct, Access to Meeting Rooms, and Access to Internet and Personal Computing Resources. Additional new or revised policies (especially collections development, as noted above) are required. Revisions of long-standing policies (e.g., circulation) also must be considered on a recurring basis.

Once a library has established its Mission and Principles, policy development (or revision) should begin. The library must determine where its current policies are deficient, where they require simple updating or where they do not address contemporary trends in library service. Ideally, policies should be drafted before they are needed (e.g., Internet Access) rather than as a reaction to a negative situation, grievance or complaint.

All policies should be collected in a single manual available at every location throughout the System. Every member of the staff should be aware of the manual, where it is kept and what it contains. Each policy is an agreement with the community, defining the terms under which the Library delivers services and makes itself accessible and responsive to its users.

Each policy must be consistent with federal, state and local laws and regulations. Each should strive to be consistent with policies and guidelines of the American Library Association, the Public Library Association and relevant state or regional associations. Prior to adoption by the B&ECPL Board of Trustees the Library's legal counsel should review all policies.

Among the formal policies every Library should adopt are the following. This list does not purport to be exhaustive, but it provides a basic checklist for future and/or recurring consideration.

- Behavior/Conduct for Use of Library Facilities
- Circulation of Materials
- Confidentiality of Library Records
- Collection Development/Materials Selection
- Cooperation with Other Libraries and Information Service Providers
- Distribution of Free Materials/Community Information
- Emergencies in the Library
- Exhibits/Displays/Bulletin Boards
- Fees for Service
- Gifts
- Human Resources/Personnel
- Intellectual Freedom/Censorship
- Interagency Cooperation
- Internet and Personal Computing Access

- Meeting Rooms
- Provision of Library Equipment and Supplies for Public Use
- Provision of New Technology for Public Use
- Public Participation and Input
- Public Relations/Communications
- Responsibilities of Board and Director
- Sexual Harassment
- Training and Continuing Education
- Unattended Children
- Volunteers

A **Communications/Marketing Plan** should be defined and executed as discussed in the Marketing section above.

A **Human Resources Plan** is critical to the functioning of a library system. Details are found in the Human Resources section above.

A **Facilities Master Plan** prepared by an architect, engineering company and construction-costing specialist should logically follow the ACA planning team's facilities' analysis. This should address the degree of investment required to optimize the system-wide physical plant, the cost of bringing a building to code, to rid it of asbestos, to provide electrical and telecommunications upgrades. Consider modifications, renovations and alternative uses of selected current facilities. Incorporate long and short term maintenance issues in any proposed plan.

Coordinated, Clearly Publicized and Seldom Changed Patterns of Hourly Operations are necessary to eliminate confusion by the user public over the present situation of manifold and apparently random differences in hours from location to location. Patrons also feel cheated when on certain days, like "Summer Saturdays," no library is open anywhere in their region. This is particularly true in the contract libraries where most summer closings on Saturdays occur. Hours of service delivery fall clearly under the disposition of the B&ECPL Board of Trustees as part of its overall authority to define the terms of service for which it will provide operating revenues. In surveys and focus groups, library users called for consistent, coordinated and convenient hours. B&ECPL administration acknowledges that it now takes a complicated spreadsheet to examine hours of operation for the entire System. The System ought to have only two or three patterns of operational hours. There should be few changes in hours from season to season, and when those changes occur, they ought to occur all at one time and for substantial System-service reasons. There ought to be Saturday hours year-round in every region. If users had their way, there also would be a consistent pattern

of Sunday hours, just like there are at area shopping malls and bookstores. Many of those surveyed were willing to exchange some weekday hours for weekend hours.

“Guidelines and Procedures for the Approval of New Library Construction,” adopted by B&ECPL’s Board of Trustees as an “interim” measure in 1996, must be reviewed and revised to incorporate the findings of this report. The interim guidelines served to assess and advance new construction projects, concluding a long-standing, divisive and ultimately ineffective moratorium on building projects. Several new projects are waiting in the wings, but these must not be advanced under the prevailing “Guidelines” without a thorough understanding of their long-term relevance and viability.

In December 1997, B&ECPL released its first **Technology Plan**, an official roadmap for future deployment of electronic information technology. At least once each year, this document should be revisited to determine how well B&ECPL is meeting its own technology agenda and how much that agenda must be modified to address shifts in demographics and service priorities as well as inevitable progress in computing technologies.

New Performance Measures are needed. B&ECPL is engaged in a study conducted by Florida State University to establish a new methodology to assess the performance of libraries serving inner city populations. This study and other internal discussions should lead to a new set of verifiable measurements for resources allocations and the development of new and meaningful services.



Facilities

Overview of Facilities Study

In September 1997, two project team members, Aaron and Elaine Cohen, surveyed all B&ECPL buildings, with the exception of the Central Library, which was not part of this study's contracted services. The object was to inspect the facilities and gain a general impression of each building's condition, how well each can support good library services, and how each complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Findings were reviewed and updated through August 1998. The results appear in Volume 2 of this report, which includes a profile of each facility and a reprint of this section for convenience.

As already noted in this report, B&ECPL includes 53 facilities: 1 central library, 15 city branches, and 37 contract library buildings, including the Gowanda Free Library which is not located in Erie County¹⁵. Five rural towns do not have library buildings. Their library needs are met through mobile services or libraries in adjacent municipalities.

In this section, sizes of library buildings are expressed in gross square feet (GSF), which encompasses all the interior spaces within a building's envelope. GSF includes all assignable spaces used for library purposes, as well as non-assignable spaces used only for mechanical equipment, vertical and horizontal transportation (i.e., corridors, elevators, stairwells) and code requirements.

In Volume 2, the legal description of the building forms the basis of the profile. For example, many older structures in Buffalo have their major public service space on the main or first floor, and meeting room, lavatories, and storage on the lower level. A legal description of these buildings would be one floor plus basement. In cases in which an attic and a basement are used for library purposes, the legal description would be one floor plus basement and attic.

It is important to reinforce the fact that B&ECPL does not own or maintain any buildings. Erie County owns the Central Library. The City of Buffalo owns the city branch buildings. Municipalities or free associations own the contract library buildings. The owners assume capital and most maintenance costs. Several municipalities have more than one library building within their legal boundaries.

B&ECPL's non-ownership/non-maintenance status creates an ever-changing set of difficulties. In an organization with so many boards in so many municipalities, it is a complex matter to upgrade buildings. More importantly, it is impossible to phase out buildings that are inadequate, badly designed, past their prime or poorly sited. For B&ECPL to operate effectively, the number and type of buildings to be maintained must

¹⁵ The Gowanda Free Library serves the village of Gowanda with a population of 2,901, approximately 800 of whom reside in Erie County.

be considered as a System policy issue addressed by the B&ECPL Board and based on the level and type of service required for individual outlets. In other words, building locations and their ultimate sizes depend upon service requirements in a detailed service plan.

Throughout the course of this study, Erie County residents offered different perspectives about System libraries. Participants of the December 1997 community meetings tended to be B&ECPL users, whereas the participants of the spring 1998 focus groups represented a cross-section of urban, suburban and rural users and non-users. Several community meeting participants indicated to the ACA planning team that, although they wanted substantial upgrades to their libraries, they also wanted the facilities to remain exactly where they are. They became quite vocal about any attempt to move or close facilities. Focus group participants were less partisan about library outlets. The ACA planning team believes that it is essential to look at broad-based issues including a "Shared Vision" and better use of human and physical resources.

Many B&ECPL facilities were built long before population shifted. Several Buffalo libraries are in out-of-the-way places. Most contract libraries are easy-to-find but some are removed from their municipality's main business districts or school centers. Too many are without meeting rooms or sufficient parking. Nearly all have limited electrical and communications wiring. A number of buildings are substandard by local, state and national codes. At least one should be closed immediately because of safety issues. The impact on the operating budget to sustain so many marginal facilities is substantial.

Choices for the Third Millennium

If B&ECPL did not exist and planners were to create a new library system to serve the diverse needs of Erie County residents, it would not resemble the System as it is today. The number, size, design and location of facilities would be radically different.

In an effort to work toward the ideal system structure, the 8-region hub services hierarchy proposed in the Services section should be implemented. This includes the creation of model libraries built from the **Third Millennium Fund**. Such a plan would replace several substandard libraries with strategically sited, state-of-the-art facilities. Capitalization cost estimates are found in the Finances section.

If the B&ECPL Board fails to act upon these recommendations and adheres to the status quo, libraries will close throughout the System during the next economic downturn. Such a crisis-based reduction will not provide replacement libraries. The result will be far worse – fewer libraries, no replacements, no improvements. Austerity will be imposed on the System by outside forces, not by internal direction and thoughtful planning. Size, age, location, condition, parking and activity measurements will affect which libraries remain and which close, but other potentially divisive influences may test the Board's resolve to act with foresight and equity.

Given the economic climate in Western New York, this scenario is inevitable. Instead of a System of fewer but better outlets delivering improved services, there will be fewer but essentially inadequate libraries rendering marginal service.

The Existing Physical Plant

Too many B&ECPL facilities are small (at or under 4,500 GSF). Because of their size, most do not house full service libraries although staffs attempt to make them full-service. The buildings have neither sufficient space for collections and seating nor adequate meeting rooms, if any meeting rooms at all.

Most buildings are in various states of disrepair. At least one is 100 years old and inflexible when it comes to providing modern library services. Quite a few cannot meet ADA standards – no elevators, ramps, or proper lavatory facilities. Too many have no parking or inadequate parking. Expansion on site is often impossible.

Only two buildings (Audubon and Julia Boyer Reinstein) can begin to function as hub libraries today. Each has sufficient GSF, a strategic location with easy access to community libraries and a spacious meeting room. JBR needs additional parking and a larger collection. Their foremost deficiency is state-of-the-art technology, although connections to the B&ECPL network already exist.

The table on the following page is a summary of B&ECPL facilities arranged by GSF.

Concerns

Single-faced Shelving

The interior layout of most existing libraries provides excellent vision and control, emphasizing security. Although the City of Buffalo ranks forty-fourth in crime among cities of equal size, a perception exists that the crime rate in Erie County is high and that libraries would be unsafe without proper controls. Thus, from nearly all charging desks, it is possible to view almost every nook and cranny of public service spaces. Except in rural libraries, lavatories are kept locked and patrons must request keys. This creates a minor but recurring interruption for staff.

Single-faced shelving lines the walls in most facilities, providing vision and control. Double-faced shelving is used inconsistently. In all but the smallest facilities, the resulting layout severely limits collection capacity. More double-faced shelving should be considered.

Electrical and Telecommunications Infrastructure

Lining the walls with single-faced shelving is an impediment to upgrading electrical and telecommunications wiring. It is easier to locate computer workstations against walls than to position them in the middle of the room.

**THE BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM:
THE LIBRARY'S STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN, 1999-2003**

B&ECPL Facilities							
Library	Bldg GSF	Construction Date	Parking	Site GSF	Ability to Expand	ADA	Mtg Rm
North Collins Memorial Library	675	1923	0	17,600	NO	NO	NO
Collins Public Library	1,174	1917	21	84,740	NO	PARTIAL	NO
Sheridan Parkside Library	1,905		Shared		NO	PARTIAL	NO
Martin L. King Library	2,234		Shared	3,190	NO	PARTIAL	YES
West Falls Library	2,754	1930's	1	18,960	NO	NO	YES
Angola Public Library	3,000		5	5,445	NO	YES	NO
Boston Free Library	3,000	1930	16	18,960	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Blasdell Library	3,414	1953	17	23,000	NO	YES	YES
Brighton Library	3,494	1956	12	22,545	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Akron (Denio) Memorial Library	3,546	1920	0	5,250	NO	NO	YES
Kenilworth Library	3,684	1949	19	22,632	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Gowanda Free Library	3,700	1900	10	4,800	NO	NO	YES
East Clinton Library	4,500	1976	4	7,320	NO	NO	YES
James M. Mead Library	5,225	1937	2	10,080	NO	NO	YES
Marilla Free Library	5,824	1936	20	52,481	YES	PARTIAL	YES
Concord Public Library	5,840	1994	28	60,000	YES	YES	YES
Depew Library	5,850	1976	42	80,000	YES	PARTIAL	YES
Elma Public Library	6,049	1959	24	64,605	YES	PARTIAL	YES
Fairfield Library	6,228	1897	0	10,000	NO	NO	YES
Williamsville Library	6,300	1960	30	22,500	NO	YES	YES
North Park Library	6,400	1928	2	22,419	NO	YES	YES
Dudley Library	6,762	1962	23	24,112	YES?	YES	YES
Alden (Ewell) Free Library	6,900	1913	0	22,304	NO	YES	YES
Kensington Library	6,927	1925	0		NO	NO	YES
Greenhaven Library	7,190	1960	21	35,100	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Lake Shore Library	7,194	1966	27	26,796	NO	PARTIAL	YES
North Jefferson Library	7,220	1929	2	7,488	NO	NO	YES
City of Tonawanda Library	7,270	1963	24		NO	YES	YES
East Aurora Library	7,520	1963	21	18,760	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Eden Library	7,616	1991	23	61,750	YES	YES	YES
Crane Library	7,800	1955	4	13,500	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Riverside Library	7,800	1986	23		NO	YES	YES
South Cheektowaga Library	7,819	1967	26	31,668	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Clarence Public Library	8,200	1965	32	25,300	NO	YES	YES
West Seneca Public Library	8,328	1959	34		NO	YES	YES
Eggertsville Library	8,550	1960	40	35,200	NO	YES	YES
Cazenovia Library	8,900	1925	2	28,900	YES?	NO	YES
Northwest Library	9,604	1969	13	16,200	NO	NO	YES
East Delavan Library	10,300	1961	20		NO	NO	YES
Hamburg Library	10,700	1966	66	21,780	NO	YES	YES
North Cheektowaga Library	11,942	1966	16	30,720	NO	NO	YES
Clearfield Library	12,150	1968	72	58,206	YES	YES	YES
Grand Island Memorial Library	12,342	1989	67	188,250	YES	YES	YES
Fronczak Library	12,400	1965	17		NO	NO	YES
Niagara Library	13,650	1958	22	42,120	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Lackawanna Public Library	13,700	1922	20	38,750	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Orchard Park Public Library	13,978	1971	56	108,000	YES	NO	YES
Reinstein Memorial Library	14,827	1964	99		NO	PARTIAL	YES
Kenmore Library	16,000	1976	24	17,835	NO	YES	YES
Lancaster Library	17,512	1967	22	28,400	NO	PARTIAL	YES
Julia Boyer Reinstein Library	20,000	1996	60	111,000	YES	YES	YES
Audubon Library	22,206	1987	103	412,500	YES	YES	YES

Wiring in each facility appears to be done on an as needed or crisis basis. While expedient because of limited funding, this method of operation is inefficient and ultimately costlier. A better approach is to upgrade each building with the proper conduit and cabling based on a logical wiring plan.

Seating and Special Use Areas

A combination of small size and an emphasis on circulation have resulted in insufficient seating capacity in many libraries. Collections are out of proportion to the size of the building, limiting quiet places for children to do their homework or for adults to read the newspaper and use reference materials comfortably.

Children's spaces, in general, are inadequate and show little imagination. No library has a decent toddler area; the shelving is too high and the spaces are not "warm and fuzzy." This deficiency is underscored by the fact that very few of the facilities contain a separate story hour area. The meeting room is used instead.

Few libraries cater to the needs of senior citizens. Some have displays of large print and audio books with comfortable seating in close proximity. Given the increasing number of senior citizens in most communities, this situation should be rectified.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Most libraries have open, accessible layouts in their reading rooms but cramped staff spaces. In many of the older facilities, the meeting room and public lavatories are on a lower level. Elevators or exterior entrance ramps do not exist. In several buildings, steep stairs lead to an emergency exit.

Most entries are not ADA compliant. Doors are either not wide enough or cannot be activated by a push button. There has been a major effort to make the public lavatories ADA accessible but not the staff facilities.

ADA guidelines require the top reference shelf to be no higher than 54 inches. Only the largest and newest facilities meet this requirement. In several libraries, there has been an attempt to make the space around computer workstations accessible to the disabled but the general layout is overcrowded. ADA requires a 30-inch high cutout at the circulation desk. Few libraries meet this standard.

Lighting

Most buildings are well maintained but more than a few interiors are dim. This problem results from lighting fixtures whose plastic panels have yellowed with age. The light discolors rather than illuminates. In some cases, it would be sufficient to replace the panels; in others the installation of more efficient fixtures is required. There are many efficient and inexpensive lighting fixtures available.

General Interior Upgrades

Several of the older buildings appear to have cellulose and/or asbestos floor tiles. Both types should be replaced. The furniture in these buildings is serviceable but unattractive, dating from the 1950s and 1960s. In tandem with installing new lighting fixtures, seating could be upgraded to add color and grace. Carpeting the public service areas would also add color and soften the appearance of the interior.

Safety and Security

The overwhelming majority of buildings do not have sprinkler systems or adequate security systems. Too many are without emergency lighting, fire alarms and panic buttons. Several buildings lack required outdoor storage facilities for gasoline equipment.

Parking

Many libraries either have no parking or minimal parking. Patrons are forced to park on the street or at even greater distance, sometimes across busy highways.

Design Requirements for All Library Buildings with Special Considerations for New Construction

To support a hub services hierarchy, B&ECPL must develop a detailed Facilities Master Plan in conjunction with its overall service plan. This comprehensive study should be prepared in consultation with an architect, an engineering firm and a construction-costing specialist. It should be funded through the new **Third Millennium Fund**.

New construction should be financed through creative partnerships under the umbrella of the **Third Millennium Fund**. All new construction must result in operations that are expenditure neutral. Any proposed replacements, improvements or expansions must not increase the overall B&ECPL operating budget. Additional full-time or part-time positions required to enhance services or support expanded or replacement facilities must be created from reclassification, reassignment or redeployment. Overcoming this difficult hurdle will enable B&ECPL to begin to function as a more efficient "system" as opposed to a federation of expensive independent library outlets.

Increasing the size of facilities and replacing others would bring B&ECPL closer to comparable library systems in the United States. For library systems serving populations between 700,000 and 1,000,000, the national average is 43,137 people per service outlet. B&ECPL serves an average population of 18,626 per library. It is not advisable to reduce the System's libraries to 22 in order to meet this criterion. Instead it is reasonable to set a goal of 39 facilities at the end of 5 years, each serving approximately 25,000 Erie County residents. In the long term, 30 outlets each serving about 33,000 people is preferable.

More than a few library systems have a standard minimum of 20,000 GSF for their "community" libraries — the same size the ACA planning team recommends for a B&ECPL hub. Some U.S. systems have branches 60,000 GSF or larger.

The following are some factors to consider in developing design standards for expanded, renovated or new libraries.

Service Population

Over the intermediate term, the average population served by an individual library should be 25,000. Eventually, an average service population should be 33,000. Overlapping service areas as well as proximity and distance factors must be carefully reviewed in setting new standards.

Space Allocation

40% of assignable space should be devoted to print and multimedia collections, 40% to seating and computing workstations, 10%, to staff, and 10% to a community meeting room. For a hub, the collection, seating and meeting room allocations should incorporate space for innovative services, such as homework assistance centers or "children's zones."

Health, Safety and Minimum Maintenance

All buildings should meet minimal health (e.g. restroom), safety (fire suppression systems, emergency lighting, panic buttons, security/fire alarms, bookstack anchors, etc.) and maintenance (cleanliness) standards.

Electrical and Telecommunications Infrastructure

New or renovated facilities must include flexible and expandable data/power cabling to provide connectivity potential throughout.

Lighting

New facilities should include adequate and attractive lighting, at least 50 foot candles in seating areas, 30 foot candles washing the stacks, and specialized lighting at service points or distinct service areas. Expanded or renovated facilities should strive for equivalent lighting standards.

Meeting Rooms

Eventually, every community library should provide a meeting room with a minimum seating capacity of 100. Hub libraries might have meeting rooms that accommodate as many as 150.

Shelving

Double-faced shelving should replace single-faced shelving wherever feasible so libraries can increase collection capacity without increasing floor space. If possible, shelving should not stand against walls. In new construction or renovation projects, maximum wall space should be reserved for wiring connectivity and, thus, workstations and seating.

Specialized Space

In both types of libraries (hub and community) distinct areas for story hours, senior citizens, young adults, literacy tutoring, etc. should be considered.

Parking

Community library buildings require at least 50 parking spaces for patrons and an additional space for each member of the full-time equivalent staff. For hub libraries, 100 to 150 parking spaces should be provided, depending upon meeting room seating capacity.

ADA Compliance

All buildings must meet full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Barrier-free accessibility for present and potential user groups is integral in any new construction or renovation program.

Storage

All buildings should include sufficient storage space and, where required, outside storage for gasoline equipment.

Flexibility

Any new building must be planned with continual change in mind. Modular design should be applied to anticipate changes in collections, services and staffing.

A Hub Library: A Place for the People

A hub library building should be stimulating, hospitable and conducive to learning. Browsing areas and related seating should reflect an open design and employ a degree of natural light to create an impression of warmth. Because a sense of community is so important, a hub might have a café where library users can congregate. On the other hand, since a library is a place to learn and study, a sufficient number of quiet spaces must be available for those whose work requires concentration. The interior should be designed to absorb rather than broadcast incidental noise.

The library should have human scale, applying proportional design for all its visitors: children, adults and senior citizens. For those with disabilities, the layout should limit

the need for special equipment. Indeed, transparency is necessary to showcase the interiors. To enhance the concept of the library as a family destination, its architecture should beckon and inspire. At the same time, areas should be arranged logically, unfolding in an easily understood hierarchy.

Through systems flexibility and modular design, the building should be adaptable and have a net to gross ratio no higher than seventy percent. Not only must the structure accommodate the latest advances in information technology and communication, it must also anticipate their evolution. "Connectivity" is the key word. Although expansion potential is an important concern in site selection and building/systems design, the structure should handle basic changes in library service for at least 20 years without major renovation.

Within the building, service points must be visible. Upon entrance, the circulation and reference/information desks should be in view. Popular collections or areas of brief but concentrated use should be located near the public entrance while other esoteric or time-consuming elements should be farther away. Clear zones are necessary for areas such as a periodical lounge or computer center.

The building design should incorporate energy efficient environmental (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) controls and modern telecommunications, electrical and security systems. Mechanicals must be accessible for maintenance, repair or replacement. The building should be simple to secure when closing.

Collections should be housed on both bookstore-type and traditional library shelving. Rotating towers may be used for paperbacks and certain forms of multimedia. Popular materials or featured collections should have face-out display. The end panels of bookstacks can be used for display shelves or to hold computers, audio or video devices.

A Community Library: Serving Community Needs

A community library ought to be an inviting, full-service facility with the feel of a mini-hub library. A minimum of 10,000 square feet is required to house an in-depth collection, networked computer workstations and a one hundred seat meeting room. It should be sited in an accessible, high traffic location on a lot that allows parking for at least 50 visitors plus staff. Current buildings of less than 10,000 square feet designated as community libraries should eventually be upgraded.

Many of the requirements for a hub library apply here: an open, flexible, energy efficient design with visible service points and the capability of housing the latest advances in information technology. Space should not be assigned for innovative or unique services like those offered at the region's hub library. However, design elements should be incorporated to provide interesting spaces for children, young adults and senior citizens. Barrier-free accessibility should be integrated throughout.

A Specialty Library: Basic Services with Something Extra

A specialty library is an important link in a region's service chain. Besides providing basic library service – a limited selection of best sellers, CDs, video and audio tapes, a core reference collection and a rudimentary collection of children's materials – the specialty library will render a unique service to the community. Depending on the features of the neighborhood, these libraries may be "hot books" locations with a bookstore ambience, a job/careers center, a youth focused branch, a senior citizens reading room or a neighborhood computer center. Specialty libraries in rural areas will function as computer/delivery libraries. Networked computer workstations and a daily delivery schedule will afford quick access to the riches of the B&ECPL System.

These smaller buildings should be upgraded to meet the demands of their designations. Most would need improved electrical and telecommunications infrastructures, especially those serving as computer centers or located in rural areas. Senior reading rooms or youth branches require specialized design elements for the target population.

The Time Is Now

B&ECPL is at a crossroads, renewal or deterioration. Historically, library service in Erie County has moved on a relatively flat plain with occasional jumps to a new plateau. One such leap was the creation of the federated library system in the 1950s. B&ECPL came into being during a time of turmoil, a product of compromise under circumstances that no longer exist. It is time to climb to a new plateau. As in the 1950s, negotiation should be used to bring about change. An institution cannot thrive in the twenty-first century when its modus operandi is mired in the mid-twentieth century. The goal is modernized library service delivered in the most efficient and cost effective manner. Informed citizens demand it as their due; B&ECPL is capable of fulfilling that demand.

This is an exciting time in the history of this Library System. As outlined throughout this plan, the possibilities for improvement are many. The individual components of B&ECPL must come to a "Shared Vision" and work together to make that vision a reality. By concentrating on the benefits and not the problems, the System will attain the new plateau.



Implementation Plan

Over the next 5 years, specific targets are needed in order to modernize the System as outlined in the Strategic Plan. Without an implementation plan that is reviewed and revised annually, the planning effort is null and void and the planning document will only gather dust on a shelf. Targets have been set up for 1, 3 and 5 years. Goals and objectives for each target must be developed by January 31 of every year, not just the target years. At that time, the previous year's goals and objectives should be evaluated and future targets must be considered as well in order to keep the plan on track. It is crucial to identify policy and procedure issues to be addressed in the upcoming year. This process is intended to be open and flexible; new projects should be added and given a priority in the overall implementation plan as needed.

1999 Targets


1. Board adopts Strategic Plan (3 to 5 months). This process should include formal discussions with the staff and the public at various regional locations, as well as a public hearing before the entire Board of Trustees.
2. Set goals and objectives for 1999 by 7/31.
3. Establish a System Communications Plan/Strategy.
4. Begin the process to institute one employer authority by starting negotiations with the Contract Libraries and the Library's bargaining units.
5. Starting in June, develop a strategy for implementing the new Services Plan.
6. In September, initiate development of a Financial Plan for the years 2000 to 2004 with a completion target date of 5/31/00. A component of this plan is the creation of the **Third Millennium Fund**, which should be incorporated in the Library's 2001 budget request. These efforts should be coordinated with the Library Foundation.
7. Begin the development of an implementation strategy for the Facilities Master Plan. Since the plan is dependent on the **Third Millennium Fund**, an alternative strategy must be established, within 90 days of final adoption of the Strategic Plan, to deal with immediate construction plans. This strategy should be a modification of the interim "Guidelines and Procedures for the Approval of New Library Construction."
8. Fulfill the objectives of the 1999 Technology Plan, continuing the evolution of B&ECPL's Virtual Library.
9. Make plans to re-register all borrowers.

2001 Targets

1. By 1/31, evaluate progress for the year 2000, plan for future targets and include any new projects in the annual goals and objectives.
2. By 1/1, establish one hiring authority.

3. By 1/1, have in place centralized hiring and human resources policies and procedures associated with hiring shifts.
4. Create a B&ECPL Development Office.
5. Set up system-wide data collection criteria and procedures.
6. Establish general Human Resources policy and procedures objectives.
7. By 12/31, adopt a new Services Plan.

2003 Targets

1. By 1/31, evaluate progress for the year 2002, plan for future targets and include any new projects in the annual goals and objectives.
 2. Open model libraries of all three types: hub, community and specialty.
 3. Establish a policy concerning the number of outlets.
 4. Develop an implementation schedule for the Facilities Master Plan.
 5. Have in place a robust Virtual Library.
 6. Adopt remaining Services Plan policies.
 7. Adopt remaining Human Resources policies.
 8. Begin the Strategic Planning Process for 2004 – 2008.
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Supplemental Information

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