Marion County Public Library System

FY 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

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2019 PATRON SURVEY

"We enjoy books & movies and knowing the library is there – I can find something that will go with a topic we are studying or get to see the new movie or read the bestseller everyone is talking about is wonderful – and for free. Being able to put holds online is very great value. The programs offered have been wonderful for our family. All online services – I can't say enough great things about them as well and how helpful they are for us…"

Marion County Public Library
321 Monroe Street
Fairmont, WV 26554
(304) 366-120

Fairview Public Library
500 Main Street
Fairview, WV
(304) 449-1021

Mannington Public Library
119 Clarksburg Street
Mannington, WV
(304) 986-2803

Introduction

The Marion County Public Library System (MCPLS) continues to evolve in the ever-changing digital information realm. While the library's mission has always been to serve the literary needs of our communities, the challenge of providing information, books, and ideas in many different formats from paper to the Internet has afforded MCPLS the opportunity be a community leader in emerging information technologies and products. Public libraries across the nation and MCPLS have seen a steady decline in print circulation over the past several years. However, patrons are accessing digital library services in increasing numbers. MCPLS is also on trend nationally with increased programs, events, and library attendance, while struggling with stagnant or reduced funding and staffing.

Other challenges MCPLS faces include expensive platform services for electronic books, magazines, and streaming audio books and movies. Many publishers will charge public libraries sometimes more than three times the cost of a book or sell copies with access for only a year or a set number of circulations. Public perception of libraries has also changed rapidly because of the Internet as a primary source for information. Most of the general public are unaware of library services, our ability to access the "right" information to fulfill information needs, and the quality, value-added events and programs offered at all library locations. Limited funding leaves little room for MCPLS to effectively market services in Marion County communities through expensive news media platforms. The library relies heavily on word of mouth and social media engagements and is now developing branding opportunities through subscription marketing tools available to public libraries in order to reach future library clients more effectively.

Often patrons will ask if public libraries are needed because of the Internet. It is a fortunate opportunity to share the many wonderful resources and tools that MCPLS gives freely to the community. The library has increased the digital collection over the last five years to nearly 820,000 downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, and movies, and over 11 million downloadable music titles. The library has also built a virtual Marion County Public Library that you can access from home, or any Internet connected place. From auto repair, hobby crafts, science reports, bestseller series, to the latest newspaper articles, law forms, and reading lists, so much of the library's information is available to you for free on a home computer, tablet, or smart phone. Patrons can visit any of the MCPLS branches for a variety of services including one-on-one training on tablets and other computer literacy services, free tax preparation help, notary services, book clubs, lectures, author signings, performance programs – the list goes on. The MCPLS library board and staff encourage those who haven't visited their local public library to visit, engage, and share the incredible amount of community value that residents and families have free access to, gathered in one place, in their own backyard.

Erika Connelly – Library Director

Our Community

The Marion County Public Library System works to provide service to 56,418 county citizens, and to the surrounding counties of Taylor, Harrison, Wetzel, and Monongalia. Marion County has a relatively stable population count. The county's residents are predominantly White, with 93.8% of the population identifying themselves as White and 3.3% of the population identifying themselves as Black or African American. Less than 1% of the population identify themselves as another race. 1.8% identify as two or more races, and 1.4% of the population identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino. 19% of the county's population is over 65 years old, which is similar to the statewide average. 23% of the population is under the age of 18.[1]

$0 - $15,000	13.6%
$15,000 - $24,999	12.2%
$25,000 - $34,999	10.9%
$35,000 - $49,999	13.4%
$50,000 - $74,999	19.8%
$75,000 - $99,999	13.1%
$100,000 - $149,999	11.4%
$150,000+	5.6%

Table 1 County Household Incomes

Only 13.8% of people in Marion County have a college degree. While 81.9% of the households in Marion County have a computer, only 75% have a broadband internet subscription.[2] Marion County is below the national average in median household income of $61,327 at $48,158. The county's poverty level is much higher than the national average of 12.3% at 16.1%.[3] While employment has slightly declined, the largest job sectors in the county are Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational services, and Retail Trades.[4]

Library patrons are generally evenly distributed by age group, although there are slightly more patrons in the 18 and under group, and the 60 and older group. Significantly, nearly two-thirds of our patrons are female. 62% of our borrowers are female, as compared to 36% male borrowers. Out of the 23,647 households in Marion County, 7,331 are library card holders.

While the library system provides services to multiple counties, the most households with library cards reside in the greater Fairmont area, in the south eastern portion of the county. The top communities with the largest number of card holders are served by branch facilities in Fairmont, Mannington, and Fairview. The next largest community card holders are Farmington, Rivesville, Barrackville, Worthington, Grant Town, and Carolina.
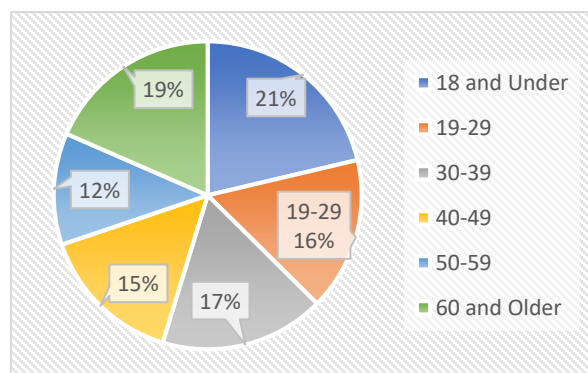

Table 2 Borrowers by Age Group

[1] Gale Patron Segmentation Analysis (2019).

[2] U. S. Census 2017: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

[3] U. S. Census 2017: Income and Poverty in the United States

[4] Data USA

Library Value Statements

The Marion County Public Library System is redesigning the library patron journey by creating personalized experiences, balancing information technologies with personal engagements, and extending the reach of the physical library services into our communities. MCPLS accomplishes these goals through careful, thoughtful stewardship of levy funding and shaped through value statements adopted by the Library Board of Trustees.

Mission Statement

The Marion County Public Library System provides the best possible library service to the citizens of the region. We serve the educational, cultural, informational, and recreational needs of people of all ages, and accomplish this by exploring all methods of communication and technology.

Vision Statement

We embrace the rich heritage and vibrant future of our growing communities and aspire to be the best possible public library system for Marion County. We create opportunities to participate, connect, and discover.   We encourage lifelong learning, respond to the needs of our diverse community, offer space for people and ideas to come together, and provide materials and programs that entertain, inform, and inspire. We are committed to excellent customer service and stewardship of the physical and financial assets entrusted to the library.

Statement of Responsibility

The Marion County Public Library System serves our patron and hires employees regardless of political affiliation, sexual orientation, national origin, religious affiliation, or economic standing. The Library has an obligation to provide many points of view, and to remain neutral on subjects that might discriminate or favor one person over another. The public library setting is historically a place where ALL persons are comfortable and welcome to enjoy information discovery, social interaction, and learning opportunities.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE *Community Spaces*

The Marion County Public Library System plans to meet the evolving needs of our communities. Our library users will become more aware of our library locations and services by highlighting the advantages of the public library forum in the digital age and showcasing the library as a popular community space.

- o Our library branch teams will focus on outdoor classroom engagements through innovative programming initiatives with a special focus on outdoor learning, utilizing adjacent, library green spaces.
- o Our library technology team will explore and implement current technologies for digitally connected classroom and meeting space environments.
- o Our programming teams will encourage more involvement with local organizations to utilize the library as a safe space for political forums and discussions.
- o Our programming teams will foster community lead library programs utilizing Maker Space models that facilitate learning, encourage reading, and providing a safe space for engagement.
- o Our programming teams will showcase both library bookmobiles as engagement spaces for community partners and organizations to better utilize library outreach resources.
- o Our administrative team will focus on securing resources and develop partnerships to secure a new main library facility and develop a capital project plan. The new facility will transition the current space from a 100-year-old building to a more modern space that is suitable for current and future library needs and services.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE *Civic Engagement*

The Marion County Public Library System plans to create measurable impact by leading transformational change in connecting existing and emerging library resources with stakeholders in our communities. County residents will recognize and utilize library branches as trusted public forums to share and engage in collaborative ideas and common discourse.

- o Our programming teams will attract and engage library users with creative programming including, mystery dinners, lunches with local authors, tabletop and electronic gaming events, and textile learning. Our teams will promote growth in services and resources through local business partnerships.
- o Our outreach teams will connect underserved areas of our communities by connecting homebound patrons and seniors through special bookmobile stops, books by mail, and curbside delivery.
- o Our circulation teams will foster an atmosphere of inclusion and belonging by connecting underprivileged and underserved patrons with community resources they need. Our teams will work with local bus schedules to make job training, computer training, and pertinent library programming available to accommodate the widest audience.
- o Our circulation and administrative teams will begin the process to make local historical documents and photographs available in a digitized collection. Our teams will curate from various resources and locations, and partner with the local genealogy clubs to provide greater access to local treasures.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE *Critical Literacies*

The Marion County Public Library System plans to create community collaborations through engagements with local businesses and organizations to highlight the importance of critical literacy skills. The library system will facilitate connections with area resources by curating an up to date repository of organizational contacts and information. The library system will also promote and connect organizations with existing and emerging library resources with similar mission and values.

o   Our technology and programming teams will develop senior programming that introduces and reinforces basic to advanced computer literacy skills, smartphone, tablet, and digital device training, and introduction in emerging information technologies.
o   Our circulation teams will create, implement, and encourage library card registration for all Marion County students K-12. Our teams will connect with schools and classrooms through digital signup, online book clubs, discussions groups, and book talks.
o   Our programming teams will work with area organizations to develop GED site trainings, signups, test preparations, and job seeking opportunities. Our teams will work with local social services to connect our underserved populations with local resources.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE *Facilitate Learning*

The Marion County Public Library System plans to move from outputs to outcomes by engaging library patrons and community organizations to collaborate in library programming and creating ongoing patron relationships. The library system will utilize current and emerging library technologies to help bridge the digital divide within the county, to become the premier location for learning and information retrieval, and to be a safe, and welcoming space for learners of all types.

o   Our technology teams will provide expanded classes on trending STEM and STEAM programs to support the Marion County Board of Education curricula, like 3D printing, computer coding, and computer technical skill building.
o   Our administrative team will create new spaces to meet the demand for small to medium engagement learning rooms that can be used as transitioning "Maker Spaces". These spaces will encourage collaborative, community-driven programs as a safe place for public discourse.
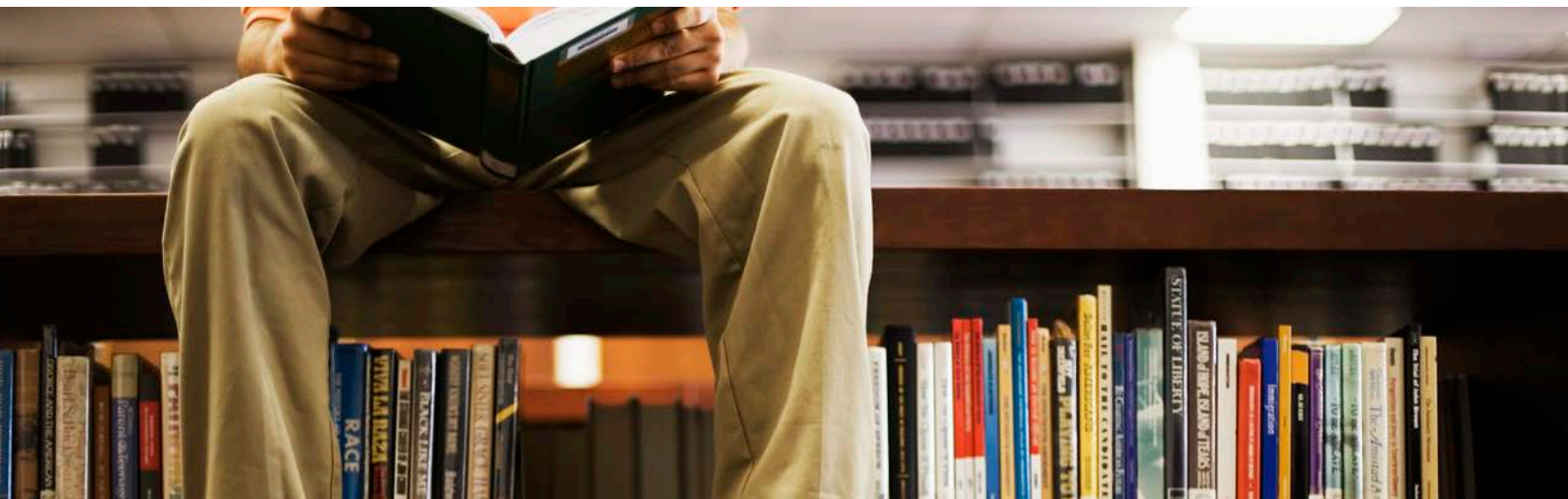
- o Our programming teams will fulfill homeschool needs by providing safe spaces, classroom learning environments, and access and training on the library's information resources through creative and collaborative programs.
- o Our marketing team will highlight and arrange library collections to target current student needs to reinforce current public and private classroom learning.
- o Our technology teams will create and implement programs to circulate mobile hotspots that help bridge the digital divide within our county by targeting areas with little to no Internet connectivity.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE *Community Engagement*

The Marion County Public Library strives to secure stakeholder support with careful planning of local funding, balancing the integration of library infrastructure with technology, and with adapting libraries in a new digital age. Community collaboration utilizing the library system's resources is vital to our continued success. The library system plans to create spaces and services that promote and continue the library conversation throughout our library communities.

- o Our marketing team will focus on promoting the library image and brand through a "Library Store" to include apparel items, tote bags, pens, and similar. Our teams will focus on high visage signage throughout the library system, drawing attention to library upcoming programming and services. Our team will also cultivate business partners to distribute calendars, newsletters, and library event poster.
- o Our marketing and administrative teams will participate the "Little Free Libraries" program by placing 4 units throughout the county. Our teams will also maintain a location map on the library system's website that displays all units sponsored by other participating organizations.
- o Our marketing and programming teams will produce regular library video segments to promote library driven community projects, programs, and events to be viewed on the library system's YouTube channel.
- o Our circulation teams will create safe, comfortable spaces for seniors to engage in social contact, literacy discourse, and event promotions through "coffee times", and making them aware of library programming for all ages.
- o Our circulation and marketing teams will create branded promotions in communities and businesses to promote two bookmobile daily routes, that include evening and weekend stops. The teams will focus marketing the bookmobiles in special community events, like parades, fairs, farmer's markets, and literacy events.
- o Our circulation teams will work with library vendors to establish self-check stations for faster checkout of library materials to enhance the patron experience.