

Burbank Public Library Planning Process

Information-gathering phase August 2019-February 2020

As part of its strategic planning efforts, Burbank Public Library staff gathered information from community members, library users, and Library staff over the course of several months in 2019-20. The elements of the information gathering effort were:

- Community Conversations: A series of several facilitated events with target audiences to ensure diverse voices are represented in the planning process.
- User Survey: A paper and online survey asking three open-ended questions about priorities for the Library.
- Accomplishments and Statistical Trends: Review of statistics, programs and existing services, including comparison of Burbank to regional peer libraries.
- Trends Research: Evaluation of national trends in libraries and larger trends affecting libraries, highlighting areas of relevance to Burbank.
- Staff Input: Appreciative interviews highlighting staff desires, followed by activities at February 2020 All-Staff Day.

This document outlines the results of that research.

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Key information about the City of Burbank and Burbank Public Library

To understand the current state and future opportunities for Burbank Public Library, it is important to place the discussion into context. Information in this section is drawn from the US Census, the City of Burbank, Burbank Unified School District, and Burbank Public Library.

About Burbank

- The current population estimate is 107,702. The population has been stagnant for many years but is expected to increase with a City Council commitment to add 12,000 housing units over the next 15 years.
- The daily workforce is about 150,000. 24 percent of the workforce is in entertainment, with Warner Bros. and Disney as the top employers, followed by Providence St. Joseph Medical Center and the Hollywood Burbank Airport. Whereas Burbank used to be dominated by stable manufacturing work, the workforce of today and the future are more likely to work on contract and require advanced education and technology skills.
- The median age is 42, older than the national median age of 38 years, and the population in Burbank is expected to continue to age. About 90 percent of residents have an educational level of high school or better, compared to 87.3 percent nationally. The median household income in Burbank is \$69,118, significantly higher than the national median income of \$57,650.
- The median home price in Burbank in January 2020 is about \$840,000 an increase of almost 16 percent in four years and 37 percent above the Los Angeles County median price. Vacancy rates for rentals are low, and there is a shortage of affordable housing. A majority of housing units are occupied by renters at 56 percent.
- 7.3 percent of families live below the poverty line, and about two-thirds of those have children.
- Just under one-third of the population is foreign-born. 54 percent of residents speak only English. Major languages besides English include Spanish and Armenian. While Spanish is still the dominant non-English language, in the Burbank Unified School District, Armenian has become the major secondary language group. School district reports indicate other language groups with a growing presence include Arabic, Russian, Tagalog and Korean.
- 24 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino of any race, a percent that has decreased slightly in the past decade. The non-Hispanic white population is 56 percent, which has also decreased in recent years. The Asian (13 percent) and Black (2.6 percent) populations have increased in the past decade.
- Burbank Unified School District enrolls 15,000 students annually. Priorities for the school district include improved technology and support for STEAM learning; arts programming; mental health initiatives; and support for special needs students.
- Major nonprofits include: Burbank Temporary Aid Center, the Family Services Agency, the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, Family Promise of the Verdugos, and Burbank Arts for All.
- The City of Burbank employs 1,600 people.

About Burbank Public Library

Burbank Public Library was founded in 1913 and has three locations: Central, Buena Vista and Northwest.

Major services include:

- Circulation of books, audiobooks, DVDs and downloadable media
- Access to online resources, internet-connected PCs and wifi
- Programming for all ages, offered onsite and offsite. Programs range from early literacy programs to summer reading to cultural offerings to technology training
- An adult literacy program funded by the state through California Library Literacy Services
- The Spark! Digital Media Lab at the Central Library, offering access to equipment and software for content creation and media productions
- A volunteer program that delivers materials to homebound patrons, among other services
- Special services for visually impaired, blind, and physically handicapped users provided in partnership with the Braille Institute
- A Friends of the Library group, founded in 1980, who staff two used bookstore and host book sales and other fundraisers
- Coordination of the Burbank Sister City program

In 2018-19, Burbank Public Library:

- Was open 155.5 hours per week at three sites
- Had 91 employees, 40 full-time and 51 part-time (64 full-time equivalent positions)
- Had an operating budget of \$6.9 million, 78% of which was devoted to salaries and benefits
- Offered a collection of almost 425,000 physical items and about 6,500 downloadable items
- Hosted 720,000 visitors at its three locations
- Circulated more than 850,000 items
- Had about 30,000 attendees at 615 programs
- Recorded almost 115,000 requests for information
- Supported 180,000 public computer sessions and about 56,000 wifi sessions

User Survey

A user survey was conducted between October 21 and November 22, 2019. Most responses were gathered online, but people could obtain paper surveys at all Library sites. There were 1,132 responses. Of the respondents, 74% lived in Burbank and 92% had a current Burbank Public Library card. The ages of respondents broke down as follows:

Under age 14: 2.0%	Age 35-49: 36.0%
Age 14-18: 1.1%	Age 50-64: 24.8%
Age 19-34: 14.3%	Age 65 and older: 21.8%

The question, “How would you rate your most recent experience?” resulted in the following responses:

- Met my expectations: 52.7%
- Exceeded my expectations: 43.2%
- Failed to meet my expectations: 4.1%

The survey asked three open-ended questions aimed at determining the most highly valued services, ideas for the future and areas for improvement.

Question 1: What services or programs currently offered by the Library are the most important to you?

Responses fell into four categories:

- Collection
- Programming
- Technology
- Services (included reference/research assistance, space, hours, interlibrary loans, community information, TAP cards, literacy, etc.)

Most respondents gave answers that fit into multiple categories – that is, they use the Library in many ways. Overall: 48.3% of responses related to the collection; 26.9% to programming; 11.7% to technology; and 13.1% to services.

Question 2: What new services or programs would you like to see the Library offer in the future?

Responses fell into five categories:

- Collection
 - more copies and more selection, all formats
 - more and more diverse eBooks, eAudiobooks and streaming video; Kanopy
 - specific genres, specific languages

- things (baking supplies, instruments, hotspots, tools, tablets)
- online resources (online learning, online access to historical Burbank Leader)
- Programming
 - more programs for all ages at different times
 - multilingual (Spanish, Armenian, Chinese), diverse, special needs
 - DIY, authors, music, entertainment industry, civic issues
 - support for parents, both in terms of training/education and offering children's programs at times when working parents can attend
 - homework help and tutoring
 - workforce training, job fairs, financial literacy
- Services
 - space/zones, comfortable seating, a quiet room
 - study rooms, coworking space, community meeting rooms
 - extended loan periods, online payments, automatic renewals, no fines or fine forgiveness
 - book recommendations on site and online; easier way to recommend books
 - bookmobile
 - café or coffee stand
 - art exhibits and museum passes
- Technology
 - more computers, longer computer sessions
 - technology help in basic and advanced digital skills
 - Adobe software, VR equipment, podcasting space
 - better online catalog, library app, online readers advisory services
 - laptop lending, scanning
- None (no answer, nothing specific/it's all great, do more in general, do less in general).

Overall: 30.9% of responses related to programming; 29.3% to "none"; 16.5% to services; 13.2% to collection; and 10.1% to technology.

Question 3: Do you have any other ideas about how the Library can improve?

Many of the responses to this question overlapped with responses to the previous question. Requests for improvements to the collection, programs and technology (basically, more of everything) amounted to 24.8% of responses.

Common responses under Collection reflected demand for more downloadable and streaming material; interest in materials in non-English languages; and increased renewal or loan periods.

Common responses in Programming highlighted the continued strong demand for programming of all sorts for all ages. The Technology responses requested some improvements that have been achieved since the survey, namely an updated online catalog.

The Services category (28.1%) contained numerous responses related to:

- an updated Central Library
- improvements to furniture, space and hours at all sites, most notably evening or weekend hours at the Northwest Library
- a desire to find solutions or add services to help people experiencing homelessness who spend their time in and around the libraries
- concerns about cleanliness, noise and unfriendly staff; lack of diversity of staff
- improved signage and more marketing

By far the greatest percentage of respondents (47.1%) had no opinion on this question or provided general compliments.

Community Conversations

While the user survey obtained broad information from a large number of people, the technique of Community Conversations was utilized in order to dig deeper into the perspective of key community groups. Library staff facilitated four community conversations targeted at the following populations: English language learners; older adults; business owners; and those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

The Community Conversations were based on methodology from the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, using techniques designed to understand what participants feel are key attributes of the Burbank community, why those attributes matter, and where there is need for improvement. Participants had the opportunity to suggest library activities that could support or improve community strength.

Three other Community Conversations took place during this planning period with a more specific focus on needs for a new Central Library. These groups targeted teens; parents, caregivers and educators; and people working in or supporting the creative economy. Input from these groups is also captured below.

Overwhelmingly, people across all populations identify common attributes to the City of Burbank:

- The small town feel (welcoming, family-oriented, easy to get around, safe, clean, City officials are accessible)
- Amenities (good schools, good libraries, parks and senior centers, lots of recreation and entertainment options, access to larger Los Angeles resources)
- Strong economy (unique shopping neighborhoods, high-paying jobs, pride in association with the media industry)

Notable characteristics with room for improvement included:

- Lack of diversity, including diversity of viewpoints that are included in decision-making
- Resistance to change
- Challenges related to being part of a large urban area: high cost of living, traffic, crime, presence of people experiencing homelessness
- Inadequate transportation options
- Disconnect between services available and community knowledge of those services

Suggested activities the Library could undertake in response:

- Provide more spaces for meeting, tutoring, group and individual work, and small business support
- Provide safe and welcoming spaces for people of various ages, for families and for individuals who may not have other options
- Engage actively with the population experiencing homelessness to connect them to services
- Curate collections and programs to support diverse viewpoints
- Provide access to tools and training to help students and workers succeed, including both basic and advanced technology used in the media industry
- Improve marketing of both Library and community services

- Offer programs that bring people together, both inside and outside Library facilities
- Support learning needs throughout the lifespan, from play-based pre-literacy through school and work years and into retirement, including job training and retraining as the economy changes
- Collaborate with community partners to expand reach, including but not limited to schools, institutions of higher education, nonprofits and businesses
- Use expertise in research and information to assist individuals and groups and help people be engaged with the community
- Continue to ensure services are free and accessible to all

Accomplishments and Statistical Trends

2017-20 Strategic Plan

Burbank Public Library's first strategic plan covered 2017-20 and contained six major objectives:

- Build community by strengthening connections with residents and local institutions and groups
- Provide collections, programs and services that meet community needs
- Support digital literacy and technology learning for all ages
- Develop staff's ability to be adaptable and responsive
- Demonstrate good stewardship of financial resources
- Modernize facilities and use of space

Major accomplishments during this time period included:

- Creating and expanding the BConnectED program, which as of this year has decreased barriers by turning student ID cards for almost 10,000 BUSD 6-12 graders into library cards.
- Developing a series of basic digital literacy classes and opening the grant-funded Spark! Digital Media Lab to supplement that with access to the more advanced technology and skills needed to succeed in the Media Capital of the World.
- Weeding and refocusing our international languages collection to respond to the demographics of the community.
- Developing and deploying manuals and training for programming and community engagement work.
- Launching PYRA, giving each staff member the chance to speak about their career path with their supervisor once a year outside the stressful time of an evaluation.
- Creating the Essential Skills documents so all staff clearly understand expectations and can be better prepared to promote.
- Researching the homelessness brochure, which today is used not just by the library but by all other city departments and many nonprofits to help connect people in need to services.
- Implementing many creative and resonant programs, from author visits to baby parties to robotics workshops to writing groups and crafts.
- Developing customer service standards, learning about journey maps and starting cross-training programs to help make sure everyone who uses the library can get their needs met without snags.
- Writing a new missions statement and core values to help us remember that while tools, techniques and audiences may change, we're still here for the same reasons: to provide access, to be welcoming, to help people learn and to protect privacy.
- Improving internal and external communication with launch of Daily Dewey and huddles and implementation of eNewsletter software, coordinated marketing campaigns, expansion of social media presence and an updated online catalog.

Statistical trends over the past three years:

- Circulation of physical library materials has dropped 12 percent, while circulation of eMaterials has increased 172 percent. Circulation of eBooks, eAudiobooks and other online material represents 5 percent of total circulation; total circulation in 2018-19 was almost 900,000 items.
- Total staffing has remained stable. Minimizing staff positions that work fewer than 10 hours per week continues to be a priority.
- Due to a City budget deficit, the Library cut six hours per week of service during the time period September 2018 through April 2019. Regular hours were restored after the City Council rescinded a hiring freeze. This impacted circulation and library visits in the 2018-19 fiscal year.
- Local funding is unchanged. Increases to the Library departmental budget have been limited to funds to cover unfunded pension liability and other costs related to benefits.
- Due to increasing costs of benefits, the percent of the Library Services Department's budget that goes to materials, supplies and services has decreased slightly. Within the discretionary portion of the Library budget, funds have been shifted to eMaterials in the past three years.
- The primary eBook provider, OverDrive, continues to be popular in Burbank. New services added in the past three years include: Flipster (digital magazines), Hoopla (eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming video and music), Universal Class, ValueLine, and the historical Los Angeles Times.
- The number of Library visits dropped 13 percent in three years, partly attributable to loss of open hours during the hiring freeze. The Buena Vista Library continues to be the most heavily used branch by a significant margin.
- Programming has evolved, with fewer programs overall but more focus on high impact programs and underserved populations.
- Public computer use and use of the Library website have declined, while wifi use has increased since a system upgrade in 2019.

Compared to other libraries in the region (Glendale, Pasadena, Santa Monica, Thousand Oaks, Torrance), Burbank:

- Is low on space (ranks 5 of 6 at .74 square feet per capita, with only Torrance lower)
- Is second in terms of percent of population registered, indicating high non-resident use (105%, second to Pasadena)
- Has a slightly larger than average collection (ranks 3 of 6 in items per capita at 3.94)
- Has moderate program attendance (ranks 4 of 6 at 0.3 programs per capita, comparable to Glendale and Pasadena)
- Has well-used public computers (ranks 1 of 6 at 1.95 uses per capita)
- Is moderately well-funded locally (ranks 3 of 6 at \$62.68 per capita, comparable to Thousand Oaks)
- Has average annual circulation (ranks 3 of 6 at 8.4 per capita, comparable to Pasadena and Torrance)
- Is moderately well-staffed (ranks 3 of 6 at 0.60 staff FTE per 1,000 population, slightly ahead of Thousand Oaks and Torrance)

Trends Research

A team of staff members reviewed library and non-library publications to identify relevant trends in several areas:

- Children's and teen services
- Adult services, reader engagement and workforce development
- User services: Barriers to service, inclusion
- Collection trends, including the Library of Things, and improved access to collections
- Digital literacy and online learning

This research revealed the following major trends and issues that will affect Burbank and other public libraries in the coming years:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion – diversity in publishing; challenges to LGBTQ material and drag queen storytimes; multi-lingual collections, programs and services; removing barriers to service like fines; improving accessibility of physical and online spaces; unconscious bias and cultural competency training
- New forms of learning – social and emotional learning for children; gamification; online and distance education; training in brief snippets; video as a form of communication
- Workforce and economy – STEM and STEAM starting from birth; libraries as part of the sharing economy; need for constant retraining; rise of gig economy and independent contractors in need of work spaces; demand for space for teleconferencing, business meetings, business counseling
- Services across ages – parent and family engagement with early learning; participation of patrons (especially teens) in developing library services; intergenerational programming
- Community building – community partnerships; connecting patrons with services; libraries as social services providers and homeless shelters; promoting civic engagement (voting, Census, neutral place to discuss challenging issues)
- Reading – continued value of physical books; Millennials as most avid library users; challenging relationship between publishers and libraries for eBooks; rise in popularity of audiobooks; celebrity book clubs and social media-based reader communities
- Technology – basic computer access still needed; advanced technology offerings (digital media) an increasing expectation; apps and mobile access; ability to fully use the library digitally if desired; makerspaces, digital media labs and production studios; open data and Smart Cities
- Collection – growing demand for eCollections while maintaining physical collections; Library of Things (tools, ties, laptops, bicycles, appliances, musical instruments, media production equipment)
- Spaces – zones for quiet or loud; individual or group work; children, teens and adults; books and technology; connecting interior and exterior spaces; modular furniture/allowing patrons to create their own spaces
- Staff – ever-changing demands; need for constant training; high community expectations to have solutions to societal concerns; need for mediation, de-escalation skills

Staff Input

All staff participated in an appreciative interview activity in fall 2019. In teams of two, staff interviewed each other about times when they felt their skills were valued and their work had impact. Each staff member also had the chance to express three wishes that would help Burbank Public Library achieve more of these positive moments in the future.

Key wishes from appreciative interviews:

Buildings, spaces, staffing & funding

- New Central Library; better staff and public parking (Central)
- More variety of seating; updated furniture
- More spaces for group work or meetings; zoned quiet and loud areas
- Teen spaces with walls; imaginative play spaces for children
- More staff; more skilled staff; less staff turnover
- Time for staff to collaborate with each other
- More open hours
- Improved accessibility in facilities; cleaner facilities
- More funding for spaces, staff positions, programs

Programs, collections, technology & services

- Ability to offer more programs; programs for underserved populations; diverse programs; out-of-the-ordinary programs
- Share the passion of reading; more and more varied readers advisory
- Bigger budget for eBooks; bigger budget for collection; improved access to collection via signage
- Social worker; security guards; resources for people experiencing homelessness
- More outreach and activities outside the building; bookmobile or book bike; improve relationships with community partners and other City departments
- More technology training for public; makerspace at BV
- Coffee cart; passport services; book-making machine
- More marketing and social media; efforts to get non-users into the library
- Streamlined way to get a card and check out online library card application
- Lend musical instruments

Internal culture/staff development

- Learn more about each other; more ways for people at all levels to express ideas
- Supervisors listen better; supervisors know all their staff's strengths; increase communication
- Respect for expertise; respect for experience
- Flexible schedules
- Flexibility in trying new things; being open minded

- Supervisors express appreciation; share positive comment cards; staff recognize each other
- Cross-training; working beyond job description; more promotional opportunities
- Morale activities and events
- Training in new skills; training on career paths for librarians
- Continue bonding everyone as one staff, not three branches

Customer service

- All staff make every patron feel welcome; friendlier staff
- Staff who speak all the languages our patrons do; digital translation options at service points
- Time to engage with each person; opportunities to learn more about patrons
- Consistency of user experience at all branches
- Ability to know what impact we're having
- Open-minded and flexible staff; less bouncing of patrons back and forth between services points
- A welcome kit for newcomers
- More staff at service points to provide individualized attention
- Fewer hours each staff member has to be on-desk so they can provide other services
- Training in how to deal with situations like fines and authority to make decisions
- Safe, stress-free environment; fewer angry patrons