



## **Strategic Plan, 2021-2025**



## **Vision Statement**

The residents of the Mercer area value social connectedness and a strong sense of community; children's literacy; an informed citizenry; a diverse and healthy local economy; and lifelong learning and engagement. We recognize the importance of reading and other media for personal enrichment, professional development, and recreation. We understand that local government, businesses, and organizations provide important services that improve the quality of life for everyone in the Mercer community.

Our vision is of a community that values the Mercer Public Library as a partner that provides valuable services to benefit Mercer-area residents, property owners, and visitors; supports families and promotes the Mercer community as a place for children to reach their potential; helps seniors stay mentally and socially engaged; and provides resources to local businesses and organizations that assist their efforts in building a strong and sustainable local economy.

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## Introduction

In 2013, the Mercer Public Library completed a major renovation and expansion project that doubled the size of the library, adding a meeting room, children's room, staff office, and more area in the main library for shelving and seating. Planning for that project began prior to 2007, when the library board developed a strategic plan and goals for a building expansion and fundraising plan.

Since the completion of the 2013 expansion, the Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees has been creating annual goals to better focus their efforts and the activities of the library staff. However, the board has not completed a strategic planning process to guide the long-term development of the library since at least 2007.

All public libraries face a rapidly changing environment due not only to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, but also due to changing community needs brought about by the advent of digital media and changing societal norms. Most libraries in Wisconsin have seen changes in use in recent years, including rising attendance at library programs, fewer general library visits, circulation figures that peaked during the economic recession in 2009, and a rising demand for access to digital services and content.<sup>1</sup>

The Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees recognizes that libraries must think strategically in order to make best use of their resources to meet the needs of their communities. To achieve that goal, the board began a strategic planning process in the spring of 2020 to develop a five-year strategic plan.

## Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees

Members of the Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees and staff that participated in the strategic planning process included:

- Judy Bugni, President
- Chad McGrath, Vice-President
- Dorothy Bangle, Treasurer
- Mike Nelson, Secretary (began board term January 2021)
- Nichole Christoferson, Mercer School representative (began board term July 2021)
- Deanna Pierpont
- Hedda Patzke
- James Wahner (ended board term December 2020)
- Susan Guenard (Mercer School representative, ended board term June 2021)
- Opal Roberts, Mercer Town Board liaison
- Teresa Schmidt, Library director

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<sup>1</sup> "By The Book: How Wisconsin's Libraries are adapting in 2020 and beyond," Wisconsin Policy Forum, February 2020, <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/by-the-book-how-wisconsins-libraries-are-adapting-in-2020-and-beyond/>

## **Strategic Planning Themes**

During the strategic planning process, the Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees identified four main themes that will guide the strategic growth of the library during the next five years: partnerships and connections, library usage, access to library services, and organizational health.

### **Partnerships and Connections**

The library is central to the success of Mercer and the surrounding area, and the Mercer community is central to the library's success. We will work to create and strengthen partnerships in order to build connections and increase both the library and its partners' capacities.

### **Library Usage**

The Mercer Public Library has a strong and dedicated community of library users who love the library's services and the staff. We will develop outreach projects and policies to expand and strengthen the user base of the Mercer Public Library, providing services to benefit all members of the Mercer community.

### **Access to Library Services**

The Mercer Public Library's mission is to provide quality materials and services that fulfill educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community. We will work to increase access to library services, identify barriers to library access, and remove those barriers where they exist.

### **Organizational Health**

We are dedicated to the cultural, educational, and fiscal health of our community and our library. We will invest and carefully plan for the library's future in order to make sure that our staffing, space, collections, and services can continue to meet the needs of the Mercer community.

## Strategic Planning Data

The library board examined several sources of data and information about the library's existing services and perceptions in the community, including:

- Annual report data: All public libraries in Wisconsin are required to submit an annual report to the Department of Public Instruction. A summary of the Mercer Library's annual report data from 1999 to 2020 is included in **Appendix B**.
- Survey & survey responses: The library board released a survey to members of the Mercer Community in June 2020. The survey included questions about community members' perceptions of the library and desired library services. The library received 124 responses to the survey. A copy of the survey is included in **Appendix C**, and a summary of the survey results is included in **Appendix D**.
- Local demographic data and library comparative data: The library board reviewed the [Iron County Asset-Based Community Development \(ABCD\) Strategy](#) prepared by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in October 2017, which provided insights on community demographics, economic characteristics, and other assets in the community. The board also examined [Wisconsin Public Library Service Data](#) collected by the Department of Public Instruction from the annual reports of Wisconsin's public libraries. The board considered comparable data from libraries in the Northern Waters Library Service, libraries with service populations between 1000 and 2000, and libraries in other "rural remote" communities in Wisconsin.
- Board member survey: Board members responded to a survey issued by consultant Melissa McLimans from the Wisconsin Library Service (WiLS), which asked board members to identify opportunities, challenges, community needs, changing roles of the library in the community, and specific ideas for library activities. A summary of those responses is included in **Appendix E**.
- Other information: The library board also reviewed the [Wisconsin Public Library Standards, Inclusive Services Assessment and Guide for Wisconsin Public Libraries](#), and [Wisconsin Geography Profile](#) from the 2017 American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census.

## **Strategic Planning Process**

The Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees began the strategic planning process in January 2020. The process began with the library director and board collecting demographic data about the Mercer community and reviewing the library's mission statement. In June 2020, the board released a survey to the Mercer community for information about their impressions and use of the library.

In August 2020, the library board reviewed the survey results and examined Wisconsin Public Library Service Data from our library and comparable libraries selected by location, community demographic, and service population. Board members also responded to a survey issued by our strategic planning consultant, Melissa McLimans from the Wisconsin Library Service (WiLS).

On September 15, 2020, the Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees and library director Teresa Schmidt met with McLimans for a strategic planning workshop. McLimans assisted the board with reviewing goal statements, developing objectives and activities, and identifying emerging themes related to library service in Mercer. After the event, McLimans prepared a themes document summarizing the Board's work at the session. This document became the first draft of our library strategic plan.



## 2021-2025 Strategic Goals

Within each of the four Strategic Planning Themes identified by the library board – Partnerships and Connections, Library Usage, Access, and Organizational Health – the board developed a set of goals and desired outcomes. These goals are focused on the benefits that the Mercer community will see because of the services provided by the Mercer Public Library. These goals were drafted to align with the Mercer Library’s Mission and Goals Statement (Appendix A).

### 1. Partnerships and Connections

The library is central to the success of Mercer and the surrounding area, and the Mercer community is central to the library’s success. We will work to create and strengthen partnerships in order to build connections and increase both the library and its partners’ capacities.

**Goal 1.1:** The Mercer Public Library will demonstrate a commitment to children’s literacy, school readiness, and information literacy by partnering with Mercer School, local families, and other agencies that promote early-childhood education. Mercer children will improve their school readiness by attending library programs. Mercer parents and caregivers will be empowered to help their children build early literacy skills with early literacy information and ideas provided by the library.

**Goal 1.2:** The Mercer Public Library and the Mercer Historical Society will leverage each other’s strengths to provide access to and preservation of local history materials.

**Goal 1.3:** The Mercer Public Library will pursue strategic partnerships with local businesses and business organizations to support their needs and support a healthy and diverse local economy.

**Goal 1.4:** The Mercer Public Library will support local clubs and organizations as key partners towards improving quality of life for Mercer area residents. The library will also partner with local clubs and civic organizations to provide a diverse selection of programs for the community.

**Goal 1.5:** The Mercer Public Library will strengthen our relationship with town and county elected officials and departments. We will support our town and county governments with information services, meeting room space, and other services as requested.

### 2. Library Usage

The Mercer Public Library has a strong and dedicated community of library users who love the library’s services and the staff. We will develop outreach projects and policies to expand and strengthen the user base of the Mercer Public Library, providing services to benefit all members of the Mercer community.

**Goal 2.1:** The Mercer Public Library will increase use of the library by children, teens, and families through targeted programming, interactive learning activities, and interesting spaces.

**Goal 2.2:** The Mercer Public Library will increase use of the library by non-senior adults.

**Goal 2.3:** The Mercer Public Library will increase use by vacationers, visitors, and part time residents.

**Goal 2.4:** The Mercer Library will continue to provide services that address the information needs of seniors and will offer programs and resources that help seniors stay mentally and socially engaged.

**Goal 2.5:** The Mercer Library marketing and communication efforts will reach more community members, especially those that do not regularly use the library, to increase awareness about all that the library provides and promote the idea that the library is a place for anyone and everyone.

**Goal 2.6:** The Mercer Library will see increased use of its special collections and equipment, including the Memory Lab.

### **3. Access**

The Mercer Public Library's mission is to provide quality materials and services that fulfill educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community. We will work to increase access to library services, identify barriers to library access, and remove those barriers where they exist.

**Goal 3.1:** The Mercer Library will adjust its operating schedule to meet the needs of the greatest number of users with the resources available.

**Goal 3.2:** The Mercer Library will develop a space and feasibility plan for the library to examine the community's need for changed and/or increased library space(s) now and in the future.

**Goal 3.3:** Mercer Library patrons will experience shorter wait times for popular materials. The library will increase the local use of materials owned by MPL.

**Goal 3.4:** Mercer-area residents with limited access to transportation will have several ways to obtain library services.

### **4. Organizational Health**

We are dedicated to the cultural, educational, and fiscal health of our community and our library. We will invest and carefully plan for the library's future in order to make sure that our staffing, space, collections, and services can continue to meet the needs of the Mercer community.

**Goal 4.1:** Evaluate positions, resources, and the organizational structure of the library to ensure that the needs of the community continue to be met.

**Goal 4.2:** Develop and implement advocacy and funding strategies needed to realize a relevant and modern library for the community. Make responsible use of all current revenue sources and seek new revenue sources as appropriate. Increase library champions that will advocate for investing in the Mercer Public Library as a clear way to invest in Mercer.

**Goal 4.3:** Expand the number of library volunteers by increasing collaboration with the Friends of the Library and recruiting other community members.

**Goal 4.4:** Review the Wisconsin Public Library Standards annually to determine the Mercer Public Library's level of service and identify any areas of improvement needed.

## 2021-2025 Objectives and Activities

To achieve the Mercer Public Library's 2021 Strategic Goals, the library board has identified objectives and initiatives that align the library's activities with its desired outcomes. The library director and board of trustees will review these objectives and activities at least annually for inclusion in the library's annual goals and plan of service. These goals and activities are listed in chart form in **Appendix F**.

### 1. Partnerships and Connections

#### GOAL 1.1: Improved children's literacy and school readiness

The Mercer Public Library will demonstrate a commitment to children's literacy, school readiness, and information literacy by partnering with Mercer School, local families, and other agencies that promote early-childhood education. Mercer children will improve their school readiness by attending library programs. Mercer parents and caregivers will be empowered to help their children build early literacy skills with early literacy information and ideas provided by the library.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL will increase the number of library programs and services offered for children and families and increase attendance at those programs.

- Measures: circulation statistics for children's library materials, children's program attendance statistics, changing attitudes on user and non-user surveys, and improvement in school readiness for students entering Mercer School.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will see increased participation in summer reading programs by Mercer School students. MPL will increase the number of outreach programs held at Mercer School.

- Measures: number of registrations for summer reading programs, and a decrease in "summer slide" in reading skills for program participants.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** MPL will employ staff with dedicated time for children, teen, and family programming and services.

- Measures: By 2025, Mercer Library will have a staff member whose job description specifically includes children's librarian services.

#### Activities:

- Re-launch the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten (1Kb4K) program using the Beanstack online reading challenge platform. Partner with area healthcare providers, social services, hospitals, Head Start, and Mercer School's preschool program to promote the program to Mercer-area families. [2022]
  - As part of the 1Kb4K promotion, provide outreach to families that includes early literacy education for caregivers. [2022]

- Provide weekly or bi-monthly early literacy programming such as story times for preschoolers, lap sit programs, and other programs for young children. [2023]
- Provide after-school resources and programming for school-aged children, such as after-school programming and a tutoring program.
  - Provide at least one after-school program per month. [Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.]
  - Examine the feasibility of a volunteer-led after-school tutoring program. [Evaluate in 2021-2022. If feasible, begin this program for the 2022-2023 school year.]
- Enhance the resources available to Mercer School students by ensuring that Mercer School staff are aware of the services that the library can provide. Invite school staff to the library for informational presentations, including an annual staff lunch sponsored by the Friends of the Library. [Fall 2021 and ongoing]
- Provide information literacy instruction, collaborative projects, inter-library loan and access to digital resources, and other services to Mercer School staff and students on request. [Fall 2022 and ongoing.]
- Increase outreach efforts to Mercer School to ensure that all students have a library card and promote the use of the Sora reading app. Use “Library Card Sign-up Month” promotional materials from ALA and provide outreach materials to Mercer School. [Annually in September.]
- Provide library staff for children’s services by utilizing potential partnerships, part-time staff, reassignment of current staff, or new funding sources. [2023-2025]
  - Examine the potential for partnerships with Mercer School or with other area libraries to share children’s services staff.
  - Consider starting with a summer-term children’s librarian or library aide.
  - Explore funding sources for additional staff including municipal funding, grant opportunities, or Friends of the Library funding.

### **GOAL 1.2: Access to Local History**

The Mercer Public Library and the Mercer Area Historical Society (MAHS) will leverage each other’s strengths to provide access to and preservation of local history materials.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL will develop a local history website at mercerhistory.org and will include at least 10 artifacts or documents on that site by December 31, 2023.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will develop guides and finding aids to local history material archived at MPL.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** MPL and MAHS will collaborate on at least one activity, event, or archive/digitization project each year, and utilize other partnerships with area historical societies and Mercer School to provide more access to historical resources when available.

**Activities:**

- Establish a liaison position to facilitate communication between the library and the Historical Society. [2022]
- Develop a local history website at mercerhistory.org and include at least 10 artifacts or documents on that site by December 31, 2024. [2024]
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of the library and the historical society to avoid duplication of effort and overlap of services. [2022]
- Develop digitization best practices and provide information and resources for those engaging in digitization projects of local history materials owned by the Historical Society and by others in the community. [2022]
- Focus the library's historical document collection projects on high-interest and at-risk materials. Prioritize items for digitization based on access needs and risk of deterioration. [2021, as part of the development of the mercerhistory.org website] Set reasonable goals to continue to add resources to that site in future years. [2023]
- Consider storage needs for physical items and develop a plan for the storage of local history items retained by the library. [2023]
- Develop local history guides of high interest to residents and visitors, such as a guide to current and former resorts in the area. [2023]
- Develop collaborative programming with the Historical Society. Ideas include a Mercer History Day or other history-related events. [2024 and beyond]

**GOAL 1.3: Improved partnerships with local businesses**

The Mercer Public Library will pursue strategic partnerships with local businesses and business organizations to support their needs and support a healthy and diverse local economy.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Business owners will view the library as a valuable resource partner.

- Measures: MPL will issue an annual or biennial survey to business owners and Chamber of Commerce members and will observe improvement in the number of respondents who view the library favorably.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will offer programming or services for business owners and will promote those activities to local business owners at least once per year.

**Activities:**

- Interview and/or survey local business owners to better understand needs of the community. [Winter 2022-2023]
- Partner with the Iron County Development Zone and the Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce to provide programming and support for local businesses.
  - Evaluate past programs (business lunch events, business mentorship program, etc.) and develop future programming for business owners based on local business needs. [2022]

- Become a more active participant in Chamber of Commerce activities. [2023]
- Share information on library services and on information topics of interest with business owners using Chamber newsletters and other communication. [2023 and ongoing]
- Directly support local businesses with library activities
  - Embrace the “library beyond the library” idea, or the idea that library activities can be outside the library, and host library-sponsored events at local businesses. The goal of these events is to increase visibility of library services, provide programs of interest to the community, and increase patronage of local businesses. Examples of this programming include the “Grown-Up Story Hour” series or Live After 5 partnerships. [2021 and ongoing]
  - Host events at the library that highlight local businesses and organizations, including library programs that connect residents with local businesses and other experts. Provide events that invite business owners and employees to share their expertise with the public. [2024 and ongoing] Ideas include:
    - Fishing workshops sponsored by local bait shops and fishing guides
    - Bike rodeo in partnership with first responders and local bike-related businesses and organizations
    - Kayak and canoeing safety
    - “Home Works” series about construction and home systems
  - (Examples include the HomeWorks program series held in 2019 and the Community Chat series.) [2023 and ongoing]
  - Purchase products and services locally whenever possible. [Ongoing]

#### **GOAL 1.4: Partnerships with local organizations**

The Mercer Public Library will support local clubs and organizations as key partners towards improving quality of life for Mercer area residents. The library will also partner with local clubs and civic organizations to provide a diverse selection of programs for the community.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Nonprofit and community service organizations will view the library as an important and reliable partner that helps them achieve their organizational goals.

- Measure: MPL will survey nonprofit and community service organizations and will measure improvement in the number of respondents who view the library favorably.

#### **Activities:**

- Survey nonprofit and community organizations to ask about service needs and library impressions. Include these questions in the business survey. (See Goal 1.3) [2022]
- Support area non-profit and other organizations by providing reduced-cost copy and fax services, technical assistance, and information programs to meet their organizational needs. [Ongoing]

- Promote library services to organizations who might not be aware of them. [2022 and ongoing]
- Partner with area organizations such as the Senior Center, Historical Society, gardening club, trails and recreation groups, the Mercer Senior Center and ADRC, and others to promote a more diverse selection of programs for the community. [Ongoing]
- Maintain a listing of local organizations and contact information to assist with communication between groups and with local government and residents. [2022/2023]

### **GOAL 1.5: Strong relationships with local government**

The Mercer Public Library will strengthen our relationship with town and county elected officials and departments. We will support our town and county governments with information services, meeting room space, and other services as requested.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Local elected officials will gain an understanding of library services, funding, and resources.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** The library will assist local government in communicating with area residents and property owners about local government issues and about the services available to the community.

#### **Activities:**

- Share information about the Mercer Library with elected officials, including annual report summaries to the town and county board, Friends of the Library annual letter/membership information, and the library’s strategic plan. [2022 and ongoing]
- Create an informational brochure that includes annual report statistics. Include information about services that the library can provide for local governments and agencies, including reference services. Share with town and county elected officials and the general public. [2022 and ongoing]
- Invite newly elected officials to the library for a tour and to share library service data. Alternatively, schedule appointments with newly elected officials during their office hours to discuss the library’s services and needs. [2022 and ongoing]
- Have the library director attend at least four town or county board meetings each year. [Ongoing]
- Invite Local government officials to an annual library open house hosted by the library and the Friends of the Library. [2021 and ongoing]
- Provide technical and informational support to local governments as requested. [Ongoing]
- Host county departments for office hours, bringing services closer to Mercer residents. [2023 and ongoing]
- Host events like the “Community Chat” series to help residents understand what services are available to them. Ensure that library staff are informed about local, county, and state government services so they can assist residents and property owners with accessing those resources. [2021 and ongoing]



- Participate in local emergency planning to ensure that the resources of the library are available to local government and the community when needed. [As needed]

## 2. Library Usage

### GOAL 2.1: Increased library use by children, teens, and families

The Mercer Public Library will increase use of the library by children, teens, and families through targeted programming, interactive learning activities, and interesting spaces.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL will see an increase in the number of cardholders who are local residents under the age of 18.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will see an increase in circulation of materials for children and teens.

#### Activities:

- Publicize information about ‘family-friendly’ library policies such as high lending limits and fine-free lending. [Ongoing]
- Develop interactive learning opportunities in the community, such as Story Walks on local trails or in business storefronts, to increase interest in reading and in the library. [Winter 2021 and ongoing]
- Provide regular programs for school-aged children like story times, craft activities, and movies. Include Saturday and/or evening events to appeal to working families. Record and evaluate attendance at family events to identify preferences for the programs and schedule offered. [2022 and ongoing]
- Host at least two large family-oriented events each year. Ideas include an Earth Day Fair, Halloween Trunk-or-Treat, pet-related events, etc. [2021 and ongoing]
- Develop programs that build connections between generations such as mentoring programs, Reading Buddies, tutoring, Big Brother/Sister programs, Foster Grandparents, etc. [2024] [Also see Goal 1.1]

### GOAL 2.2: Increased library use by non-senior adults

The Mercer Public Library will increase use of the library by non-senior adults.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Non-senior adults will utilize library resources and view the library favorably as measured on annual patron and community surveys.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will offer programming for new adults and will see increased attendance at all library programs by non-senior adults.

#### Activities:

- Provide programming that appeals to the 20- to 35-year-old demographic. Ideas include career information, “new adult” programming, programs for parents, adult craft workshops, game nights, etc. [2023]
- Develop community read programs that focus on topics of interest to non-senior adults. [2024]

- Provide culturally diverse programming to meet the needs of all Mercer-area residents, property owners, and visitors. [2023 and ongoing]

### **GOAL 2.3: Increased library use by visitors**

The Mercer Public Library will increase use by vacationers, visitors, and part time residents.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Vacationers and part-time residents will be aware of the services and resources available to them from the Mercer Library and will make use of those services.

**Activities:**

- Ensure that the library’s collection development policies and procedures help to match collections and services with popular leisure activities and offer high-interest materials for leisure reading and viewing. [Ongoing]
- Provide marketing materials to area resorts and motels and through the Chamber of Commerce and Turtle Flambeau Flowage Association. Provide marketing materials to area real estate agents. [2022]

### **GOAL 2.4: Continue engagement with seniors and older adults**

The Mercer Library will continue to provide services that address the information needs of seniors and older adults and will offer programs and resources that help them stay mentally and socially engaged.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Older residents and visitors to the Mercer area will utilize the library as a source of information, social connectedness, leisure activities, and lifelong learning.

**Activities:**

- Provide introductory classes on technology topics, social media, and other online resources that are useful to older adults. [Ongoing]
- Provide enrichment classes of interest to seniors and older adults, including art, cooking, crafts, and book clubs. [Ongoing]
- At least three times per year, host events that offer seniors and other adults social experiences in a setting that is welcoming to all. Previous events that had high appeal for this demographic included a November soup lunch, craft materials swap, holiday cookie exchange, and knitting group. [Ongoing]

### **GOAL 2.5: Increased awareness of library services**

The Mercer Library marketing and communication efforts will reach more community members, especially those that do not regularly use the library, to increase awareness about all that the library provides and promote that the library is a place for anyone and everyone.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Non-library users will have a favorable opinion of the library as measured on annual community surveys.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will increase the number of library cardholders and users by utilizing marketing and outreach in the community.

**Possible Activities:**

- Develop a media plan for the library that utilizes traditional and new media to reach specific audiences.
  - Utilize new media to promote library services to young adults and new adults. Offer incentives like contests to increase library awareness. [2023]
  - Promote Wisconsin's Digital Library and other online resources to non-senior adults. Promote Gale Courses and other career-related resources. [2022 and ongoing]
  - Promote the outdoor reading area to remote workers and others. [2022 and ongoing]
  - Develop a rack card that can be shared at the Mercer Chamber of Commerce and in other community locations. [2022]
  - Create a "Welcome Packet" for new residents and property owners. Partner with real estate agents, local businesses, and Chamber for distribution. [2023] [See also: Goal 2.3]
- Host an annual spring open house with door prizes. (This event should be in addition to fundraising events conducted by the Friends of the Library.) Invite local government officials and other important community figures. Advertise the event to the entire community. [2022]
- Perform outreach in the community to improve perception of the library.
  - Offer presentations to local organizations. [2022]
  - The director, board members, and Friends of the Library members will represent the library at community events. [Ongoing]
- Strengthen our relationship with the Mercer Chamber of Commerce.
  - Maintain our membership in the Chamber.
  - Share library news and events with the Chamber to be included in their marketing to local businesses and residents. [Ongoing]
  - Encourage library staff and board members to volunteer at Chamber events and represent the library in community activities. [Ongoing]
- Collect data to gain a strong understanding of "infrequent or never" library users. Modify library marketing, collections, and services to best meet their needs. Understand the different segments of the population and develop messaging to match.
  - Conduct interviews with non-users [2023]
  - Conduct annual community perception surveys [2022 and annually]
- Utilize a variety of local media to promote library programs and services.
  - Investigate local radio offerings to determine what stations and features might be most beneficial for reaching non-library users. Consider providing a regular radio segment on library activities or on information literacy topics of general interest. [2023]

- Maintain relationships with local newspapers and other local media who help promote library activities. [Ongoing]
- Utilize social media and email marketing to share events information. [Ongoing]
- Consider new media such as podcasts to share more in-depth library information. [2023]
- Consider outreach programs to the Iron County Jail either by library staff or by volunteers and Friends of the Library. [2024]

**GOAL 2.6: Increased use of in-library equipment and special collections**

The Mercer Library will see increased use of its special collections and equipment, including the Memory Lab.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** The community will be aware of the non-traditional services and equipment available at MPL, including unique lending items like our telescope, Memory Lab equipment, tech help services, and other resources. MPL will see an increase in the circulation of these items and in use of for the Memory Lab.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Members of the community and of the Friends of the Library will suggest new items and services for MPL to provide.

**Activities:**

- Develop memory lab marketing materials, including how-to videos. Provide programming to promote and educate users on the available memory lab equipment. [2021/2022]
- Develop an in-library display of “Library of Things” items that can be checked out. [2021]
- Develop a “wish list” of items to add to the library’s memory lab equipment or library of things. Accept suggestions for the list from the public, staff, and Friends of the Library. Make the list available in the library and online for people who would like to donate funding or items. [2022]

### 3. Access

#### **GOAL 3.1: Library operating hours aligned with community needs**

The Mercer Library will adjust its operating schedule to meet the needs of the greatest number of users with the resources available.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** The library director and board of trustees will understand the library usage patterns of MPL patrons and will adjust services to match demand.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL operating hours will provide a consistent schedule that aligns with the needs of the community, resulting in more visitors to the library.

**Activities:**

- Collect data to better understand library usage during open hours. Evaluate patterns of use by time and by day of the week. [2021]
- Perform an examination of library hours to ensure they match our community's needs. Consider adjusting service hours (including Saturdays, early morning hours, and/or evening hours) to increase library usage. [2022]

#### **GOAL 3.2: Library space aligned with user needs**

The Mercer Library will develop a space and feasibility plan for the library to examine the community's need for changed and/or increased library space(s) now and in the future.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** By 2025, MPL will develop an assessment of library space needs and a feasibility plan for meeting those needs.

**Activities:**

- Examine demand for meeting rooms by tracking meeting room use, including the number of reservations, popular meeting room times, and the type of use. [2023]
- Examine storage space needs, including space needs for historical items and/or digitization. [2022]

#### **GOAL 3.3: Increased use of popular materials**

Mercer Library patrons will experience shorter wait times for popular materials. The library will increase the local use of materials owned by MPL.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL patrons will have a clear understanding of how to use the resources of the Northern Waters Library Network, place holds, use inter-library loan services, and request items for purchase.

- Measures: MPL will improve its net lender ratio from **x:x** to at least **y:x** by 2025.

**Activities:**

- Educate patrons on placing holds in the library's online catalog and in the digital collection. [2021 and ongoing]

- Promote the new online catalog and the rebranding of the Merlin Consortium as the Northern Waters Library Network. [2021]
- Update the MPL website to utilize the features of the new NWLN catalog that promote browsing and discovery of library materials. [2021]
- Provide an easy way for patrons to recommend materials for purchase, including an online form on the library's website and catalog. [2022]

### **GOAL 3.4: Patrons with limited transportation are able to access library materials and services**

Mercer-area residents with limited access to transportation will have several ways to obtain library services.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL will increase outreach services and utilize creative solutions to meet the needs of community members who are unable to visit the library or find accessing the library difficult.

#### **Activities:**

- Provide materials and instruction on the use of online library services. [Ongoing]
- Promote improved broadband access for the Iron County community. [??]
- Participate in conversations with town/county about public transportation services and options. [??]
- Develop methods of delivering library materials into the community – “Bring the library to the people.” Ideas include:
  - Rotating collections at low-income apartments in the area
  - Provide services or delivery of library materials in conjunction with senior center
  - In partnership with the Friends of the Library, stock Little Free Libraries at points in the community like the Senior Center, Carow Park, and Community Garden / Food Pantry / Town Hall. [2022]

## **4. Organizational Health**

### **GOAL 4.1: Library resource allocation will align with the needs of the community**

Evaluate positions, resources, and the organizational structure of the library to ensure that the needs of the community continue to be met.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL collection development spending will align with circulation trends. As part of the annual summary report provided to the library board, the director shall provide information on the percent of funds spent on different material types (books, audiobooks, DVDs, etc.) and on the circulation of those material types. The director and board will set annual collection development budgets to align with circulation and community needs.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** The MPL director and board will examine job descriptions and duties of the director, staff, and volunteers and may reassign tasks in order to align daily activities towards achieving the library's overall goals.

**Activities:**

- Examine circulation trends and adjust services and collection development as format preferences and needs change. [Spring 2022]
- Evaluate the use of staff and volunteer time. Reallocate duties to ensure that the library can achieve its desired outcomes. [2023]
- Continue to focus on providing excellent customer service. Provide customer service training to library staff and volunteers who work at the service desk. [2023]

**GOAL 4.2: Advocacy and funding strategies will provide adequate resources for the library**

Develop and implement advocacy and funding strategies needed to realize a relevant and modern library for the community. Make responsible use of all current revenue sources and seek new revenue sources as appropriate. Increase library champions that will advocate for investing in the Mercer Public Library as a clear way to invest in Mercer.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MPL will enjoy broad support from the community and from local funding agencies.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** MPL will have a network of supporters that are educated on funding issues and who communicate library needs to others in the community.

**Activities:**

- Educate Friends of the Library members and other library supporters on library funding issues. Encourage library supporters to act as library advocates. Develop an intentional advocacy education plan for Friends of the Library members. [2023]
- Collect information about the positive effects a strong library has on its community. Use press releases, library newsletters, Friends of the Library communications, and social media to share this information with the community. [2024]
- Maintain good relationships with town board and county board members. Provide town and county elected officials with information on library funding issues and needs. [Ongoing] *See also Goal 1.5.*
- Seek new revenue sources as appropriate. [Ongoing]
- Conduct an annual user/community survey to determine what “a relevant and modern library” means to the Mercer community and understand general opinions about the library. [Annually beginning 2023]

**Goal 4.3: The library will have a strong group of volunteers to supplement staff services.**

Expand the number of library volunteers by increasing collaboration with the Friends of the Library and recruiting other community members.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** The library will have a sufficient number of trained volunteers who can assist with circulation services (a.k.a. “working the desk”), particularly during evening and weekend hours, and volunteers to assist with routine library maintenance projects like shelf reading and covering new books.

**Activities:**

- Hold volunteer recruitment and training events. [2022]
- Hold an annual volunteer meeting and training. [Ongoing]
- Share information about supporting the library and volunteering with new library cardholders in a welcome packet. [2021]

**Goal 4.4: The library will utilize the Wisconsin Public Library Standards as an ongoing planning and evaluation tool**

Review the Wisconsin Public Library Standards annually to determine the Mercer Public Library’s level of service and identify any areas of improvement needed.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** The Mercer Library Board of Trustees and library staff will understand the facets of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards and how they relate to providing quality library service.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** The Mercer Public Library Board of Trustees will annually review MPL’s performance as measured by the Wisconsin Public Library Standards, will identify any needed service improvements, and will incorporate goals for improvement into the library’s annual goals.

**Activities:**

- The Mercer Library Board of Trustees will review their yearly schedule and develop a routine for continuous evaluation and improvement. The board schedule will include the annual election of board officers, an annual performance review of the library director, ongoing review of library policy, annual budget review and planning, annual report review and approval, and an annual review of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards. [2022 and ongoing]
- At the May Board of Trustees meeting, the library director will provide the board with a review of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards, indicating the level of service provided by the Mercer Library and any areas of concern. [2022 and ongoing]
- Begin a strategic planning process to develop future strategic plans. [2025]