DATA REVIEW SUMMARY
SUN PRAIRIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Sun Prairie, WI
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prepared by
Anders C. Dahlgren
Library Planning Associates, Inc.

In support of the FEH / LPA study to identify the space needs of the Sun Prairie Public Library and expansion strategies to address the identified needs, the study team engaged in a variety of data gathering and data review efforts. This short report summarizes the findings that emerged from that review. The full documents are posted to the project page at the library's web site for board members, task force members and others who may want to access the full reports.

Specifically, the following studies were completed:
- projection of the library's service population to the year 2040
- review of Wisconsin public library standards
- review of national trends in library service
- review of local trends in library service
- peer comparative / trendline analysis

All of these studies contribute to an understanding of prospective future resource and service inventory goals for the library, which in turn determine the library's space needs.

Service population projection

A critical aspect of planning future public library service has to do with understanding how the library's service community is going to change. Typically, a facilities planning effort seeks to identify service goals and space requirements to meet the community's needs over a twenty year planning horizon, acknowledging that expansion projects usually only come around once every generation or so. While it may be difficult, if not impossible, to make accurate forecasts that far out, the impetus to optimize the community's return on its capital investment moves local planners to try to anticipate that unknowable future.

The library's future service population is the foundation of understanding how the community is changing. Is the community growing? not growing? How fast is the rate of growth / no growth? A library will a different posture with regard to future service goals based on the answers to these questions. These questions will be complemented by a host of other questions about the community – is the community aging? seeing an influx of young families? Is the ethnic composition of the community changing? – all of which will also impact the selection of future resource and service inventory goals. But at the heart of it all is an understanding of the library's future service population.

In Wisconsin, each public library serves a "blended" community. Each library is established by one or more units of local government, and the population of that unit(s) becomes the library's primary service population. By virtue of the library's membership in and participation in the area's library system, however, the library also serves a broader, extended population. While the specific protocols governing

this vary slightly in different parts of the state and among different library systems, most of the libraries in the state receive funding from county or system sources to open their doors and offer service to the residents of those parts of the county that do not directly support a public library.

The Wisconsin state library agency has long sought to acknowledge this reality by annually calculating each library's "de facto" or true service population. Usually this involves starting with the each library's primary service population, then allocating the population of the outlying county to the to the libraries within the county. The state agency does this using a formula that relies heavily on the circulation patterns of those outlying county residents.

In 2015, Sun Prairie's municipal population was reported at 31,810. The state library agency estimated that there were 93,907 residents in Dane County living outside of existing library service jurisdictions. Of that number, the state agency determined that 9,605 should be allocated to Sun Prairie PL, bringing the library's extended service population to 41,415.

The FEH / LPA study team used reports from the state library agency and from the Wisconsin Department of Administration to make a forecast of Sun Prairie's population in the year 2040. State agency records were examined to identify trends and patterns regarding the distribution of population in Dane Count from 2005 to 2010 and 2010 to 2015. DOA has issued population forecasts for every municipality and county in the state for 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035 and 2040.

State agency records indicate that the outlying population in Dane County represented a smaller and smaller share of the county total between 2005 and 2015. A larger and larger share of the county's population became concentrated in the municipal jurisdictions that operate a library. DOA's population projections anticipate that the outlying county share of total will decrease from 17.34% in 2020 to 16.58% in 2040.

State agency records indicate that Sun Prairie's allocation of outlying county residents represented an increasing share of the outlying county population. Between 2005 and 2010, Sun Prairie was allocated a larger share of the outlying county total. The FEH / LPA study team expects that trend will continue. Between 2020 and 2040, the share of outlying county population allocated to Sun Prairie will continue to grow.

For purposes of making an estimate of future service population, the study team forecast that by 2040, Sun Prairie will be allocated 12.75% of the outlying county total. Based on DOA figures, the population of Sun Prairie proper in 2040 will be 45,580, to which is added an allocation of 12,707 from the outlying county, for a combined, extended projected population of 58,287.

Wisconsin public library standards

The Wisconsin state library agency issues standards for public library service. These standards identify a minimum level of service the state library agency and two additional tiers of a higher level of service that an individual library may choose to aspire to. The specific standard can and typically does vary depending on the library's service population – the standard for a library serving 5,000 population will be different from the standard for a library serving 50,000 population. The standard can be calculated using the library's current population to see how the library stacks up today, or it can be calculated using the library's

projected population to establish a prospective future service goal.

The chart to the right summarizes the recommendations of the Wisconsin public library standards as they apply to Sun Prairie. Two calculations are made for each measure – the first based on the library's current-day extended service population (41,415) and the second based on the library's projected population (58,250).

WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS SUN PRAIRIE PUBLIC LIBRARY					
		Sun Prairie	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Books / vol per cap	Current	107,558	99,396	107,679	132,528
Books / vol per cap	Projected		139,800	151,450	186,400
Audo / items per cap	Current	12,377	7,869	11,596	12,839
Audo / items per cap	Projected		11,068	16,310	18,058
Video / items per cap	Current	14,251	9,525	13,667	17,394
Video / items per cap	Projected		13,398	19,223	24,465
Combined collection	Current	134,186	136,670	153,236	178,085
Combined collection	Projected		192,225	215,525	250,475
Magazines / per k pop	Current	215	191	236	298
Magazines / per k pop	Projected		268	332	419
Technology stations	Current	32	32	40	51
Technology stations	Projected		45	57	72

Based on the current-day calculation, Sun Prairie PL meets or exceeds the minimum recommendation of the standard on every measure except combined collection, just missing that mark.

Using the standards as a gauge, looking forward Sun Prairie should anticipate providing, at a minimum, a collection of 139,800 books, 11,000 audio recordings, and 13,400 video recordings. Note that the library *already* provides a larger nonprint collection than the minimum recommendation. In this case local planners may wish to use the standards to establish a more assertive service goal. For example, noting that the library's current audio inventory is just below the Tier 3 recommendation, planners might want to consider if the Tier 3 recommendation based on the library's future service population is the more suitable goal.

National trends in library service

For more than 30 years, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has engaged with the state library agencies across the country to standardize data gathering from the public libraries within each state. For more than 25 years, the IMLS has published a database of public library statistics annually. LPA downloads that database and works with the report to identify trends. An understanding of broad national trends can condition local decision making regarding future service goals. Among the trends highlighted in the memo discussion this examination more thoroughly:
  • The number of items held in all U.S. public libraries (books + audio + video) peaked in 2009 and has been in decline ever since.
  • The aggregate number of volumes held in all U.S. public libraries grew through the year 2005, then leveled off at roughly 815 million volumes before starting to slide; in 2015 the combined print inventory in U.S. libraries was 752 million volumes.
  • The number of volumes held *per capita* in all U.S. libraries reports an even longer pattern of decline. This ratio peaked in 2003 at 2.83 and has been in steady decline since. There are

indicators that the rate of decline may be increasing. In 2015, the ratio stood at 2.37 volumes per capita.

- More recently, public libraries across the U.S. started to report smaller audio collection inventories. The combined inventory of audio recordings held per 1,000 population in all U.S. libraries peaked in 2009 and has been in decline ever since.
- Video holdings are the only component of public library inventories that continue to grow, both in total numbers and in per capita holdings.
- Nonprint holdings as a percent of total inventories has grown steadily since the mid-1990s, and that ratio continues to grow, albeit mostly because U.S. public libraries on the whole are reducing print inventories at a faster rate than they are reducing nonprint inventories.
- There appears to be a clear distinction between smaller and larger libraries. Libraries serving fewer than 50,000 population on balance report larger print and nonprint inventories in 2015 than was the case in 2005, but larger libraries have downsized to such a degree that their reductions in inventory more than offset the increases among smaller libraries.
- Nevertheless, public libraries as a whole are responding to user needs with a leaner inventory than was the case ten years ago.
- Over the past 20+ years, public libraries have aggressively sought to expand the combined inventory of computer / technology stations for public use, in order to provide more ready access to e-content. That said, the rate of growth appears to have slowed in the last five years.
- Total circulation peaked in 2010 at more than 2.4 billion transactions; in 2015, U.S. public libraries reported just under 2.3 billion transactions.
- The number of circulation transactions per capita also peaked in 2010, and has been in decline since.
- The total number of visits to U.S. public libraries peaked in 2009 and has been in decline since.
- On the other hand, the number of program events has almost doubled over the last ten years.
- Likewise, program attendance has increased substantially, from 67.3 million in 2004 to 106.2 million in 2015.

Local trends in library service

Just as broad national trends offer useful context for the assessment of local service needs, an understanding of local trends and the development of service over time can inform choices about future service goals. The FEH / LPA study team assembled Sun Prairie PL's annual report data from 1995 through 2017 to examine broad trends over time.

- Sun Prairie runs counter to broad national trends, growing its collection by roughly 30%; in 2007 the combined inventory was roughly 105,000 items; in 2017, 135,000 items.
- Inventory growth is driven in part by population and a growing service jurisdiction. For the last ten years, the number of items held per capita has hovered between 3.00 and 3.25.
- Nonprint holdings have risen dramatically, from roughly 13,000 items ten years ago to more than 26,600 items in 2017.
- As was seen in the national trends, nonprint holdings as a percent of total inventory has increased, at an even faster rate than is seen nationally; from 2007 to 2017, nonprint holdings as a percent of total increased from 12.50% to just under 20%.
- Sun Prairie devotes a larger share of its inventory (about 20%) than most libraries do nationwide (the aggregate share nationally is about 12.5%).

- Like libraries across the country, Sun Prairie has increased its inventory of technology stations for public use.
- Like public libraries nationwide, total circulation peaked at Sun Prairie in 2013 – a handful of years after the national peak – and has been decreasing since. The rate of decrease is smaller than is apparent nationally.
- The number of program events sponsored by the library roughly doubled between 2010 and 2017.

Peer comparative / trendline analyses

The IMLS database was also used to provide a different kind of context. In 2015, for example, Sun Prairie PL circulated roughly 670,000 items. That's good to know, but is that an indication of heavy use or less-than-heavy use? More to the point, in support of identifying prospective future resource and service inventory goals, what can the experience of libraries deemed to be peers tell us about what Sun Prairie might expect to experience in the future?

The study team used the IMLS database to draw a sample of libraries that serve between 50,000 and 75,000 population. This cohort includes a group of libraries that more or less bracket Sun Prairie's projected population (58,250), excluding libraries that are substantially smaller or larger on the assumption that the experience of those smaller and larger libraries would have little bearing on what Sun Prairie might expect to experience when it reaches a service population of 58,250. The cohort was also filtered to include only libraries within roughly a 250-mile radius, acknowledging that there are very real variations in service heritage and service expectations across the country and a more focused cohort would reflect Sun Prairie's experience and expectations.

This sample cohort was examined over a variety of metrics, and the combined experience of this group of 44 libraries was used to establish prospective benchmarks for service: given the experience of this particular cohort, what results should a library expect that serves a population of 58,250? This analysis produced a series of benchmarks for consideration. Based on the experience of this cohort of libraries, when Sun Prairie serves a population of 58,250 in the year 2040, it would be reasonable for the Sun Prairie PL to:
- maintain a collection of 236,000 items
- 198,000 volumes
- 18,000 audio recordings
- 21,000 video recordings
- provide 66 technology stations for public use
- support 810,000 circulation transactions
- and 385,000 total annual visits
- sponsor 1,000+ program events
- generating 32,500 attendees

It's important to remember that *all* of these measures are dynamic. This comparison uses current data to anticipate future results. By the time Sun Prairie reaches a service population of 58,250, more than 20 years will have passed and the landscape the library occupies then will be different. These benchmarks cannot be applied without considering how they might shift over time and by how much. National and local service trends can offer guidance.