LARAMIE COUNTY LIBRARY

Strategic Planning

2021

Laramie County Library System

Executive Summary

In the spring of 2021, the Laramie County Library System (LCLS) convened a multi-session strategic planning process that solicited feedback from the community and staff and resulted in a 2–3-year plan that will guide the work and take LCLS into the future. LCLS hired Align to facilitate the process. Align Vice President, Brittany Ashby and Consultant, Tiffany Comer Cook worked with the LCLS leadership team to design a process that started with surveys of both internal staff and the community. The information collected from these surveys were then brought back into the process to help the planning team make decisions.

The planning team consisted of representation across the organization. The members of the team included:

The Library Board of Directors:
- Elizabeth Dillow – Board Chair
- Julie Daniels – Vice-Chair
- Rob Dickerson – Treasurer
- Stacia Berry
- Michael Pearlman
- Buck Holmes – Laramie County Commissioners Representative

Library Staff
- Carey Hartmann – Executive Director
- Laura Block – Deputy Director of Operations
- Jeff Collins – Deputy Director of Public Service
- Cara Nett – Manager of Computer Center and Cataloging Services
- Megan Fox – Youth Librarian/Assistant Manager, Youth & Outreach Services
- Kasey Mossey – Communications Coordinator

Laramie County Library Foundation Representatives
- Kristi Wallin –Director
- Dallas Lain – Foundation Board Vice President

The planning committee met over three sessions to review the mission, vision, and commitments of the organization and to build strategic directions and goals for the next two to three years. The Laramie County Library System Board of Directors adopted the plan on June 12, 2021.

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Survey

Align administered two surveys prior to the facilitated strategic planning sessions which included an internal survey to all board and staff members and a community survey. The surveys were conducted via Survey Monkey and participants were given approximately two and a half weeks to complete it. Internally, the survey was sent via email. The community survey was sent out via the marketing and communications lists that the library uses to communicate with members and the community.

Total Internal Surveys Collected: 27
Total Community Surveys Collected: 1475

Summary of Internal Survey Results

Employees were asked open ended questions. Below are summaries of their responses in each area surveyed. The responses, along with responses from the patron survey, were utilized by the planning team as a starting point.

Successes since 2018/19 Strategic Plan: highlights included patrons may now check out materials with an ID if they forgot their library card, notary services have expanded to all open hours in the Cheyenne library, late fees for youth items were eliminated and better signage.

Successes Outside of 2018/19 Strategic Plan
The #1 response, by far, was about meeting community needs during the pandemic through adaptation and creativity (curbside service, zoom events, etc.). Growth in the Library 2 Business program and new sort machine material returns were also mentioned.

Keeping Changes and Lessons Learned from COVID
The top responses for this question related to keeping curbside service and continuing with virtual/digital programming and resources. Several people suggested offering a virtual option for in-person events moving forward.

Suggestions for Working through Funding Cuts
At the time of the survey, the information about the severity of cuts to the budget due to a negative impact from mineral extraction in the county was dire. It turned out not to be as severe as anticipated. Employees suggested cross-training employees, reducing the amount the library pays for continuing education of employees, suspending projects that could take place in later years, and volunteers taking on more tasks.

Accomplishments in the Next Two Years
- Adapt services, such as checking out PCs; analyze programmatic offerings and adjust them to meet community needs
- Analyze why people don't use the library

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- Be a hub for community events and services
- Better use of bookmobile and outreach
- Complete the YOS collection change in call number project
- Create relevant adult programming
- Different employee performance evaluation system
- Don't cut staff and keep benefits
- Encourage book-reading
- Financial stability and succession planning
- Hire social workers to help with homeless and mentally ill
- Improve the financial standing of the café
- Increase awareness of the value of the library
- Maintain buildings, including branch facilities
- More collaborative spaces
- More services in the north and west parts of the county
- Offer more music and video digitally
- Recover from the pandemic (all areas back to normal and more patrons back into the library)
- Remove fines
- Reorganize collection
- Research better maker-space offerings, especially for teens
- Salary increases
- Varied selection of up-to-date and out-of-print materials
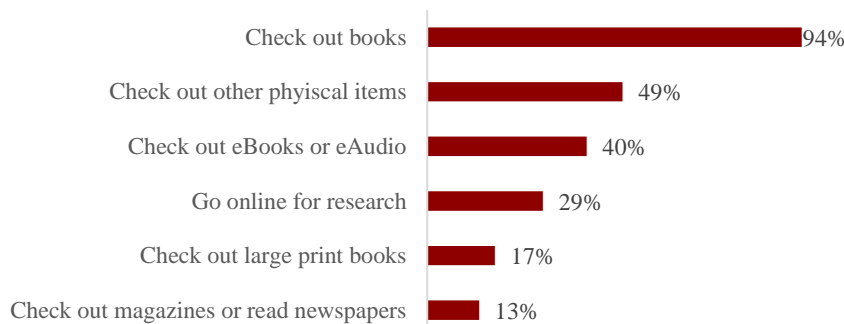
Suggested Changes

- o Computers by the front door that can be used for 15-minute sessions; allow patrons to use other computers without a card
- o Continue partnership with schools
- o Create a map of the library that can be handed to patrons
- o Eliminate fines and fees (fees for DVDs and video games, late fees, ILL fees)
- o Expand outreach to seniors
- o Focus on adventure; partner with adventure sites to create family passes; develop a library-of-things checkout program; outdoor experiences
- o Keep expanding and innovating; stay modern
- o More engaging programs for adults
- o More public relations; reach more people
- o Post-pandemic in-person events
- o Raise wages to living-wage standard (Note: employees are currently paid at 100% of market as of January 2018.)
- o Use technology to improve efficiencies (internally and for patrons using the computer center); computer and technology training
- o Weekly ad (newspaper, radio, TV) about what the library is doing; advertise on a bookmark that can be handed out at doctors' offices

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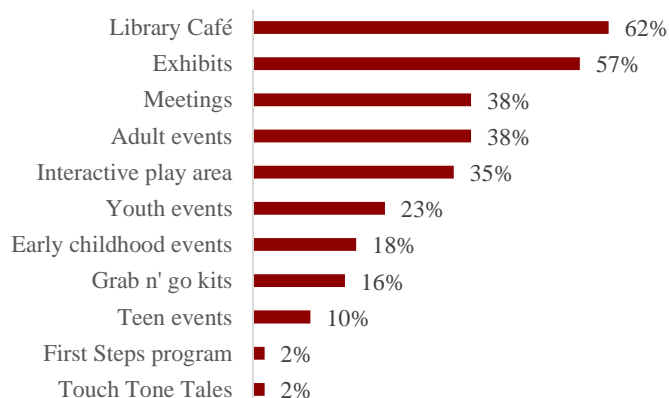
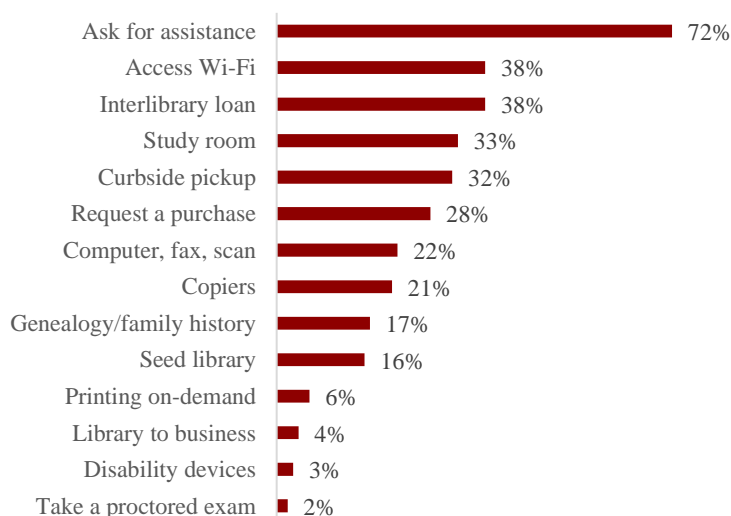## *Summary of Community Survey Results*

Patrons' Use of Materials
n = 1,466

Category	Percentage
Check out books	94%
Check out other phyiscal items	49%
Check out eBooks or eAudio	40%
Go online for research	29%
Check out large print books	17%
Check out magazines or read newspapers	13%

Participation in Events & Activities
n = 1,195

Category	Percentage
Library Café	62%
Exhibits	57%
Meetings	38%
Adult events	38%
Interactive play area	35%
Youth events	23%
Early childhood events	18%
Grab n' go kits	16%
Teen events	10%
First Steps program	2%
Touch Tone Tales	2%

Patrons' Use of Services
n = 1,300

Category	Percentage
Ask for assistance	72%
Access Wi-Fi	38%
Interlibrary loan	38%
Study room	33%
Curbside pickup	32%
Request a purchase	28%
Computer, fax, scan	22%
Copiers	21%
Genealogy/family history	17%
Seed library	16%
Printing on-demand	6%
Library to business	4%
Disability devices	3%
Take a proctored exam	2%

Favorite Events
Author visits and book signings
Escape rooms
Harry Potter's birthday
Monthly movies
Music events/symphony
New Year's celebration
Presentations
Story time
Summer reading

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Must-Have Services

Computers and internet access/Wi-Fi
Early childhood, youth, and teen
    activities and programming
2nd floor play area
Bookmobile
Café
Community events
Curbside pickup
Genealogy
Interlibrary loan
Online catalogue
Online eBooks and audio books
Public meeting rooms
Research services
Study rooms

Ideas for Improvement

The #1 suggestion, by far, was to change the mask requirements and reduce COVID-19 restrictions—open interactive play area and bring back events.

Other suggestions include:
Allow for longer checkout times and ease up on fees for overdue items
Better selection of books, eBooks, audiobooks, and magazines (keep classics, obtain newly published books, and have full series available)
Change hours/open earlier
Create/enforce rules about loitering
Communicate with users about services and events
Don't require payment for movies and video

Patrons Love Best

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Popular Facilities

81% (1,142 respondents) reported using the Cheyenne Library 1st floor regularly, 56% (783) reported using the 2nd floor, and 57% (800) reported using the 3rd floor.

3% (48) use the Burns Branch Library regularly and 2% (32) use the Pine Bluffs Branch Library.

2.5% of respondents (35) use the bookmobiles.

Strategic Plan – Results

The Vision, Mission, and Our Commitment statements were revised.

Vision

Champion a Knowledgeable and Engaged Community

Mission

Be a hub for engagement, literacy and learning, and lifelong curiosity and discovery.

Our Commitments

- Free and easy access to the printed and digital word, information, and cultural enhancement
- A rich reading and literacy culture for children and adults
- Dynamic, current, pertinent, and uncensored collection of materials in a variety of formats
- Well-trained professional librarians, employees, and volunteers serving our community.
- Responsible resource development, management, and sharing
- State-of-the-art technology and digital resources
- Innovative and welcoming facilities to meet the needs of all people of Laramie County
- Promotion of library services through a variety of communication channels
- A flexible, nimble, and responsive approach to community needs
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion of all members of our community

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Key Focus Areas

- Expand and diversify our marketing and communications efforts to connect with all community members
    - Goal 1.1: Revitalize and invigorate library usage and attendance
    - Goal 1.2: Enhance and increase partnerships through creative thinking about underserved and under-partnered areas of our community

- Engage with the whole community through outreach and diverse events
    - Goal 2.1: Increase and improve adult events using the nationally recognized LCLS youth events program as a model
    - Goal 2.2: Increase youth participation in events so that more children and parents are exposed to and use the resources the library provides
    - Note: The goal to offer high quality, engaging, and high impact online events has been incorporated into Goals 2.1 and 2.2.

- Meet the reading and discovery needs of the community through diverse print, digital, and library of things collections
    - Goal 3.1: Develop new and diverse collections to meet the current needs of our members and community
    - Goal 3.2: Expand digital collections and digital opportunities
    - Goal 3.3: Increase utilization of the whole collection

- Provide good stewardship of existing and future resources
    - Goal 4.1: Create a long-range financial plan that identifies long-term needs and projects and identifies potential funding opportunities
    - Goal 4.2: System and foundation board engage in dialog to enhance the relationship and best leverage the abilities of each
    - Goal 4.33: Explore and create a plan for how LCLS might eliminate fees and fines

- Easier utilization of library resources with reduced barriers to use
    - Goal 5.1: Meet users where they are and improve user experience
    - Goal 5.2: Expand and evaluate service offerings to reach more people
    - Long Range Goal: Open a library branch at the new Sweetgrass Development

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The Plan

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Strategic Focus: Expand and diversify our marketing and communications efforts to connect with all community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3">Goal #1.1: Revitalize and invigorate library usage and attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Items</td>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>Person Responsible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct a demographic analysis of users</td>
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<td>Create a continuous "Library 101" education program</td>
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<td>Create a comprehensive, targeted marketing campaign to encourage users back to the library and to diversify users</td>
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<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measurements</td>
<td colspan="2">

Exceed number of users in the library compared to FY 2019 numbers by FY 2023
Expanded demographics of library users based on needs identified in analysis.
Mapping of where library users live

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Goal #1.2: Enhance and increase partnerships through creative thinking about underserved and under-partnered areas of our community		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Conduct a partnership audit to identify current partners, former partners, what value the partnership brings to the library, what value the partnership brings to the partner, what types of partnerships the library has and where we need to focus.		
Reach out to new partners to help meet the mission and expand our reach based on the findings from the audit		

Notes	
Measurements	• Re-engagement of 3 partners per year • Two to three new partnerships per year • Increased expression of value in the partnerships when asked

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Strategic Focus: Engage with the whole community through outreach and diverse events		

Goal #2.1: Increase and improve adult events using the nationally recognized LCLS youth events program as a model		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Identify target adult populations		
Create a map of events throughout the year to have a balance with fun and engaging events, serious discussions, diverse speakers on a variety of topics and two to three major events		
Include some virtual events or virtual access to live events as is feasible		
Work with the foundation to identify funding possibilities or donor underwriting		
Measurements	• Increased numbers of adult events by 10% over FY 2019 by end of FY 2023 • Increased attendance by 10% over FY 2019 by end of FY 2023 • Evaluation/Survey at events to determine quality (potentially using technology)	

Goal #2.2: Increase youth participation in event so that more children and parents are exposed to and use the resources the library provides		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Re-start in person events in September 2021		
Rely on regular events and special events to build back the audience that was active prior to March 2020		
Include virtual events or virtual access to live events where applicable		
Continue to promote events with craft and other kits that families may pick up prior to, at or after an in person event		
Measurements	• Exceed attendance at events compared to level of FY 2019 by end of FY 2023 • Exceed number of events compared to the level of FY 2019 by the end of FY 2023 • Survey of participants (potentially using technology)	

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Strategic Focus: Meet the reading and discovery needs of the community through a diverse print, digital, and library of things collections		
Goal #3.1: Develop new and diverse collections to meet the current needs of our members and community		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Conduct a needs assessment to determine what the needs are and where there is "competition" for those needs		
Identify a Library of Things that would meet the needs identified		
Evaluate budgets to determine how money might be redistributed to fund the identified library of things		
Notes		
Measurements	• One new Library of Things collections that are circulating regularly by end of FY 2023	

Goal #3.2: Expand digital collections and digital opportunities		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Evaluate the needs and wants of the community regarding digital collections		
Examine digital collection options and get feedback from the community on what might meet their needs		
Create and implement a plan for improving the digital collection		
Notes		
Measurements	• Increased usage of digital collections by 10% from FY 2019 • Increased satisfaction with digital collections	

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Goal #3.3: Increase utilization of the whole collection		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Identification of items in the collection that need to be there, but do not circulate regularly		
Creation of a marketing and referral program to increase circulation of those items		
Create challenges in Beanstack to encourage usage of various collections in the library		
Improve readers' advisory material on the web page, utilizing some of the tools available through the Enterprise catalog		
Notes		
Measurements	• Targeted collections show a 5% increase in usage from FY2019 statistics to FY 2022 statistics	

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<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" style="background:#6a8a3a">Strategic Focus: Provide good stewardship of existing and future resources</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Goal #4.1: Create a long-range financial plan that identifies long-term needs and projects and identifies potential funding opportunities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action Items</td><td>Due Date</td><td>Person Responsible</td></tr>
<tr><td>Create a list of potential "dream" projects</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Identify staffing and succession needs</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Evaluate current and potential funding options and create a Boom/Bust budget</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Identify potential funding options for staffing and "dream" projects</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Notes</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Measurements</td><td colspan="2">An up to date "dream project" and staffing list by end of FY 2022
A financial plan for addressing needs and projects by end of FY 2023</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="3">Goal #4.2: System and foundation board engage in dialog to enhance the relationship and best leverage the abilities of each</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action Items</td><td>Due Date</td><td>Person Responsible</td></tr>
<tr><td>System and foundation board meet to discuss roles and goals</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Review the "dream" project and staffing list and create fundraising goal/focus</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Create an MOU outlining the goal and the roles</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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<tr><td>Notes</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Measurements</td><td colspan="2">MOU in place by end of FY 2022
Financial fundraising focus/goal requested of the Foundation by end of FY 2022 (in preparation for the Foundation FY 2023 budget planning)</td></tr>
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Goal #4.3: Explore and create a plan for how LCLS might eliminate fees and fines		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Analysis of current revenues and potential impacts		
Look at how to work it into the financial plan		
Notes		
Measurements	• Plan for how fees and fines might be eliminated by end of FY 2023	

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Strategic Focus: Easier utilization of library resources with reduced barriers to use		
Goal #5.1*: Meet users where they are and improve user experience*		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Work to ensure that the Bookmobile is on the 6th Penny Ballot		
Evaluate hours		
Launch the commons area and develop as a community resource		
Pilot: evaluate book vending machines and determine feasibility		
Pilot: evaluate hold lockers and determine feasibility		
Creation of more educational signage for easier use of the services		
Notes		
Measurements	- Public satisfaction using satisfaction surveys with an increase in satisfaction ratings year over year. - Detailed analysis of the potential pilot projects. - Increased usage of commons area year over year.	

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Goal #5.2: Expand and evaluate service offerings to reach more people		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Assess needs for a potential maker space and create a plan		
Review the operation and create a plan for the café		
Pilot: assess the need for external services (vaccine clinic, health fairs, mental health, passport acceptance, etc.)		
Notes		
Measurements	• Detailed analysis of pilot projects. • Café usage exceeds FY 2019 numbers by the end of FY 2023.	

Long Range Goal: Open a library branch at the new Sweetgrass Development		
Action Items	**Due Date**	**Person Responsible**
Executive Director and board chair set up a meeting with Sweetgrass Development to determine if there is still a space possible for a library branch		
If yes, and there is an estimate of the space that may be available, do research on other storefront branch libraries of similar size to assess how such a facility may be used		
Complete a needs assessment that may include preliminary budget figures for building/remodeling, fixtures and furnishings, staffing costs, etc.		
Keep abreast of the bill in Congress that if it passes may provide funding for a building prior to waiting for the next 6th Penny budget in 5 years		
Notes		
Measurements	• Needs assessment complete • Next steps identified	

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Survey Questions

Surveys

The Laramie County Library System started their 2021 strategic planning process with two separate surveys. The questions from these surveys are below:

Internal Survey Questions:

1. What successes has the library had based on the goals and objectives from the strategic planning process that was done in 2018/19?
2. What successes has the library had outside of the strategic planning that was done in 2018/19?
3. What is something that the library learned, implemented, changed, or adapted in 2020 due to COVID that we need to continue to look at or learn from moving forward?
4. Like many other government entities in the State right now, the library is looking at budget cuts and a very tight budget over the next few years. What suggestions do you have for helping the library continue to be a workplace of choice, to improve morale and to continue to provide high quality services with reduced funding?
5. What are two things the library should focus on accomplishing in the next two years?
6. What are two changes the library could make to better meet its mission?

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Community Survey

1. What services of the library do you or your family use? (choose all that apply)
   a. Materials access and Check-out
      i. Check out books
      ii. Check out movies, audiobooks, music or videogames
      iii. Check out eBooks or eAudio
      iv. Go online in the library or at home to use library databases for research
      v. Check out large print books
      vi. Check out magazines or read newspapers in the library.
   b. Events and Activities
      i. Attend Adult events
      ii. Attend Youth Events
      iii. Attend Early Childhood Events
      iv. Attend Teen Events
      v. Use the Library Café
      vi. Use the Interactive play area on the second floor
      vii. View Exhibits in the library
      viii. Participate in the First Steps Program
      ix. Utilize Grab n' Go Kits for crafts
      x. Call in to Touch Tone Tales
      xi. Attend a meeting or book a meeting room
      xii. If you have attended a library event, what have been some of your favorites?

   c. Services
      i. Asked for assistance with research or to find a book
      ii. Requested the library purchase an item
      iii. Use curbside pickup
      iv. Use devices that assist people who have a disability, i.e. enlarging print on computer screens, magnifying glasses, motorized carts, or devices that can enlarge print or read print out loud to a person.
      v. Use the library to take a proctored exam
      vi. Use Genealogy and Family History Services or other items in the Special Collection room.
      vii. Use Interlibrary Loan services
      viii. Use Library to Business services
      ix. Use library copiers
      x. Get seeds from the Seed Library
      xi. Access Wi-Fi at the Library (in the library or outside)
      xii. Request printing-on-demand
      xiii. Use a study room
      xiv. Use a library public computer, fax, or scanning (Youth, Teen, Special Collections or Computer Center. Or in the facilities in Burns or Pine Bluffs)

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2. Which library facilities do you use regularly? (choose all that apply)
   a. Cheyenne Library 1st Floor
   b. Cheyenne Library 2nd Floor
   c. Cheyenne Library 3rd Floor
   d. Burns Branch Library
   e. Pine Bluffs Branch Library
   f. Bookmobiles

3. If the Library was only able to keep on service beyond the materials access and check-out (checking out books), what should they keep?

4. What do you like best about the library?

5. What could the library do to improve service or better meet their mission?