Ralph Ellison Library

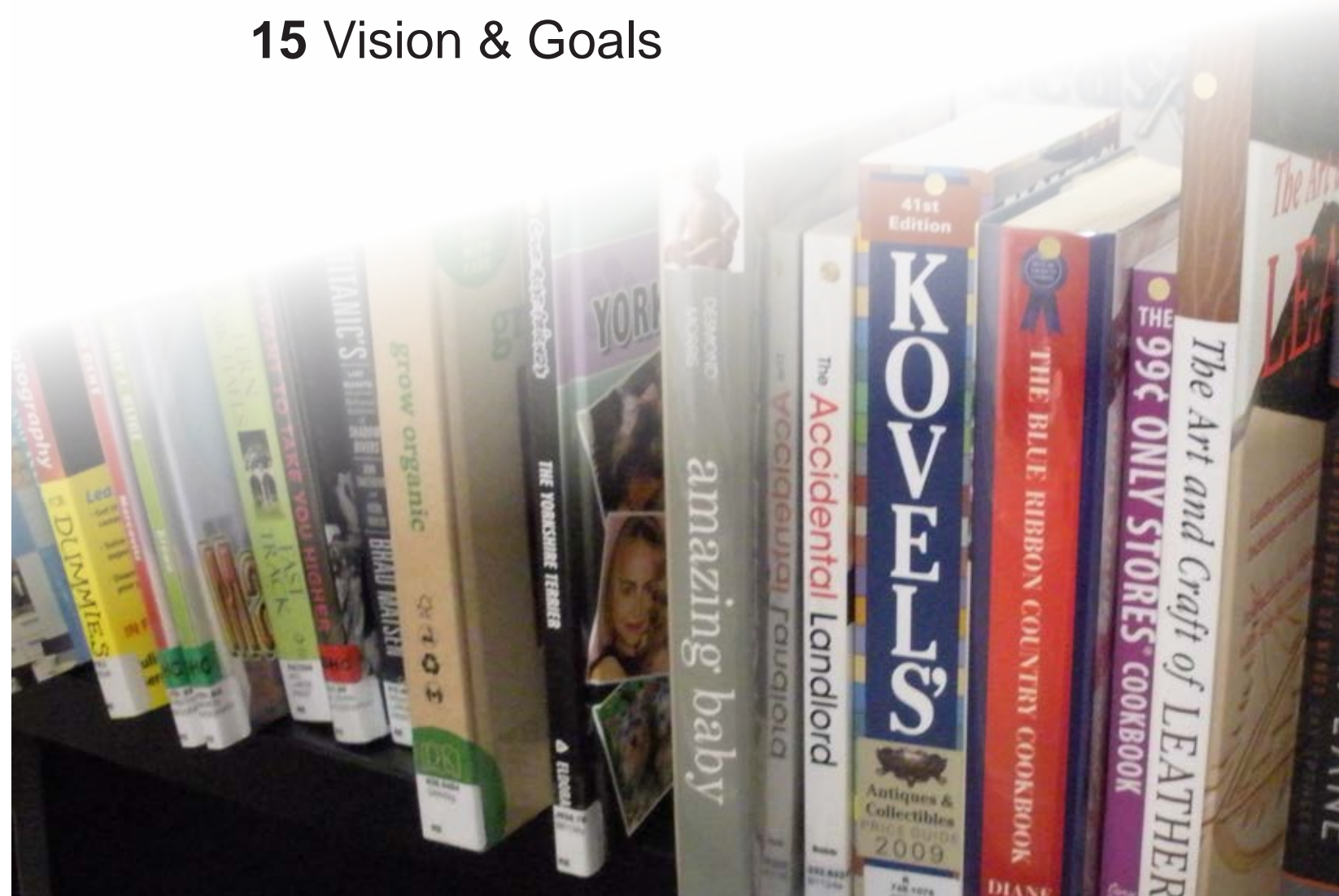**Service Plan 2009**
Completed December 1, 2008 in conjunction with the Metropolitan Library System.

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A word from the manager...

The Ralph Ellison Library Service Plan was designed to meet the Metropolitan Library System's Strategic Plan objectives. As the manager leading a highly qualified, skilled, and innovative staff, I am committed to the goal of making our library an inviting and innovative link to the world. In order to meet these objectives, we pledge to make customer service and satisfaction a top priority. In the following pages, the reader will find a detailed analysis of our community and the many challenges that we face. Working with and in the community, we envision that these cooperative efforts will produce many successes. Our plan includes building and maintaining stra-

tegic partnerships with organizations that represent every sector of our community, and the larger Oklahoma City area. This Service Plan highlights the historical contributions made by the Ralph Ellison Library and our aspirations for future endeavors.

The goals outlined in the Metropolitan Library System Strategic Plan are our guiding force toward success. The following narrative delineates the necessary steps for proper goal implementation. Our service responses to each objective will convey to our customers just how vital they are to our day to day operation. As part of the Metropolitan Library System and its mission for Oklahoma City, the Ralph Ellison Library values its customers and community, and strives to provide excellent and unforgettable service.

Michael Owens,
Manager of Library Operations

>A History of Activism

Northeast Oklahoma City is a historically Black neighborhood with a rich history of political and social activism. Trailblazers like Roscoe Dunjee helped pave the way for Black Americans in Oklahoma by fighting against racial segregation in the early part of the twentieth century and founding the *Black Dispatch*, the Oklahoma City chapter of the NAACP and serving as president of the National Negro Business League. The historic Deep Deuce community served as a center for Black culture and commerce in the 1930's and 40's, though much of the area was bulldozed in the 1960's to make way for I-235. Community activism continued into the civil rights era, with leaders such as Clara Luper, E. Melvin Porter and Hannah Atkins. Groups like the NAACP, Urban League and Black Muslims remain active in the community to this day.

Resources: Moore, Kendrick. 2000. *The Oklahoma City African American discovery guide*. Oklahoma: Oklahoma African Trail of Tears, Tours, Inc.

>The Importance of Education

The first Black school in Northeast Oklahoma City opened in March 1891. Douglass High School would go on to produce many graduates who would make important contributions to the community, including renowned author (and the library's namesake) Ralph Ellison. In 2006, with the help of bond money from MAPS for Kids, a brand new Douglass High School opened its doors to the community.

Community Profile

The library recognizes the importance of educating young people in the community and strives to partner with local schools, including Douglass, to promote a love of knowledge, a sense of community and a desire for lifelong learning.

Resources: Moore, Kendrick. 2000. *The Oklahoma City African American discovery guide*. Oklahoma: Oklahoma African Trail of Tears, Tours, Inc.
OCMAPS. *Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area Public Schools Trust 2006 annual report*. 2006. http://www.okc.gov/OCMAPS/ocmaps_library/ocmaps_2006.pdf.

>>> Community Profile

>The Community Today

The Northeast 23rd Street Corridor boasts a community of just over 7,000 (as of January 2008), with Black Americans making up almost 90% of this population. The median household income is $17,612 compared to $34,947 for the city-at-large. Thirty-seven percent of residents live below the poverty line. Twenty-two percent of houses in the area remain vacant, while housing values average around $37,000 (compared to $80,000 in the city-at-large). The area has a

15% unemployment rate, ten percent higher than the Oklahoma City metro. Education is also a major issue in this community, with a 68% high school graduation rate, compared to over 80% in the metro.

In light of the high poverty levels, decreasing property values and low education rates in the community, the library serves a particularly important role as a community center. Since it opened in 1975, the library has served as a cornerstone for community projects and development, as well as a source of information and programs for the enrichment of all ages. In 2008, the library began a year-long renovation project, the first major project since the library opened. The $2.3 million project (approved by a 2000 bond issue) will

include the addition of a 2,400 square-foot meeting space for programs and community development, a new lobby and restrooms, new furnishings and a mechanical systems upgrade.

Resources: City of Oklahoma City, 2008. *NE 23rd Street Corridor plan*. http://www.okc.gov/Planning/ne23/NE%2023rd%20Corridor%20Plan%20FINAL%20with%20resolutions.pdf.
Metropolitan Library System. 2008. *Ralph Ellison Library undergoing renovations.*http://www.mls.lib.ok.us/mls/mls_news/2008/ralph_ellison_undergoing_renovations_2008-07.html.

Image from: www.stockxpert.com

Text by: Kim Ventrella

Library Profile

The Ralph Ellison Library is located in one of Oklahoma's historically Black neighborhoods. The community has a rich history of activism, punctuated by the efforts of civil rights leader Clara Luper, who still lives in the community. The library serves as a community center for an economically depressed, but culturally vibrant neighborhood. Customers rely on the library to find basic information about voting, taxes, tutoring, government assistance and a variety of other fundamental needs. In addition, the library serves a dynamic population of motivated young adults, college students, business people and community leaders. Our collection and programs are geared to meet the needs of all age groups, including children, teens, adults and elders. Our Black Heritage Collection highlights the achievements of Black Americans in politics, business, social activism, literature and the arts, and also provides a rich history of the Black struggle in America from slavery to present. The library's vision (in conjunction with the vision of the Metropolitan Library System) is to serve as the community's inviting, innovative link to the world.

Facility

The Ralph Ellison Library is currently undergoing a major renovation to its permanent facility at 2000 N.E. 23rd Street. The expansion, renovation and remodeling of the library was approved by the registered voters of Oklahoma City in the 2000 General Obligation Bond Issue. Allen Brown of FSB Architects designed the plans for this $2.3 million renovation, which will include a new 2,400 square foot meeting room to be used for community meetings as well as library programs and events, a new lobby, new restrooms, an overhaul of the current mechanical system and updated furnishings. The project will be completed in Fall of 2009. In the meantime, the library is excited to serve the community from a temporary location located at 1918 N.E. 23rd Street (in the former Hollywood Video building).

Service Hours

The library is open 61 hours per week. Regular service hours include: Monday through Thursday 9am – 8pm, Friday 9am – 6pm and Saturday 9am – 5pm.

Collection

The library offers over 40,000 fiction and nonfiction items for all ages, including books, magazines, newspapers, audio and videocassettes, CDs and DVDs. In addition, the library provides reference materials for in-library use, access to the Internet and the library system's databases and materials via interlibrary loan. Ralph Ellison is also home to the Black Heritage Collection, a special collection celebrating the achievements of Black Americans throughout history.

Librarian Assistance

Two FTE librarians and two half-time librarians assist customers in solving both routine and complex reference questions. Three staff members hold MLIS degrees.

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Library Services

In addition to providing reference assistance, the library also offers online computer services, meeting rooms for public use (once we return to our permanent location), tours and instruction in use of library resources, a public copy machine, a Job Information Center and tax return preparation assistance provided by VITA and AARP.

Computer Services

The library provides two "CyberMars" computers, offering access to the library catalog and borrower services, fifteen multi-use computers, offering Internet access and Microsoft Office programs, two children's computers, offering educational programs and games, free Wireless Internet access, 24/7 library services via www.metrolibrary.org and one-on-one computer classes with a trained technology assistant.
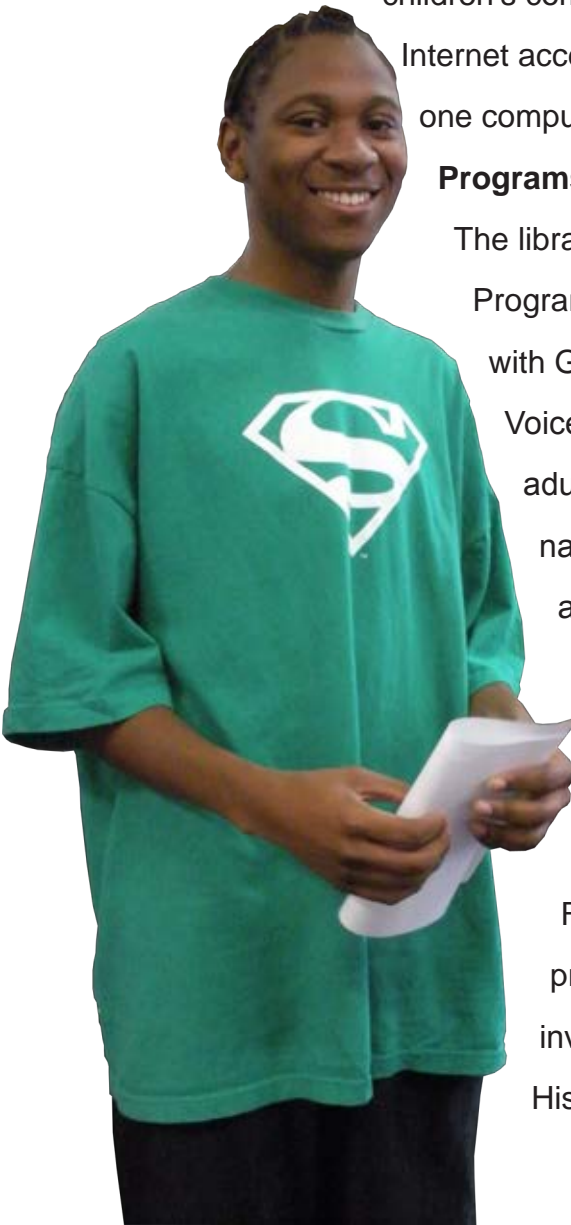
Programs and Events

The library offers dynamic, community-centered programming for all ages. Programs for seniors include the annual Winter Readfest, a partnership with Grace Living Center, senior aerobics, the upcoming Community Voices oral history project, genealogy workshops and much more. For adults, the library plans to offer a book and film club, business seminars, resume and job skills workshops, job fairs, multicultural events and more. For young adults, the library offers book clubs, video game programs, summer volunteer opportunities, the summer reading program, talent shows, craft programs and we plan to offer additional progams in the future, such as GED classes, after-school tutoring, an anime/manga club and a Teen Action Group. For children, the library offers storytime, the summer reading program, an annual holiday party and much more. Annual activities involving all ages include our Juneteenth celebration and our Black History Month programs.

Circulation by Library
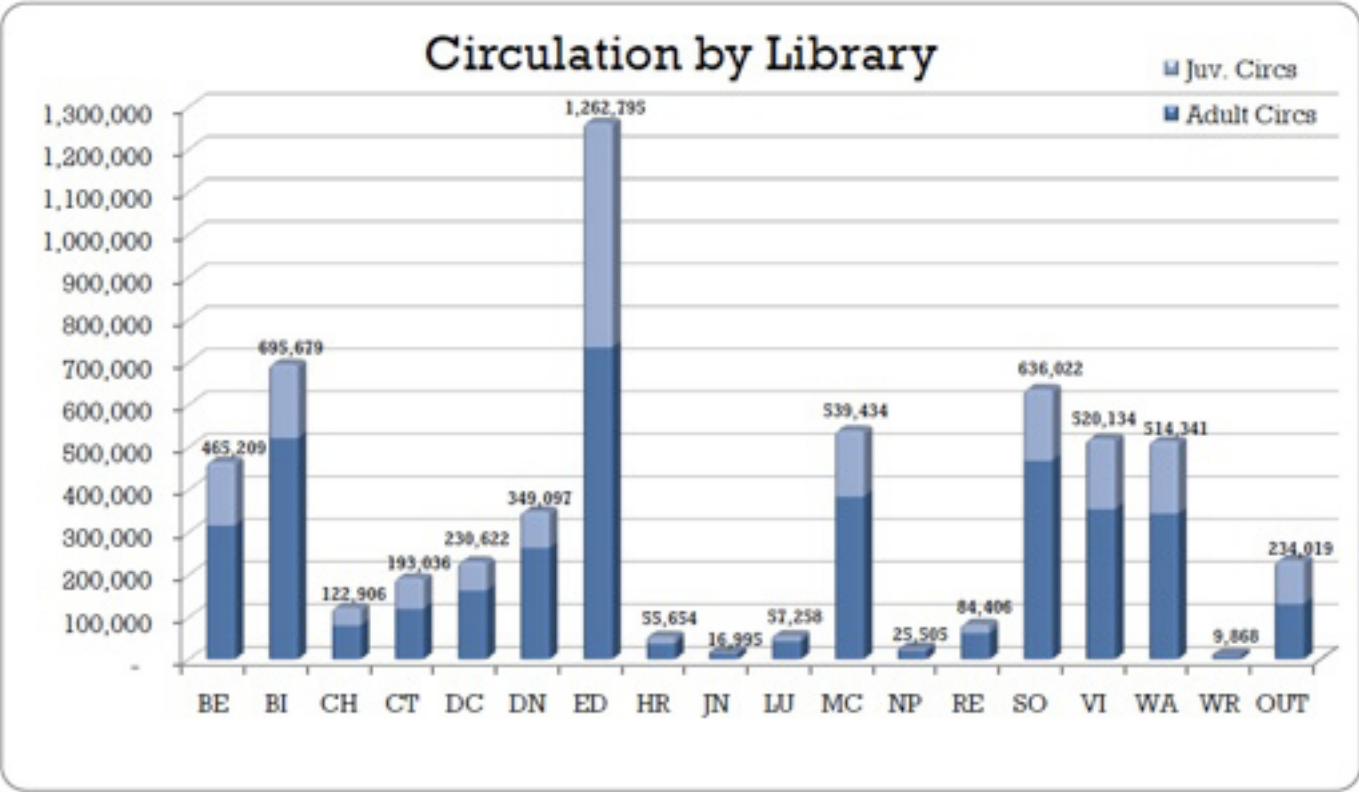
Budget

The annual budget for Ralph Ellison Library for FY08-09 is $775,797.00 (direct cost).

Circulation

In 2007, Ralph Ellison's circulation reached just over 84,000. This represents a six percent decrease over 2006. The library recognizes the need to increase our circulation and plans to implement measures in the upcoming year to accomplish this. These measures include making the community aware of the resources available at the library through word-of-mouth marketing, advertising in local media outlets (including AM 1140), taking measures to ensure that our collection meets our community's needs as well as professional standards and planning programs and events that encourage community members to utilize library resources.

>>> Library Profile

New Faces, New Places

The Ralph Ellison Library strives to serve as Northeast Oklahoma City's inviting, innovative link to the world. We work to facilitate the free flow of knowledge and ideas by providing access to materials, services and programs to our diverse community. The renovation is a major step in making this vision into reality, but we could not achieve this kind of growth without the work of our amazing staff. Ralph Ellison Library is excited to welcome a number of new faces to its team, as well as congratulate our veterans on their years of dedicated service. These incredible people bring a diverse array of skills to the table to better serve our community. Our staff holds degrees in an array of majors, ranging from French and English to Sociology. Three of our team members are proud to hold Master's in Library and Information Studies degrees. In addition to formal education, our staff is dedicated to furthering our knowledge through training offered by the library system and a commitment to life-long learning.

Kim Ventrella,
Young Adult Librarian

http://www.jagass.com/content/images/StateCapitols/Oklahoma_City_Oklahoma_State_Capitol.jpg

»AM 1140
»Douglass High School
»Grace Living Center
»Langston University
»Local Churches
»NAACP
»Oklahoma City Public Schools
»Oklahoma City Thunder
»On the Ball Publishing
»Perry Publishing & Broadcasting
»Special Friends of Ralph Ellison Library
»The Brotherhood Association, Inc
»Urban League
»YMCA
»and much more.

Strategic Partnerships

The library recognizes that partnering with community organizations is vital to ensuring that our library achieves its vision. The library hopes to serve as a community hub long into the future, and a major aspect of our success depends on developing mutually benefical partnerships with local organizations and groups. The list above provides a sample of the community organizations that the library currently partners with. We hope to expand this list in the future to involve the entire community in the exciting progress being made at the Ralph Ellison Library.

Service Responses

>Satisfy Curiosity: LIfelong Learning

The library provides resources you need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout your life.

    Goal: All ages realize that the library offers topics in a variety of formats they find captivating and enriching to their lives.

    Goal: Residents see their library as a resource for introduction to an assortment of cultural, civic and/or community interests.

>Visit a Comfortable Place: Public and Virtual Places

Your library offers safe and welcoming physical spaces to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read, as well as open and accessible virtual spaces that support social networking.

    Goal: All ages appreciate their library for its designated places for quiet reading or studying and as a place for social, community building and business activities.

    Goal: All ages recognize their library as a great place both physically and virtually to interact with others due to the noteworthy opportunities provided.

>Know How to Find, Evaluate and Use Information: Information Fluency

When you need information to resolve an issue or answer a question, you have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate and effectively use information to meet your needs.

Goal: All visitors can expect library staff to have up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver library services.

Goal: All ages can expect friendly guidance on how to locate the best information resources to meet their requests or needs.

>Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access

Your library provides high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that you can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

    Goal: All ages discover that their library offers current equipment, tools and training to allow them to responsibly access the digital world.

    Goal: Adults understand that using the Internet is beneficial to development for all ages.

    Goal: All ages recognize and use the library's website and its resources as an extension of the physical library.
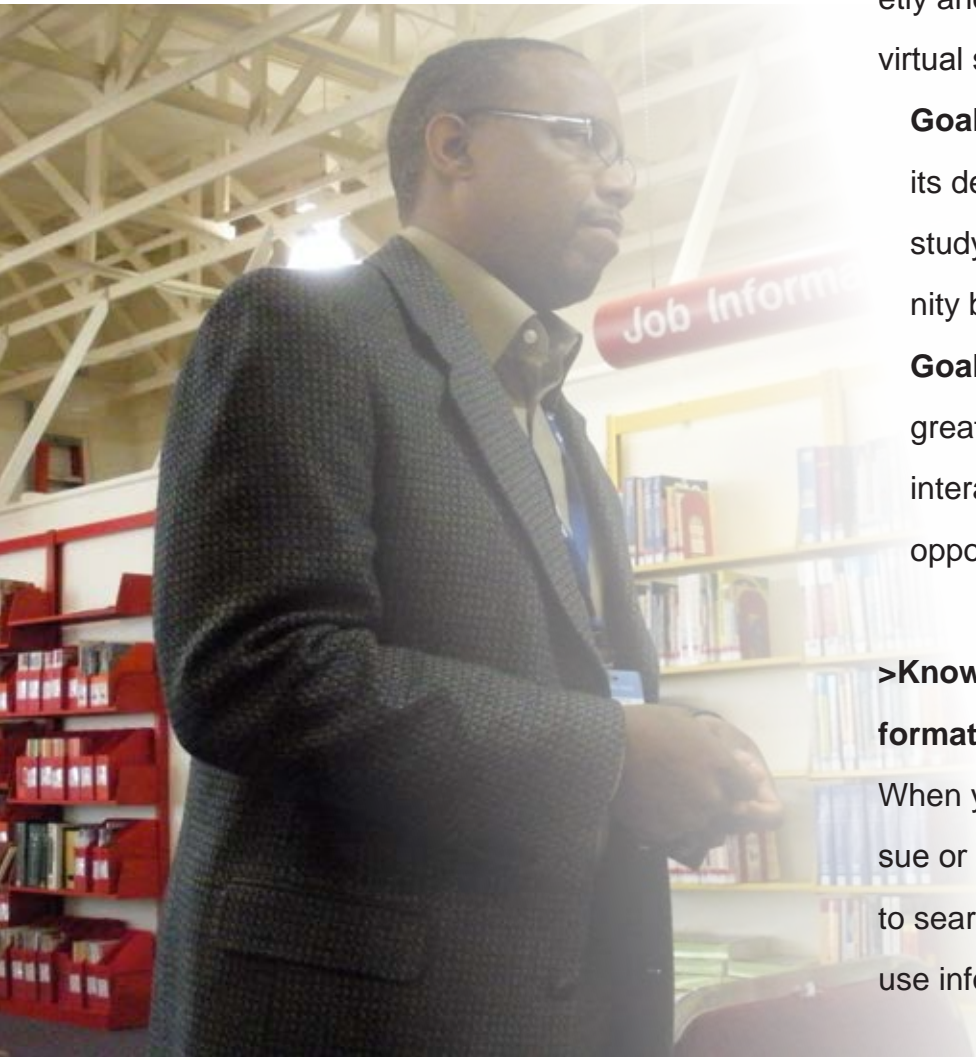
Vision & Goals

>>**Vision**

The Ralph Ellison Library is your inviting, innovative link to the world.

>>**Mission**

The Ralph Ellison Library facilitates the free flow of knowledge and ideas by providing access to materials, services and programs to Oklahoma County's diverse community.

>**Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning**

The library provides the resources you need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout your life.

Goal: All ages realize that the library offers topics in a variety of formats they find captivating and enriching to their lives.

Activity: Increase community awareness of the dynamic resources offered at the library.

Task: Provide displays of materials in various formats to increase exposure and circulation of our diverse collection.

Task: Library staff will routinely visit local organizations, including schools and nursing homes, to promote awareness and use of library resources.

Goal: Residents see their library as a resource for introduction to an assortment of cultural, civic and other community interests.

Activity: Offer programs and events that meet the cultural, civic and other interests of our rich community.

Task: Partner with Outreach Services to provide culturally enriching programming for all ages.

Task: Partner with local organizations such as schools, nursing homes, community centers, churches and more to offer unique programming that meets our community's needs.

Task: Provide information about events taking place in the community through reference service, a community information center and word-of-mouth marketing.

>**Visit a Comfortable Place: Public and Virtual Places**

Your library offers safe and welcoming physical spaces to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read, as well as open and accessible virtual spaces that support social networking.

Goal: All ages appreciate their library for its designated places for quiet reading or studying and as a place for social, community building and business activities.

Activity: Increase awareness of the inviting physical spaces and atmosphere provided by Ralph Ellison Library (both in its temporary and permanent locations).

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Task: Communicate with local community groups and organizations via face-to-face meetings inside and outside of the library, as well as through radio and print advertising to let them know about the physical spaces offered in the library.

Task: When we move to the new location, offer free tours of the new facility to the community.

Goal: All ages recognize their library as a great place both physically and virtually to interact with others due to the noteworthy opportunities provided.

Activity: Increase awareness of digital meeting spaces offered by the library.

Task: Offer programs that provide information about using Web 2.0 technologies safely and effectively.

Task: Work with Outreach and other departements to develop a library presence on social networking sites, like Facebook and MySpace.

>Know How to Find, Evaluate and Use Information: Information Fluency

When you need information to resolve an issue or answer a question, you have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate and effectively use information to meet your needs.

Goal: All visitors can expect library staff to have up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver library services.

Activity: Ensure that all staff are trained to provide professional and up-to-date assistance to all customers.

Task: All reference staff will complete a minimum of three training courses in the next year in the areas of collection management and reference and information services.

Task: All circulation clerks, pages and technology assistants will complete a minimum of two training courses during the next year covering skills related to their jobs.

Goal: All ages can expect friendly guidance on how to locate the best information resources to meet their requests or needs.

Activity: Ensure that all Ralph Ellison staff provide consistently friendly and inviting service to customers of all ages.

Task: All staff will complete a minimum of one customer service training during the next year.

Task: All staff will strive to greet customers as they come into the library and walk around the building and ask customers if they need assistance.

Task: The manager will model expected behaviors and provide encouragement, incentives and time to discuss Tasks 1 and 2.

>Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access

Your library provides high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that you can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

Goal: All ages discover that their library offers current equipment, tools and training to allow them to responsibly access the digital world.

Activity: Increase awareness of technology-related resources and services offered at the library.

Task: Provide and promote programs that offer training in basic computer skills, new Web 2.0 technologies, online searching, resume creation and job skills, online genealogy

>>> Vision & Goals

reasearch and more.

Task: Visit local organizations, including schools, to talk about the resources and services the library has to offer.

Task: Hire an additional technology assistant to help promote technology resources and services.

Goal: Adults understand that using the Internet is beneficial to development for all ages.

Activity: Increase awareness and understanding of information services available on the Internet.

Task: Offer programs to introduce adults to information services available on the Internet, and to enable them to help their children use these services safely and responsibly.

Task: Provide informational materials in the computer area that explain how to safely use new Internet technologies, such as social networking and blogging websites.

Goal: All ages recognize and use the library's website (www.metrolibrary.org) and its resources as an extension of the physical library.

Activity: Increase awareness of resources available via the library's website.

Task: Provide one-on-one assistance both in person and over the phone in using the library's website.

Task: Promote awareness of the website through word-of-mouth marketing and radio and print advertising.

Service Plan 2009