



GENERATING CHANGE. TRANSFORMING LIVES.

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
STRATEGIC PLAN
2019-2023

MISSION

Vigo County Public Library generates positive change in the community by creating an environment of opportunity in which people can explore, expand their perspectives, and transform their own lives and the lives of future generations.

CORE VALUES

Inclusiveness

We respect individual perspectives and diverse backgrounds and make cultural and intellectual resources available to all.

Community

We are committed to and invested in the betterment of the community.

Collaboration

We work in concert with strategic partners to help the community flourish.

Innovation

We invigorate our community and stimulate a creative economy through inventive ideas and services.

Accountability

We manage our resources responsibly to maintain public trust.

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LETTER FROM LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION

Thank you for your interest in Vigo County Public Library's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. This plan reaffirms Vigo County Public Library's mission to generate positive change in the community by creating an environment of opportunity in which people can explore, expand their perspectives, and transform their own lives and the lives of future generations. In pursuit of our ambitious strategic goals built upon inclusiveness, community, collaboration, innovation, and accountability, we look forward to the profound impact we will generate in Vigo County.

This plan sets a bold vision and direction for how the Library will serve the residents of Vigo County over the next five years. As an evolving 21st century library, we will continue to build and strengthen community partnerships, support workforce and economic development efforts, encourage civic engagement, provide access to advanced technology and training, proactively reduce barriers to meet the unmet needs of our community, and continue to serve as a model for other public libraries.

In developing this plan, we set out to learn more from those who call Vigo County home. To better understand our community needs and challenges, we intently reviewed information from over 35 listening sessions conducted by United Way of the Wabash Valley. Administrative staff gleaned information through conversations with other local organizations including: Wabash Valley Community Foundation, Vigo County School Corporation, and the Chamber of Commerce. To synthesize and apply what we had learned, we collaborated with Robert Hoke, an Indianapolis-based consultant, to assist our efforts of evaluation, community research, strategic planning, and statistical analysis.

Community members and elected officials, students and teachers, business owners and entrepreneurs, not-for-profits and social services, artists and philanthropists – your voices directed each phase of the strategic planning process. It is our hope that you will hear your voice reflected in this plan to generate positive change and transform lives.

Sincerely,



Terry Jones
Vigo County Public Library
Board of Trustees President



Kristi Howe
Vigo County Public Library
Executive Director

Vigo County Public Library generates positive change in the community by creating an environment of opportunity in which people can explore, expand their perspectives, and transform their own lives and the lives of future generations.



GOAL ONE

GENERATE POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY

Vigo County Public Library has a unique place in the community as a neutral public forum for individuals, families, and local organizations. By serving as a community convener, the Library can promote and demonstrate the power of collaboration and the positive impact that community-wide involvement can have on the lives of Vigo County residents.



GOAL TWO

EMPOWER SUCCESS IN INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND THE COMMUNITY

The 21st century presents challenges that require the constant development of new skills in order to create a successful workforce and to encourage economic growth and vitality. Vigo County Public Library seeks to cultivate a community with strong literary skills, critical thinking abilities, creativity, and an interest in learning that continues throughout all stages of life.



GOAL THREE

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

Vigo County Public Library has a responsibility to ensure that all members of the community have easy access to Library services and resources. By taking advantage of new technologies, the Library will be able to reduce barriers that may be created for individuals and families based on the time or distance they may have to travel to the Main Library or West Branch Library.



FOUNDATIONAL GOAL

MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF FOUNDATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES AND OPERATIONS

Vigo County Public Library serves the public by providing services and resources that meet the current needs of the community. As those needs have changed, the Library has introduced new technologies, programs, and other services to adapt to new demands. While over 1,000 people visit our libraries each day, many Vigo County residents do not hold a Library card and may be unaware of the opportunities available to them. Likewise, they may have a need for services of which the Library is unaware. By exploring unmet needs, the Library will be able to better evaluate programs and services, increase access to and use of Library resources, and continue to define itself as a 21st century library.

Changing with Our Community

The Story of Vigo County Public Library

Libraries of today are vibrant centers of a community – a place for all people to gather and exchange ideas, learn something new, or to simply have fun. As such, we are uniquely positioned in the community as a neutral and welcoming space that is used by all people. Libraries, as community hubs, serve as a place to meet your neighbors, make new connections, and build community pride.

Vigo County residents and visitors have had access to some form of a public library since the founding of the County two centuries ago. In the beginning, the Library was a simple collection of books managed by an elected president and seven trustees, and was referenced as a local attraction in 1832, housing 800 volumes for a village of only 800-900 people. As our community evolved and grew, the public library evolved and grew along with it.

The Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library opened in 1906 with the innovation of a children’s space, scaled-down furnishings, and open access to the Library’s collections. It also contained meeting rooms, public restrooms, and plenty of public space for patrons to enjoy. The current Main Library opened in 1978, with progressive architecture and much needed space to expand collections and services.

West Terre Haute welcomed the addition of a library branch in 1961. In 2016, a former daycare facility near the community center was purchased and renovated. The updated West Branch Library is five times larger than the former building. Along with more space came much needed public meeting rooms, a teaching kitchen, and dedicated teen and children’s spaces all based on community feedback.

In our current locations, we have continued to evolve to meet emerging trends and community needs. Today’s library – with meeting spaces, public instruction, 3D printers, and virtual reality – would be unrecognizable to the residents of Vigo County in 1906.

The story of the Vigo County Public Library is one of transformation as we embrace the changing nature of the community around us. Libraries have always been places of opportunity and exploration, and the VCPL of today still subscribes to that traditional ideal. However, opportunity and exploration in the modern world look very different than the print-focused world of the 1900s. In the 21st century, we embrace our changing community and the strategic role the Library plays in advancing Terre Haute and Vigo County by generating change and transforming lives.





“Vigo County Public Library provides services and learning opportunities, free of cost, as well as a safe place for kids to have fun.

Often, I think the kids are having so much fun that they don’t realize how much they are learning at the same time.”

—Public Survey Response



GOAL ONE

***GENERATE POSITIVE
CHANGE IN THE
COMMUNITY***

HOW | **PROMOTE AND DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF COLLABORATION BY SERVING AS A COMMUNITY CONVENER.**

The Library is uniquely positioned in the community as a neutral organization that serves all people, young to old, rich to poor, black to white, Muslim to Christian, gay to straight, new immigrant to founding families, and everyone in between and on the fringes. We embrace this role to bring together community groups and area libraries to build collaborations that create positive change.

HOW | **CHAMPION POSITIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

A climate of divisiveness harms our ability to work collaboratively. Strong communities are built by and thrive within an environment of inclusiveness and diversity. The Library has a historic role as a neutral public forum that can facilitate respectful conversation surrounding opposing viewpoints.

HOW | **BUILD AND SUPPORT A POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMAGE.**

Like many communities, Vigo County has a long and rich history, yet struggles with a persistent negative image. The Library has a duty to preserve the past, honor the present, and shape the future. By helping promote a positive image and encouraging paths to improvement, the Library can highlight Vigo County's vibrant history and help build a strong community-focused future.

Vigo County features public art galleries, museums, including CANDLES Holocaust museum, theaters, and many music venues, including a symphony orchestra.

Even with abundant free or low-cost amenities, many residents maintain a negative attitude of Terre Haute and Vigo County. Fifty percent of Library survey-takers believe the Library should be a primary leader in generating community pride (VCPL Strategic Plan - Public Survey, 2018). The Library generates awareness of the positive resources and services available to our community.



GOAL TWO

***EMPOWER
INDIVIDUALS,
FAMILIES, AND THE
COMMUNITY TO
SUCCEED***

HOW | CULTIVATE LITERACY, LEARNING, AND CRITICAL THINKING.

By tradition, libraries are grounded in literacy education. In the 21st century, literacy is no longer limited to reading text, but now includes a much larger set of abilities: reading and understanding multiple platforms, as well as applying analytical skills and critical thinking. By continuing to promote multiple literacies to all ages, abilities, and income levels, the Library will help community members develop 21st century skills.

HOW | FUEL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC VITALITY.

Growing and vibrant communities and economies are driven by a skillful and experienced workforce. The Library's existing partnerships with workforce development agencies and its established role as a community collaborator creates an environment to support individuals seeking employment while encouraging entrepreneurs in their endeavors.

HOW | INSPIRE CREATIVITY AND ENCOURAGE SELF-EXPRESSION.

Creativity is a key component of 21st century skills, and the Library has the ability to create a safe environment for self-expression and the sometimes difficult conversations those expressions may generate. Creative endeavors are also instrumental in developing interest in the maker economy, which in turn fuels entrepreneurship. Creative expression enhances the quality of life for individuals as well as the community surrounding them.

Nearly 108,000 people call Vigo County home. Boasting four institutions of higher education, stunning outdoor recreational opportunities, and a revitalized downtown – it is a beautiful place to call home.

Despite these advantages, 46% of households in Vigo County struggle to afford basic needs (United Way ALICE Report, 2018). By providing skills training for individuals, the Library seeks to improve the circumstances of struggling members of our community.



GOAL THREE

***CREATE AN
ENVIRONMENT OF
OPPORTUNITY***

HOW | INCREASE EQUAL ACCESS BY REDUCING BARRIERS.

As taxpayer-funded entities that have consistently served as society's great equalizer, libraries have a responsibility to ensure the reduction or elimination of barriers – regardless of type – that impact access to services. Opportunities cannot be seized if they are out of reach, and increased access deepens the impact of library services as a community investment. Reducing barriers creates potential for inspired and extended impact throughout Vigo County.

HOW | EXPAND AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES AND SERVICES.

Technology has transformed methods for accessing and utilizing resources and services, and the Library is committed to exploring additional opportunities to expand the availability of those resources and services to residents throughout the county. Access to Library services should not be limited by the locations or operating hours of Library facilities. The Library will continue to implement new technologies that support the creation of innovative services and methods of resource delivery.

HOW | ADVANCE TECHNOLOGY, TECHNOLOGY TRAINING, AND DIGITAL LITERACY.

In the 21st century, everyone should have access to quality information, including digital content. As professionals trained in technology and digital literacy, Library staff are uniquely positioned to assist community members in learning about the opportunities and risks associated with new technology. Technology skills are already a prerequisite for job searching and gainful employment, and a highly tech-savvy community is well-positioned for economic growth.

Serving as the birthplace of the iconic Coca-Cola bottle and headquarters of Hulman & Co., maker of Clabber Girl Baking Soda, Vigo County has long established itself as an innovative community.

Over 11,000 Vigo County homes do not have broadband internet (US Census Bureau, 2017). The Library is committed to providing innovative technologies and a dedicated space to allow for creative exploration and development to continue our community's innovative history.



FOUNDATIONAL GOAL

A background photograph of a library. In the foreground, a young girl with her hair in a bun is looking down at a book. Behind her, another child is partially visible. The shelves are filled with books, and the lighting is soft and natural.

***MAXIMIZE IMPACT
OF FOUNDATIONAL
LIBRARY SERVICES
AND OPERATIONS***

HOW | **EXPLORE UNMET COMMUNITY NEEDS.**

Community needs are continually evolving; the Library is committed to adapting to address those needs. Many community members who do not regularly access the Library may not be aware of the resources and technology offered, or the Library is not aware of their specific customer needs. Learning more about unmet needs allows the Library to be intentional in exploring new services to address those needs.

HOW | **CONDUCT SYSTEMATIC EVALUATIONS OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND PROCEDURES.**

To alleviate stagnation, identify needed services, and improve programs and events, the Library will emphasize evaluation to gauge success and customer satisfaction.

HOW | **ADAPT TO EMERGING NEEDS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES.**

Methods of accessing information and services are quickly changing. As new technology develops, the Library will need to evaluate and update systems, software, and devices to improve services and programs.

As an award-winning community asset, Vigo County Public Library has demonstrated success as a community leader and advocate for all community members. The Library's local awards include: TREES Inc.'s Beautiful Business Award (2018), Maple Center for Integrative Health's Breastfeeding Friendly Business Award (2018), and United Way of the Wabash Valley's Richard D. Newport Award (2019). The Library's state recognition includes Indiana Library Federation's Programming Award (2017) and Indiana Library Federation's Outstanding Library Award (2018).

As the Library continues to receive accolades, we encourage you to join us as we roll up our sleeves to better Vigo County's families, small businesses, and community.

HOW | FACILITATE IMPACT THROUGH PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.


The public survey indicates that residents view facilities and technology as Library strengths in improving quality of life. As community needs evolve, it is essential for library infrastructure to be updated and strengthened to support use of physical facilities and electronic resources and technologies. The Library will continue to build and expand the capacity to be a center of collaboration and community-building, as well as a reliable and innovative provider of technology.

HOW | ALIGN ALL LIBRARY FUNCTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC GOALS.

Success of strategic goals heavily depends on support from all areas of the Library, including non-public services. By creating an atmosphere of shared responsibility and ownership among staff, we can guarantee the success of this plan.

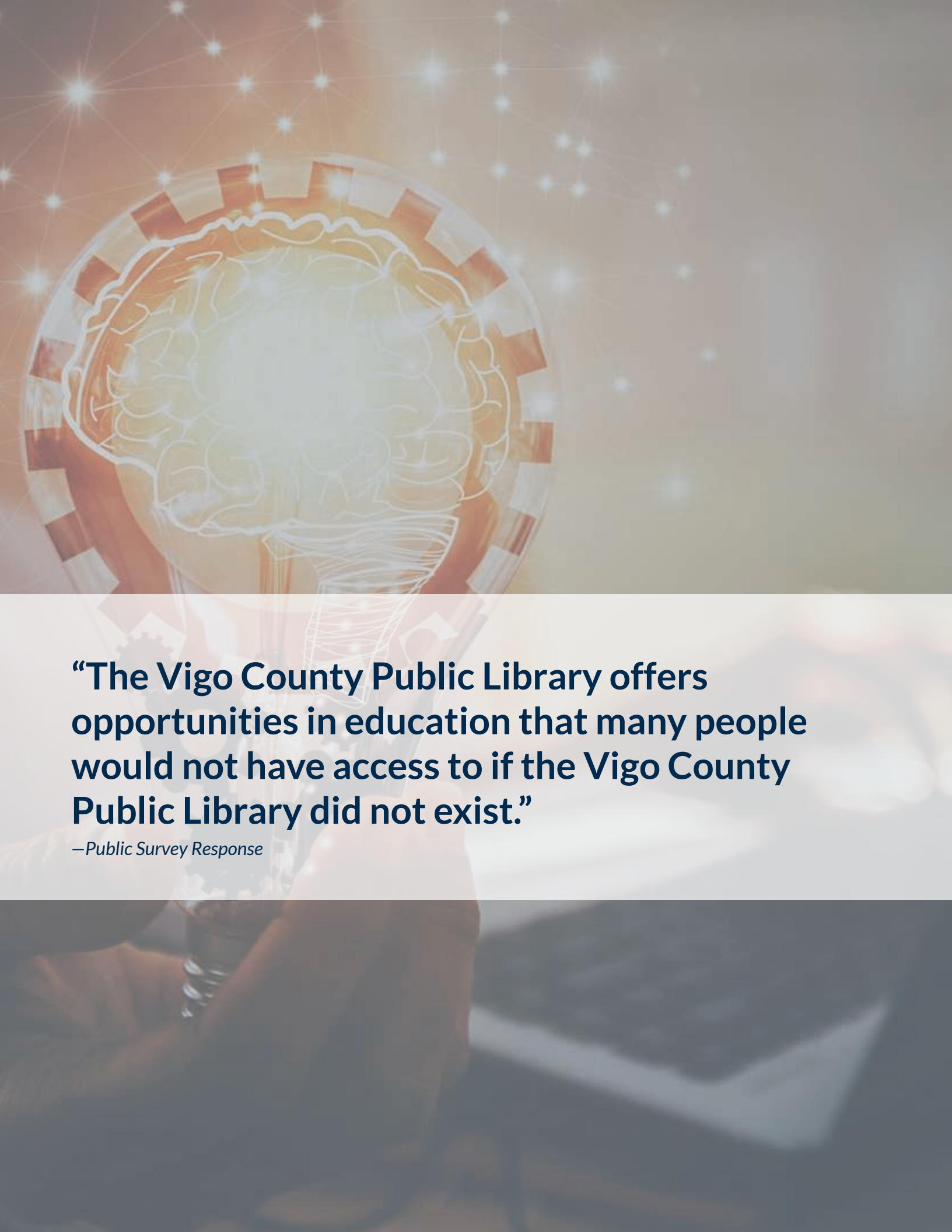
HOW | ENSURE RESPONSIBLE USE OF FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES.

As stewards of taxpayer and donor resources, the Library board and staff commit to financial transparency and accountability. Allocation of financial resources is and will continue to be managed responsibly and with due diligence. Additionally, the Library acknowledges that without highly capable staff, the Library's mission will never be achieved. The management and development of staff is essential work carried out by trained professionals and supplemented by formal education, community engagement, and support from the Human Resources department.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a patterned jacket, is leaning over a table and interacting with several children. The children are focused on an activity on the table, which appears to be a large sheet of paper or a map. The background shows other people and a white tent structure, suggesting an outdoor community event or library fair. The scene is brightly lit, and the overall atmosphere is one of engagement and learning.

“The public library improves the quality of life in our community because it provides equal access to information, promotes literacy, and encourages activities that broaden perspectives about local, national, and worldwide issues.”

—Public Survey Response

A glowing brain is depicted inside a lightbulb, which is surrounded by gears. The background features a network of white stars connected by thin lines, set against a warm, orange-toned gradient. The overall image conveys themes of technology, education, and innovation.

“The Vigo County Public Library offers opportunities in education that many people would not have access to if the Vigo County Public Library did not exist.”

—Public Survey Response

“The Vigo County Public Library is vital to the members of this community, offering and instructing people [towards a] path for success. The more educated people in the community – the better the community.”

–Public Survey Response

ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director
Kristi Howe

Director of Public Services
Margo Wilson

Director of Support Services
Dennis Callahan

Director of Technology & Special Services
Heather Rayl

Adult Services Manager
Susan Jakaitis

Business Office Manager
Dennis Shepard

Facilities Manager
Jeff Crews

Human Resources Manager
Rob Fox

Information Systems & Technology Systems Manager
Curt Huffman

Lending Services Manager
Andrew Akers

Program & Event Manager
Sarah Trover

Public Relations Manager
Elizabeth Scamihorn

Special Collections Manager
Seth James

Tech Team Manager
Bonnie McNair

Technical Services Manager
Lauren Elyea

West Branch Library Manager
Eric Fisher

Youth Services Manager
Lauri Chandler

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GENERATING CHANGE. TRANSFORMING LIVES.

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