

Pioneer Library System's guiding principal is to "help our libraries reach their full potential." Given the dynamism and energy of our member libraries, we've given ourselves a difficult assignment. Our work sometimes feels like catching a comet by the tail.

That's why in 2016, we focused on the following five strategic priorities to help us support our libraries in their constant growth.

1) Increase access to local history collections.

Our member libraries came together to form a Local History Working Group, which has been diligently compiling an inventory of libraries' local history collections. Now that we know the breadth of our libraries' collections, we have been able to add records to the OWWL Catalog and provide grant funding to support the digitization of materials, allowing researchers from around the world to access the rich history of this region.

2) Help libraries achieve higher bandwidth levels.

This year, our libraries quadrupled the amount of bandwidth they are able to provide their patrons. In order to help libraries feel financially ready to take this important step, Pioneer technology staff brought network support services in-house and the Pioneer Library System Board of Trustees decided to subsidize libraries' bandwidth costs. We hope this move forward will help make sure every resident of the Pioneer region, even those living in the county's most rural communities, will have access to the technology they need to find employment, learn new skills, succeed in school, and become fully engaged digital citizens.

3) Support personnel development at member libraries.

We know that member libraries' staff is the System's greatest asset. Supporting the professional growth of our library staff is the most gratifying and humbling work that we do. It's inspiring to see these strong leaders and advocates in action and it is our great pleasure to provide training opportunities and consulting services to meet their needs. I always learn as much as, if not more than, I share anytime I speak with a library director, staff person, or trustee.

4) Help libraries create new experiences.

Of course this is a goal that will never get crossed off our list, but because of the ever-changing nature of libraries, we know it's a goal worth pursuing. Our intent is to create low-risk opportunities for libraries to try new things and create unexpected experiences for library patrons. We hope our Mobile Maker Kits, for example, have made it easy for libraries to offer hands-on science, technology, and arts programming.

5) Partner in 1,000 Books before Kindergarten Efforts.

Research has shown that being read to at home is the most reliable predictor of school success. Reading to newborns, infants, and toddlers helps close the vocabulary gap and prepares children with the skills they need to succeed in kindergarten. Our member libraries play a critical role in early literacy education, so we've provided grants and seed money to support the creation of early literacy play areas and launch 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten programs. It is very exciting to see the creative ideas implemented by our member libraries.

The successes of the Pioneer Library System are merely an indication of the great successes of our member libraries. To everyone gathered here today, thank you for allowing the Pioneer Library System to be a part of the amazing work you do on behalf of your communities. I'm looking forward to another year of blazing forward with you.