

**Hennen's Public Library Planner:
A Manual and Interactive CD-
ROM**

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(Still waiting for full CIP info – has been ordered)

Dedication

To my Father,
who taught me that
thinking in rows and columns
won't stop your dreams.

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Preface

Successful library planners need a broad range of principles and data as well as vision and resolve. *Hennen's Public Library Planner: A Manual and Interactive CD-ROM* provides the tools and perspectives necessary to plan great library services. Its underlying philosophy is that while every library and its plan should be unique to its community, no plan should be developed without comparison to other libraries. Plans should be developed based on principles and policies common to the grand ongoing experiment that is the American Public Library.

A winning library needs to go forward to basics, not back to basics. The basics include solid budgeting and finances, good policy development, and attention to what others have done well.

Purpose

Hennen's Public Library Planner recognizes that while developing a library plan can be relatively easy, creating an *effective* plan is a true challenge. Effective planning does not start when an authority calls for a plan, nor does it stop when the planning committee presents its report; effective library planning is ongoing.

Audience

Hennen's Public Library Planner: A Manual and Interactive CD-ROM is intended for passionate people who want to make public libraries great. It is for library administrators, boards, and staff. It's specifically for the "library planner's"—different stakeholders

(the board, administration, council, planning committee, and so on) who have different responsibilities at different points in planning. It addresses the roles and responsibilities of each for the plan and for its implementation. Library Friends groups, elected officials, and library users will also find much information of value. The manual is for use with graduate school students in management and planning courses as well.

Perspective

The text differs from other public library planning books. It recommends that a library do comparisons with other libraries of comparable size and provides convenient methods for doing so. It insists that planners take inventories of current library policies and activities and address changes in written plans.

Hennen's Public Library Planner tackles nearly every aspect of effective public library planning. It deals with the substantial differences in governance, budgeting, and political structures of the 9,000 public libraries in the country. These differences matter for effective planning and all the planners need to bear them in mind.

This manual also examines many of the forces affecting today's American libraries. When planning, how do they learn how to "think outside the box"? More modestly, how do they simply reinvent the box that they are in? For example, changing the political or governance structure of a library is rare, of course, but planners should consider their options carefully in every planning cycle. The section on special planning issues addresses a number of these issues, including changing the form of organization of the library to a district or joint library and establishing alternative funding sources like impact fees or e-commerce.

Libraries with effective plans improve their funding, service profile, and their customer satisfaction ratings. Using the methods outlined in *Hennen's Public Library Planner*, I have worked with libraries to achieve a number of important things. Here are some planning success stories:

The National Association of Counties presented a 2002 National Achievement Award to Wisconsin's Waukesha

County Federated Library System for planning efforts using the techniques presented in this book. A few examples involve libraries of various sizes with greatly differing needs.

In one small library, the written plan came up for approval by the city council the same night that they first got the news of the most major cut in state revenue in a generation. The mayor, a participant in the planning process, spoke eloquently of the need to restore the library to its rightful place in the municipal service profile. Notwithstanding the state budget cuts, the council endorsed the plan to continue seeking a new building and to implement its first ever automated circulation system.

A major report on the potential merger of two entire communities (not just the library operation) was being discussed for a suburban city of 7,000 and an adjacent city of 13,000. One city had an existing but cramped and substandard library. The other city had no library, relying instead on existing state and county provisions for library extension and funding. The communities requested a particularly challenging type of plan that looked at three alternatives: a stand-alone city library, a second stand-alone city library, and a joint library. Further challenges included mandatory county library standards, a devastating impact on county funding, and a city administrator's recommendation to close the existing library because of the state budget crisis noted above! Despite the complexity of the challenges, the plan outlined the options,^β and it is anticipated that the library will be in new quarters by the end of the year.

Another community of 6,000 built a new library in a rapidly expanding community just five years before but found itself quickly running out of space. Its effective service territory was at least twice the population of the city and within ten years will easily be over four times its current size. The planning effort resulted in the development of an impact fee policy that generat-

ed a fee of about \$400 for each new house built in the community. The funding will help pay for the needed expansion of the library and its collection.

A community of 40,000 with one of the best HAPLR ratings in the country, a new building, and a very high rate of local support developed a plan using these principles. The planners resolved to build on the current great service profile and, among other things, become, in the words of the board president, “the premier digital library in the Midwest, if not the nation.”

Percentile Comparisons

Hennen's Public Library Planner touches on nearly every aspect of effective public library planning. In the cases where more in-depth discussion may be needed—building planning, technology planning, budgeting, bonding, and referendum planning—reliable sources are recommended in the text and in the bibliography.

I developed Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) to compare library performance on key measures. I believe HAPLR to be a useful tool, of course, but using this manual in no way requires library planners to use HAPLR ratings.

The comparisons in the percentile measures section allow planners to gauge where they are by comparison to other libraries their size. Not every library will choose to try to be in the top percentile for every library measure. An affluent suburban community with no problems with total municipal debt and tax loads will make different choices than will a struggling and impoverished one or an underfunded library in a rapidly growing community. The important thing is to look at how the library compares and then make informed choices.

Organization

The book deals with the three main parts of the planning process: Planning to Plan, Considering Essential Background Information, and Developing and Implementing the Plan.

Part I, “Planning to Plan,” offers three chapters.

Chapter 1, “Setting the Stage” discusses assessing motivation, deciding on whether to use a consultant, determining the plan writer, accomplishing preliminary tasks, and establishing a budget.

Chapter 2, “Designing a Long Range Planning Document,” examines getting initial impressions, asking overview questions, and establishing planning trends and outlines. It also looks at more than a dozen separate elements, including the executive summary, process description, mission and value statements, state standards, timelines, goals, and budgets.

Chapter 3, “Building Consensus for the Planning Elements,” discusses setting rules, getting support, developing a vision, employing consensus-building tools, utilizing surveys and questionnaires, and communicating the planning process and the plan.

Part II, “Considering Essential Background Information” consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 4, “Using Comparative Data Effectively,” contains a variety of information about data including data comparisons, demographics, federal and state data and statistics, and presentation of data graphically.

Chapter 5, “Establishing Library Standards and Percentile Comparisons,” gives not only a history of library standards, but also a list of current numerical and prescriptive standards, instructions and examples of staff certification, an explanation of how standards vary from state-to-state, and suggestions of how to use this data to set the standards for your own library.

Chapter 6, “Integrating Financial and Governance Issues into the Plan,” talks about control and custody of funds, various types of taxation, audits and GASB 34, types of funds, library debt management, and everything else you need to know about proper fund handling for your library.

Part III, “Developing and Implementing the Plan” consists of four chapters.

Chapter 7, “Defining Major Planning Sections,” covers electronic services, collection development, technology, access and facilities, staffing and personnel matters, and other service issues.

Chapter 8, "Considering New Organizational Options," asks the question: "Are Wider Library Units Wiser?" and expands on other considerations for new forms of governance for your library.

Chapter 9, "Using the Planning Checklist to Revise Policies," covers issues such as governance, funding, staffing, continuing education, special needs, reference services, and library policy revisions.

Chapter 10, "Writing and Implementing the Plan," includes all the practical material that's essential for the processes involved in writing and implementing your library's plan.

Part IV, "Hennen's Handbook of Support Material" includes a bibliography with over one hundred valuable sources – including books in ten basic planning areas as well as links to trustee manuals, outcome based measures, and outcome assessments.

This handbook also furnishes useful material that includes: HAPLR ratings information, recommended percentile measures for library comparisons, a sample impact fee statement, and two very different public library plans.

As the dedication indicates, I think in rows and columns. I provide numerous checklists and spreadsheets to help guide planners, but I have tried to remember throughout what my father taught me about not letting the rows and columns get in the way of the dreams. Without the details, dreams of greatness remain just dreams. Never let the dreamers ignore the rows, the columns, and the bottom line; but also never let the spreadsheet users obscure the vision.

Acknowledgements

In acknowledgements, the author's family often comes last, but not here. My wife Valerie has been the unacknowledged co-author of *everything* I have ever published, including this book. No author could ask for a better editor or a better friend. My son Tom worked on much of the spreadsheet and Web site design for this book and the HAPLR ratings—thanks. My loving daughter Rachel has taken a keen interest in my writing at all times, never fails to encourage me when I get down, and has become a key assistant in the process of preparing library reports—so thanks. Other members of my extended family, and there are many, dealt cheerfully with missed graduations, parties, and other responsibilities as I worked on the book. Thanks especially to my mother, who has been encouraging me to write a book since the third grade, and to my father, who, to our great sadness, did not live to see the book.

Thanks must go to the many library boards that allowed me to help them plan. Each of them taught me much. The Brookfield Public Library Plan is reprinted with permission. The Barbara Sanborn Library in Pewaukee and the libraries in Big Bend, Butler, Eagle, Menomonee Falls, Mukwonago, and Town Hall joined the Waukesha County Federated Library System in planning endeavors.

Dave Polodna of Winding Rivers Library System graciously allowed the printing of the Planning Issues Checklist in Chapter 2. A great staff helped with these plans as part of their library system duties. Thanks to Claudia Backus, Diane Barwinski, Nancy Fletcher, Laurie Freund, Nancy Hause, Sandy Jaeger, and Mellanie Mercier.

Thanks must also go to the excellent editorial staff at *American Libraries* magazine, including Leonard Kniffel, Beverly Goldberg, Karen G. Schneider, and Gordon Flagg. All have edited articles I have written on HAPLR ratings, library standards, library districts, and budgets in the red. Substantial portions of those articles, much improved by their editorial assistance, are included in this book.

John Carlo Bertot, Charles McClure, Joe Ryan, and ALA publications deserve credit for permission to reprint the networked environment tables (Figures 7-1 and 7-2). The PUBLIB listserv, co-moderated by Karen Schneider and Sara Weissman, provides over 5,000 public librarians a unique sounding board for the discussion of public library issues. I greatly appreciate the advice and suggestions on this book, HAPLR ratings, and other issues that members have provided to me as “DatCalmGuy” over the years since I started subscribing in 1998.

It is no wonder that public library professionals so highly value Neal-Schuman books. They have an extraordinary editorial staff. Charles Harmon provided prompt and efficient editorial direction and forgave ill-considered e-mails from the author—thanks. Michael Kelly provided expert guidance and support throughout the production process.

Did I mention that my wife is a great editor and my best friend? Oh, yeah, that's where the acknowledgements began. What better place to end? Except for this: She thinks I look sexy in the kitchen with a mop in hand. Is that effective planning for clean floors, or what?

What's On the CD-ROM?

All 104 figures (including the two sample plans, and the sample impact fee statement) are included on the CD-ROM as either Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or as Microsoft Word documents (see the complete list on page xx.) The Interactive Element of the CD-ROM—the Capital Cost Calculator

The attached CD includes a handy tool that the author has developed for projecting capital costs. Planners will need to collect the needed data—population, tax base, square feet needed, interest rate for funds borrowed, term of the loan, and so forth. Once the data are available, the spreadsheet allows planners to experiment with an infinite number of “what if” scenarios (Note that the CD also has instructions for how to change the parameters for each slider bar if they do not meet your needs.).

Library planners often find themselves asked to estimate the costs of building a new library. The answer to the question depends on many factors and can be highly controversial, so be very careful.

The *Capital Cost Calculator* can be very effective for planners when used with a computer and projected on a screen for the library board or a community group. It is then easy to demonstrate that there is no one “answer” to the “how much will it cost” question. There are several uncertain variables affecting the cost—how the bids for various components come in, how large the building is (something that is usually not known for certain in the early stages of a program), the size and term of the loan, and the prevailing interest rates.

How to use the Interactive "Capital Cost Calculator" on the CD

Enter your library's name in cell C1. Enter the population served in cell C2, and the total property tax base in cell C3 (Note that property value assessments vary quite widely in the U.S. Some jurisdictions require property to be assessed at or near full market value while others allow assessment for tax purposes to be as little as 5 or 10 percent of market value.). In cell E23, the national "average" is listed at \$60,000 using full market value, but if your jurisdiction assesses at, say, 33% of market value, you will want to re-set this value to 33 percent of \$60,000 or \$20,000 to get a proper comparison.)

Do not change any other values directly in their cells; move the horizontal slider bars back and forth to change the values.

This is what a slider bar looks like:

On the spreadsheet, you can either pull the tab along horizontally or press one of the left or right arrows to move it. Moving it will change the values in the cells in column D. If you want the value to be zero, move it all the way to the left.

By moving the slider bar in column C from left to right, you can adjust building costs, equipment costs, site costs, and other costs in lines 6 to 9; column D, the combined cost per square foot, will total automatically. The national averages in Column E will remain the same and your new rate compared to the national average will be automatically calculated as a percentage in Column F.

By moving the slider bar in column C from left to right, you can change the number of square feet you need in line 11, column D. The total cost for buildings and furnishings will be calculated in column D, line 12.

If you are adding volumes, use the slider bars to specify the number and estimated cost in lines 13 and 14. Combined building and volume costs will be calculated in line 16.

Next, specify the percent of the costs in line 16 to be financed by borrowing.

Now select the bond interest rate in line 18 and the amortization period for the loan in line 19. The annual payments as well as total principle and interest are calculated in lines 20 and 21.

The last four calculations provide context.

Tax capacity is a measure used by planners. More affluent communities have higher tax capacities. A tax capacity of \$60,000 per person is cited as "average." That would mean that the typical home with about three residents is worth a market value rate of about \$180,000.

The building size is indicated in square feet per capita.

Payments per capita and per \$1000 of market value are provided because these are the most commonly used measures for evaluating taxes.

Introduction

Library Planning in the U.S.

In 1950 R.M. McColvin¹ made an observation that is all the more true today:

“Library services that are not based on high standards are probably not worth bothering about at all. Many of the public libraries operating throughout the world are an extravagant waste of public money because they are too bad to do anything that is worth doing. *A good library is never an extravagance, a bad one always is.*”

The long-range planning advice provided to libraries by library leaders has evolved over the years. For over a hundred years, public librarians have debated about whether librarians should *lead* or *follow* public tastes in the materials they select.

Over a half century ago social scientist Robert D. Leigh challenged the library community to examine its “Library Faith” and consider the tension between quality selection and public demand for materials.² He defined six fields of knowledge and interest to which the public library should devote its resources that are echoed by the roles set in 1987 by the Public Library Association (PLA) for the first edition of its *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries*.

In 1977 Vernon E. Palmour, former director of Baltimore County Library, became the chief investigator of a research project funded by the U.S. Office of Education to prepare a manual for community libraries engaged in long-range planning. In earlier decades at Baltimore County Library System, he and others had

pushed the "give them what they want theory" of book selection and services. That put him "beyond the pale" in the eyes of many of the "we select for quality" librarians of the time.

In 1980 the American Library Association (ALA) published Vernon Palmour's *A Planning Process for Public Libraries*, a volume that marked the abandonment of standards in favor of planning for outputs. The decade-long endeavor of the PLA to revise the 1966 public library standards came to a close.

In 1987 ALA published *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries*, by Charles R. McClure, Amy Owen, Douglas L. Zweizig, Mary Jo Lynch, and Nancy A. Van House, a revision and simplification of the 1980 document intended primarily for use by small- and medium-sized public libraries. The document identified eight distinctive roles for library service roles.

The old standards published by ALA from the 1940s through 1966, judged inputs only: books owned, magazines subscribed to, hours open, staff available, and spending per capita.

Palmour and others of the "new school," emphasized outputs: circulation, visits, in-library use data, collection turnover, user satisfaction rates (did they find what they wanted or go away empty-handed?), use of materials in the library, and so forth.

For many years in the library community there was something of a civil war over planning and library assessment. On one side were those who wanted to "give the public what it wants," and pump up circulation numbers. On the other side stood those who wanted to maintain input standards and then let the librarians choose materials tastefully, regardless of the circulation numbers. This civil war ended in an armistice rather than a victory for either side. ALA opted for a "Planning Process" that let library planners choose the type of library services they wanted for the community regardless of input standards (or indeed, it seemed, output measures).

Individual states were left with the task of setting standards. ALA pursued planning processes and output measures while the states dealt with inputs. In my HAPLR ratings, I have tried to reunite the input and output threads. I believe that both are important and that a library must tailor its services to the community served.

We need thoughtful planning at the local level in reasonably sized units, and wider units may be wiser. We must measure outputs and be willing to compare them to one another. We must also specify minimum standards for libraries. Otherwise a collection of cast off books and *National Geographic* magazines can be called a library and demean the very name “library” for all adequate and excellent libraries everywhere.

Of course, having created the HAPLR ratings, I am very partial to them, but let this be said clearly from the outset: the HAPLR ratings, numbers, and methodology do not need to be used in order to use the planning process indicated in this book.

Our Business Plan

What has kept libraries going through the years is that we have a business plan inspired by and fueled by passionate beliefs. Not only do libraries keep their promise to share knowledge and seek wisdom—whether through print or nonprint (now electronic) sources, and we do so at bargain prices. The longevity of libraries is society’s reward.

For most businesses, it is an axiom that if an agency consistently meets or exceeds all expectations, soon enough the customer expectations will change. The result is a never-ending treadmill of higher quality and higher expectations. The axiom’s converse is not deemed to be true in a competitive environment—customers usually change businesses when a firm consistently disappoints them. The exception to that rule is in a monopoly setting. Libraries may have felt we had a near monopoly in the past, but with the Internet barking in the foreground and cybercafes and mega bookstores baying in the background, few public librarians feel immune any longer.

Fundamentals Matter

All too often libraries get caught up in the data gathering, mission development, and role selection and ignore the fundamentals. Any library needs some fundamental standards to be minimally effective. After these fundamentals, library planners should choose

roles, set objectives, and do the other elements of the planning process, but *first* they should go “forward to basics” by having the necessary policies and procedures on hand and up to date. Going forward to basics also means comparing the library to other libraries in a comprehensive and consistent manner. This book will provide the tools to supply those basics now and in the future.

Many libraries are already doing planning, of course. All too often, a library finishes an entire planning process and still lacks such fundamental things as a personnel policy, a selection policy, an Internet acceptable use policy, a comprehensible budget, or a host of other essentials! A library could avoid comparing itself to any other libraries in the state or nation and not realize that it has not even begun to live up to its potential. These things should not happen if you follow the advice in this book.

It is not just about the planning process; it is about implementing the plan. Different stakeholders (the board, administration, council, planning committee, and so on) have different responsibilities at different points in planning. Some of the issues and suggestions in this book should *not* be dealt with by the planning committee. The administration or the board will need to deal directly with issues such as the Comprehensive Annual Financial Review, the bylaws of the board, or policies for staff.

This book challenges library planners to assure that their library has the fundamental policies and budgets in place, but it goes further. It provides checklists for planners that can help assure that basic accounting, legal, and management issues have been covered. It also challenges library planners to compare their library's profile with other comparable libraries in the country and to ask hard questions about the library's past, present, and future performance.

Notes

1. L.R. McColvin, (Paris: UNESCO, 1950), 103.
2. *The Public Library in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), sponsored by the American Library Association and supported with funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

