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200 N. MAIN STREET, RM 300
LOS ANGELES 90012
(213) 978-7200
www.lacity.org/ctr

June 10, 2009

Honorable Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor
Honorable Rockard J. Delgadillo, City Attorney
Honorable Members of the City Council

**SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC
LIBRARY'S 2007-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN**

I am releasing the enclosed report titled "Performance Audit of the Los Angeles Public Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan." A copy of this report was provided to the Los Angeles Public Library.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Farid Saffar, Director of Auditing, at (213) 978-7392.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rushmore D. Cervantes', is written over the typed name.

RUSHMORE D. CERVANTES
Acting City Controller

Enclosure



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June 10, 2009

Ms. Kris Morita, Interim City Librarian
Los Angeles Public Library
630 West Fifth Street, 4th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Dear Ms. Morita:

Enclosed is a report titled "Performance Audit of the Los Angeles Public Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan." A draft of this report was provided to you on May 18, 2009, and discussed at an exit conference on June 1, 2009. We considered your Department's comments prior to finalizing this report.

Please review the final report and advise the Controller's Office by July 13, 2009, on planned actions you will take to implement the recommendations. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (213) 978-7392.

Sincerely,

for 
FARID SAFFAR, CPA
Director of Auditing

Enclosure

cc: Robin Kramer, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Jimmy Blackman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Miriam Scott Long, Deputy Mayor, Office of the Mayor
Raymond P. Ciranna, Interim City Administrative Officer
Tyree Wieder, President, Board of Library Commissioners
June Lagmay, City Clerk
Gerry F. Miller, Chief Legislative Analyst
Independent City Auditors



**City of Los Angeles
Office of the Controller**

**Performance Audit of the
Los Angeles Public Library's
2007-2010 Strategic Plan**

June 10, 2009

**Rushmore D. Cervantes
Acting City Controller**

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY'S 2007-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Controller's Office has completed a performance audit of the Los Angeles Public Library's (Library) 2007-2010 Strategic Plan. The primary objective of the audit was to conduct an independent assessment of the Library's processes in implementing and monitoring its current Strategic Plan.

The audit was performed in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards and covered activities from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 which represents the Strategic Plan's first year of implementation. Fieldwork was conducted between November 2008 and March 2009 and focused on the Department's goals and objectives.

BACKGROUND

A well-administered organization must incorporate strategic planning, effective and efficient service provision, and on-going evaluation to carry out its mission. Planning allows for the development of a comprehensive strategy to meet identified needs, objectives, goals and priorities. Service provision ensures priorities are met and are administered according to policies and procedures. Evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the organization in meeting the goals and objectives that were defined during planning. The results of an ongoing evaluative process should then be used to inform future plans, to consistently and successfully achieve an organization's mission.

Strategic planning is not a new concept for the Library. The Library developed a master facilities plan in 1988 to build or renovate 64 branch library facilities and develop a technology infrastructure. The Branch Facilities Plan was the Library's blueprint to utilize over \$230 million in bond funds from back-to-back bond measures in 1989 and 1998. Good planning and oversight enabled the Library to complete its building program on time and under budget, and made it possible to build an additional six facilities.

In 2005, building from the success of the Branch Facilities Plan, the Library embarked on a strategic planning process for operations to address library services, facilities needs and population growth. Library management indicated that discussions with the Mayor also helped guide their decision to develop a comprehensive and wide-ranging plan outlining the Department's goals and objectives. A consulting firm, Dubberly Garcia Associates, Inc., which specializes in library consulting, was hired to create the Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan. Input from Library management and staff, the Board of Library Commissioners and the public helped formulate the Strategic Plan.

Public feedback was acquired through the system-wide 2005 Customer Satisfaction Survey which considered the input of more than 9,500 City residents.

A Strategic Plan Committee comprised of Library administrators and staff conducted several focus group meetings to gather input, interviewed stakeholders, identified library strengths and opportunities, and reviewed prior performance results and surveys to establish performance measures that would inform the Department as to how well its goals were being met. Department management indicated that the Strategic Plan adheres to the guidelines set forth by both the Public Library Association and the American Library Association.

In 2007, the Library adopted a three-year Strategic Plan that contains eight broad goals, with related objectives, activities and operational initiatives. Goals help the Library succeed in its core mission and objectives help measure the success of the goals. Activities pertain to the actual services planned to achieve the goals, and the initiatives are actions intended to increase operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

The eight goals are aligned with the Library's mission which is *"To provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books, and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city's diverse communities."* The goals address providing service, facilities, technology and materials, assisting with literacy and expanding cultural awareness as illustrated below:

1. **Improve our communities** - *People of all ages will be served by libraries that are vibrant neighborhood centers which are attractive, safe and welcoming places to meet and interact with others. (includes 7 quantifiable objectives)*
2. **Bring technology's benefits to everyone** - *Customers will have access to technology that connects them to the world of information and enables them to communicate with others, anywhere at anytime. (includes 7 quantifiable objectives)*
3. **Help students succeed** - *Children and teens in Los Angeles will have resources that assist them with their assignments and help them succeed in school. (includes 6 quantifiable objectives)*
4. **Provide reading readiness** - *Infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Los Angeles will have access to collections, programs, and services that will help them develop a lifelong love of books, reading, and learning. (includes 4 quantifiable objectives)*
5. **Support lifelong learning** - *Teens and adults will have access to collections and programs that support their personal and career growth. (includes 5 quantifiable objectives)*
6. **Offer new and popular material now** - *Children, teens, and adults will have access to materials, programs, and services that stimulate the imagination and*

7. **Create a literate city** - *Adults in Los Angeles will have access to materials and services that enable them to acquire basic literacy skills. (includes 5 quantifiable objectives)*
8. **Expand Cultural Awareness** - *All Los Angeles residents will have access to collections, services, and programs that promote cultural understanding and celebrate the city's cultural diversity. (includes 4 quantifiable objectives)*

Many of the Controller's audits note that City departments lack a documented vision and strategic plan to help guide the direction of operations and the utilization of resources. The Library is one of the few City departments that has developed a formal, strategic plan. A strategic plan is management's foundation for administering a well-run organization and should incorporate a plan for execution and evaluation of results.

SUMMARY OF AUDIT RESULTS

The Library is to be commended for its effort to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. The Library's Strategic Plan builds on its mission by defining specific goals and performance measures; however, our audit found that the Plan's value is diminished because the Department does not have a formalized process for measuring performance against objectives, and ensuring the Strategic Plan is successfully implemented. Also, while the plan encompasses a three-year timeframe, the Department does not periodically reassess its plan as a whole to ensure that it reflects current priorities, and considers available resources.

Overall, we found that the Library's performance measures were relevant and aligned with the Department's core mission. However, we found that many of the data collected are not reliable as they lacked adequate supporting documentation to enable verification of data accuracy. In some cases, this is attributed to the Library not retaining source data.

Library management recognizes the need for improvement and plans to implement a more formal process over its monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan. The Library has recently begun monitoring the outcome for each of the objectives, initiatives and activities identified in the Strategic Plan for its first year of implementation. On January 15, 2009, the Library provided a progress status report to its Board of the plan's implementation results. This is a good start, but to ensure an effective process, the Library needs to address the audit issues noted in our report.

KEY FINDINGS

- **The Library does not have a formalized process to monitor and assess its performance in carrying out its 2007-2010 Strategic Plan.**

Our review disclosed that the Department does not have a formalized process for evaluating the performance data collected to determine the Department's progress in implementing the Strategic Plan.

Although the Department collects data to complete the California Public Library Survey and the Comparative Statistics report, the data are not all inclusive and related to the performance objectives contained in its Strategic Plan. For example, while the Comparative Statistics report contains a significant amount of information related to circulation and public services (e.g., website hits, email notifications to patrons, etc.), it does not include information related to attendance at reading or cultural awareness programs. Per management, the Comparative Statistics report updates them as to performance indicators and is used to guide departmental decisions regarding operations. While the Strategic Plan is for a three-year period, 2007-2010, the Department also does not reassess the Plan annually to ensure the goals and objectives reflect the organization's current priorities, or to consider any significant changes to available resources or other factors that could impact operations and performance.

In addition, except for the Library's executive management team, Department staff had little, if any, explicit knowledge about the Strategic Plan and related goals and objectives. Library staff was generally aware of the Department's goals but was unaware of specific performance objectives.

Without a formalized evaluation process, management cannot be assured that planned strategies are executed and intended results are achieved. The Library can benefit from the full potential of its Strategic Plan as a management tool to ensure its limited resources are fully maximized in meeting its core mission and the needs of the City's communities if a formal evaluation process is implemented.

- **The Library does not ensure data collected are accurately reported and adequately supported.**

Until recently the Department had not prepared an annual or periodic report that specifically tracked the Department's progress in meeting its goals and objectives. However, during our audit, in mid-January 2009, the Library provided its Board a status update for each of the objectives, initiatives and activities, and indicated that 30 of 38 objectives has been met. An additional 11 objectives could not be measured since they will result from a survey to be conducted in 2010. However, our review of the Library's performance disclosed data inaccuracies and cases where the reported figures could not be verified because source documents were missing, incomplete or not retained.

We found inconsistencies and discrepancies in the ways in which the Library compiles data. In some cases, there are discrepancies with summarized data and source documents. For example, branch libraries report some performance data on monthly reports, such as school visits, class visits to the library and attendance at summer reading programs. The data are then summarized for annual reports by administrative staff. Therefore, discrepancies could be the result of the administrative staff using a word processing application rather than a spreadsheet application to enter the data.

Also, system-generated data must be manually sorted and accumulated which results in errors. The Library maintains several automated systems – the CARL system which is primarily used for materials circulation and acquisition, internal ancillary systems and 3rd party vendor systems. However, because the systems do not generate reports that automatically compile data to address specific goals and objectives from the Strategic Plan, library staff must manually extract and tabulate data from these system reports. Errors occurred due to calculation or data entry errors. We also noted there is no documentation or written description of how data are grouped together to provide totals by category. As a result, the process cannot be easily confirmed for accuracy. In addition, there is no indication of any supervisory review of compiled statistics to check for reasonableness.

We also noted several instances where source documents are not retained or systems do not retain historical information because they are intended to present current, at the moment information.

Issues related to accuracy of reported results, including unverifiable data, prevent management from obtaining results that are relevant, reliable and accurate and determining whether goals and objectives are actually being met.

This was illustrated in the Library's recent progress report to its Board where it was reported that 30 objectives had been met. However, based on the results of our review, we were only able to independently verify that 15 objectives had been met. The results of our independent verification are summarized in Appendix B.

- **The Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan does not provide management with a tool that can be readily evaluated to provide an overall assessment of the Department's core functions.**

The Library's Strategic Plan includes 49 objectives which are aligned with the Department's core mission. While 11 of the objectives cannot be evaluated until a library patron survey is conducted in 2010, there remains a significant number of objectives that require considerable efforts to capture the relevant data, and evaluate the results. There may simply be too many performance objectives to adequately manage. In addition, some objectives are not distinct performance indicators, are not well-defined, and may not be the most appropriate performance indicators.

In some cases, objectives seem to overlap one another and track very similar performance. For example, the Library has three separate objectives related to teens attending library sponsored or co-sponsored programs, as illustrated below:

Objective 5.1 states “*Annually, at least 20,000 teens will attend library sponsored or co-sponsored programs that support lifelong learning and personal growth*”.

Objective 6.5 states “*Each year, at least 22,000 teens (ages 12-17) will attend programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the library*” and,

Objective 6.6 states “*Annually, at least 16,000 teens will participate in the library sponsored Summer Reading Program*”.

While the related goals are different – support lifelong learning (Goal 5) and offer new and popular material now (Goal 6), the objectives are very similar in nature. As separate performance objectives, each requires staff to capture data with the expectations that there are three sets of data to evaluate results. Further, if management views these objectives as being distinct, it means that resources are being utilized to create or arrange programs that may only be slightly different from one another.

The Department also did not provide guidance to staff on the criteria to use to determine whether Library programs promote cultural awareness, and did not establish procedures to ensure the specific objectives could be measured. As a result, there are three objectives under Goal 8 related to promoting cultural understanding and celebrating cultural diversity that are not being tracked by the Department.

For two other objectives, the Library may not have identified the most appropriate performance measure. For example:

Questions that are answered by library staff are tracked as a performance measure for improving communities. Library staff currently counts any and all questions, such as questions about library location or hours of operation. The California Public Library Survey also tracks patron questions but focuses on questions that require library staff’s expertise. Answering questions about hours of operation does not seem directly correlated to improving communities.

Operating hours are also used by the Library as a performance measure. However, this not a true indicator of performance since operating hours are established for each library facility and are not the result of the Library’s performance efforts.

REVIEW OF REPORT

A draft report was provided to the Los Angeles Public Library on May 18, 2009. We discussed the contents of the report with management at an exit conference held on June 1, 2009. Management indicated general agreement with the findings and recommendations. We considered the Department's comments in finalizing this report. We would like to thank the Los Angeles Public Library management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during the audit.

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Page Reference
<p>Finding 1: The Library does not have a formalized process to monitor and assess its performance in carrying out its 2007-2010 Strategic Plan.</p>	5
<p>The Library management should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the Strategic Plan is adequately communicated throughout the Department, and specifically, to those staff responsible for carrying out the activities that correspond to management's goals and objectives so that performance measures are understood. 2. Develop a formal process to capture, monitor, and assess performance metric data related to the key objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. The process should define timeframes for the periodic assessment of performance results and the related progress in meeting the Department's goals and objectives. 3. Annually assess the Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and objectives reflect the organization's current priorities and consider any significant changes to available resources or other factors that could impact operations and performance. 4. Ensure performance data are collected in a consistent manner to ensure complete, reliable data will be reported. 	
<p>Finding 2: The Library does not ensure data collected are accurately reported and adequately supported.</p>	8
<p>The Library management should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Establish a formal, documented review process to ensure data collected are relevant, reliable, and accurate. 6. Develop a formal record retention policy that requires staff to maintain source documents (e.g., proof of school visits, list of program attendees, etc.) for all reported performance efforts. 7. Determine the feasibility of information systems retaining historical data for a reasonable period of time. Consider 	

<p>alternative ways to retain data using other types of media.</p> <p>8. Determine the feasibility of having the information systems generate reports that automatically compile data to address specific Strategic Plan goals and objectives. At a minimum, a spreadsheet application (e.g., Microsoft excel) should be utilized to minimize the risk of manual calculation errors.</p>	
<p>Finding 3: The Library’s 2007-2010 Strategic Plan does not provide management with a tool that can be readily evaluated to provide an overall assessment of the Department’s core functions.</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>The Library management should:</p> <p>9. Re-examine its current Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and performance objectives remain relevant. Management’s review should determine whether overlapping objectives should be consolidated, objectives are clearly defined and are effective performance measures, and that all pertinent aspects of goals have corresponding performance measures.</p>	

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The core functions of the Library are to operate the network of libraries within the City, maintain a collection of materials and resources and to help people find the information they need. To serve the City, the Department manages and operates the Central Library, 8 regional libraries, and 63 community libraries. Its mission is to “provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enriches, educates, and empowers every individual in the City’s diverse community.”

With 1,136 authorized positions, the Library’s General Fund appropriations for Fiscal Years 2007-08 and 2008-09 totaled \$65.5 million and \$71.5 million, respectively. In addition, the Library received an average of \$7.5 million in other revenue annually (including \$1.9 million funding from the State Public Library Foundation).

Development of the Library’s Strategic Plan

In 1988, the Library developed a master facilities plan to build and/or renovate 64 library facilities and develop a technology infrastructure. The Branch Facilities Plan was the Library’s blueprint to utilize over \$230 million in funding provided by back-to-back bond measures in 1989 and 1998.

During 2005, in anticipation of the completion of the Branch Facilities Plan, the Los Angeles Public Library started to plan for the future by analyzing current and future library services and facilities needs and population growth. Management gathered information through research, library use statistics and experiences at branch libraries. Discussions with the Mayor helped guide the decision to develop a departmental strategic plan. The Department used the information it had already gathered including feedback from the public at more than 300 community meetings and the results of the system-wide 2005 Customer Satisfaction Survey, wherein more than 9,500 residents participated and completed the survey out of the 18,000 who were asked to participate.

To facilitate the strategic plan development process, the Department hired a consulting firm, Dubberly Garcia Associates, Inc. to work with the library staff, the Board of Library Commissioners, and other stakeholders to create a strategic plan that adheres to the guidelines set forth by the Public Library Association and the American Library Association.

The consulting firm, with the Library’s Strategic Plan Committee (comprised of the Library’s administrators and staff), conducted several focus group meetings to gather input, interviewed stakeholders, identified library strengths and opportunities, and reviewed prior performance results and surveys to establish outcome measures.

In 2007, the Library adopted its three-year Strategic Plan that contains eight broad goals and 49 measurable objectives, all of which are expected to be achieved by June 30, 2010. See Exhibit 1.

Exhibit1
2007-2010 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

GOAL NO.	GOAL DESCRIPTION	# OF OBJ
1	IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITIES <i>People of all ages will be served by libraries that are vibrant neighborhood centers which are attractive, safe and welcoming places to meet and interact with others.</i>	7
2	BRING TECHNOLOGY'S BENEFITS TO EVERYONE <i>Customers will have access to technology that connects them to the world of information and enables them to communicate with others, anywhere at anytime.</i>	7
3	HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED <i>Children and teens in Los Angeles will have resources that assist them with their assignments and help them succeed in school.</i>	6
4	PROVIDE READING READINESS- <i>Infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Los Angeles will have access to collections, programs, and services that will help them develop a lifelong love of books, reading, and learning.</i>	4
5	SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING <i>Teens and adults will have access to collections and programs that support their personal and career growth.</i>	5
6	OFFER NEW AND POPULAR MATERIAL NOW <i>Children, teens, and adults will have access to materials, programs, and services that stimulate the imagination and provide a variety of leisure activities and experiences.</i>	11
7	CREATE A LITERATE CITY <i>Adults in Los Angeles will have access to materials and services that enable them to acquire basic literacy skills.</i>	5
8	EXPAND CULTURAL AWARENESS <i>All Los Angeles residents will have access to collections, services, and programs that promote cultural understanding and celebrate the city's cultural diversity.</i>	4
	TOTAL OBJECTIVES	49

Notable Accomplishments

Per Library management, the Los Angeles Public Library, an institution for nearly 140 years, serves the largest and most diverse population of any library in the nation through its Central Library, 71 branches, extensive electronic resources available at its website and thousands of public programs for all ages. The Library's building program resulted in more than 90% of the City's libraries being rebuilt.

The Library's other notable accomplishments include: creating a state-of-the-art technology infrastructure that provides unprecedented access to its collections and services; creating an Adult Literacy program and establishing literacy centers in 20 libraries; developing innovative programs for children and teens – including the City's largest after-school program – that help them succeed in school and in life. These programs and services have helped result in record library use. Last year, nearly 18 million people visited the library, more than 17 million books were checked out, and electronic resources were accessed 120 million times.

The Department recently revised its sweeping Library Facilities Plan, which was developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders and identifies library facilities needed to meet demand through 2030.

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The overall objective of this performance audit was to conduct an independent assessment of the Library's performance measures and indicators, and specifically to:

- Conduct an overall assessment of performance management processes to ensure relevant, reliable, and accurate data are collected, enabling management to improve results in an effective manner;
- Determine the relevance of the performance measures to the activities being measured, and how they are aligned with the Library's core mission; and
- Assess the Library's progress in meeting the goals identified in its strategic plan by verifying the achievement of key performance indicators.

Our audit covered the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 which represents the Strategic Plan's first year of implementation. We reviewed the 8 goals and 38 objectives. We excluded 11 of the 49 objectives from review because the outcomes will only be determined when a "Customer Satisfaction Survey" is conducted by the Library in 2010.

For those objectives that rely on data captured and reported by branch libraries, we selected a sample of six community and regional branch libraries (out of 72 libraries) to assess the reliability and accuracy of the data. In addition, we surveyed 3 peer library systems (Brooklyn, NY, Houston, TX, and Los Angeles County) to determine how those systems use a strategic planning process.

Our approach and methodology in conducting the audit included:

- Interviewing Library's management and staff and its Strategic Plan consultant to gain an understanding of the activities and processes used for strategic planning.
- Evaluating the Library's process to monitor its Strategic Plan by conducting interviews with the Library's Board, key management and staff and reviewing the various reports and source documents showing performance results.
- Determining the accuracy of reported performance data as well as the adequacy of evidence supporting such data by reviewing documents that originated at the Library's branch facilities selected for testwork.
- Reviewing the goals and objectives identified in the Library's Strategic Plan to assess the Library's progress in meeting them.

- Identifying areas for improvement in monitoring and reporting the Strategic Plan results by evaluating the different processes, outcome measures and key performance indicators used by the Library.

The remainder of this report details our findings, comments, and recommendations.

AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 2: Strategic Plan Process



A well-administered organization must incorporate strategic planning, effective and efficient service provision and on-going evaluation to carry out its mission. Planning allows for the development of a comprehensive *strategy* to meet identified needs, objectives, goals and priorities. Service provision ensures priorities are met, and services are effectively and efficiently being administered according to policies and procedures. Evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the organization in meeting the goals and objectives that were defined during planning. These results should be used to inform future plans to consistently and successfully carry out an organization's mission.

A strategic plan determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there, and how it will know if it got there or not. However, a common problem among organizations that adopt a strategic plan is that the plan is never really implemented and monitored.

Our review of the Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan disclosed that although the Department has a comprehensive Strategic Plan that defines its mission, goals and objectives, its value is diminished by the lack of a formalized process for measuring performance against objectives, and maintaining the plan so that it remains current and realistic over its term.

We identified that there was no formal system established for collecting and analyzing critical data that would demonstrate implementation results and progress. In addition, we noted many examples of reported data that are inaccurate, or not reliable because they lacked adequate supporting documentation or data was not retained.

The City is not alone in this area. While peer library systems (Houston, TX, and Los Angeles County) have strategic plans, there are issues on how they monitor and report on the progress of their strategic plans. Regardless, a strategic plan can only be an effective management tool if there is adequate monitoring and continuous assessment of results throughout the implementation period to ensure goals and objectives are being met as planned.

Finding No. 1: The Library does not have a formalized process to monitor and assess its performance in carrying out its 2007-2010 Strategic Plan.

The Library has a comprehensive Strategic Plan that includes eight goals that are aligned with the Department's core mission which is – *“Provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate, and empower every individual in our city's diverse communities”*. The Strategic Plan sets out 49 objectives to measure performance and provide management with a basis for determining whether the Department has effectively achieved its goals.

We noted the Library captures and reports a significant amount of performance data; primarily for the annual California Public Library Survey (Survey) and an internal management report titled “Comparative Statistics” that cites various performance measures achieved over several fiscal years. The Survey includes data requested by the California State Library for the Federal-State Cooperative System for Public Library Data, and includes information such as demographics and circulation statistics for the citywide Library system as well as for each of the 72 libraries. The Comparative Statistics Report provides various department-wide summary and detailed performance measures/statistics related to circulation, borrower registrations, acquisitions, public service assistance and technology including patron computer usage, website hits, etc. The report is distributed to executive management only and provides a general assessment of Library operations. According to management, this report is used to modify or establish new operational decisions.

However, neither the Survey or Comparative Statistics Report compare the Strategic Plan's performance objectives to actual performance results. We did not observe a formalized management process to monitor the status of the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.

No Formal Monitoring

There is no formalized process for evaluating the performance data collected to determine the Department's progress in implementing the Strategic Plan.

Despite data being collected and reported for other purposes, such as the Survey and the Comparative Statistics Report, this information does not address all of the performance objectives contained in the Strategic Plan. The Comparative Statistics Report contains a significant amount of information related to circulation and public services (e.g., website hits, email notifications to patrons, etc.); however, there are a number of performance objectives contained in the Strategic Plan that are not reported (e.g., attendance at reading or cultural awareness programs). Further, while the Strategic Plan is for a three-year period, 2007-2010, the Department does not reassess the Plan annually to ensure the goals and objectives reflect the organization's current priorities and consider any significant changes to available resources or other factors that could impact operations and performance.

In addition, we found that beyond Library executive management, Department staff had little, if any, explicit knowledge about the Strategic Plan and related goals and

objectives. Library staff was generally aware of the Department's goals, but was unaware of specific performance objectives. Fundamental to any plan implementation is ensuring that those individuals responsible for carrying out the activities that correspond to management's goals are aware of the expectations, i.e., performance objectives, upon which the Department's success will be measured. This should occur in advance of any implementation efforts, and communications between management and staff should be on-going concerning the timing and significance of reporting relevant and reliable performance data. Communication will also help maintain focus and commitment to carrying out the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan's performance objectives could be reiterated to branch library staff through the Department's current reporting process – the Monthly Report Summary. However, despite an overlap of data being collected for the Survey with some of the Strategic Plan's objectives, the Monthly Reports do not have any reference that would link or correlate the data with relevant objectives in the Strategic Plan.

No Comprehensive Status Report on Performance Results

Until recently, the Department had not prepared a periodic or annual report to measure progress in carrying out the Strategic Plan. The Survey and Comparative Statistics report do not meet the intended purpose of monitoring performance as outlined in the Strategic Plan because a number of objectives are not being tracked or compiled by the Library. For example, the number of meetings or programs held in library facilities by groups other than the library, and the percentage of Adult Literacy Proficiency students that advance one or more literacy levels, are not tracked.

In addition, some data are captured but not compiled to determine systemwide performance. Branch libraries submit information related to preschool activities and computer classes on the Monthly Report Summary, but since the data are not needed for the Survey or Comparative Statistics report, there is no systemwide summary that can be tied to the Department's overall goal as noted in the Strategic Plan.

In January 2009, Library management submitted a status report on the Strategic Plan to the Board of Library Commissioners. This is the first formal management report that reported a status for every objective in the Strategic Plan. However, the reported results do not agree with what this audit could verify as accurate. This is discussed in more detail in Finding #2. The Department should ensure periodic reports continue and are based on relevant and accurate data.

Inconsistent and Inefficient Processes for Data Collection

To be effective, a strategic plan must have objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time dependent. Staff must clearly understand the performance measures and determine how and what data will be collected and reported to ensure that management receives complete, accurate, and reliable data.

We reviewed the Department's data collection processes and identified several examples where Library management does not receive reliable data. Specifically,

- **Door count statistics** to determine visits to library facilities (Objective 1.2) are not collected based on a consistent methodology. Branch libraries report door counts on the Monthly Report Summary. We selected a sample of six branch libraries (Los Feliz, West Valley, West Los Angeles, Panorama City, Eagle Rock and Jefferson) to determine how the door counts are captured and reported. For five of the six branch locations, we observed inconsistent processes in collecting data for library visits. Los Feliz, West Valley, and West L.A. manually record their door count on a daily basis. Panorama City and Jefferson record their door count at the beginning and end of the month. Eagle Rock branch has had an inoperable door counter for at least two years. We subsequently learned that a total of six branch libraries have inoperable door counters. Therefore, no statistics have been collected for these six branches to account for library visits. Lastly, we observed that the Los Feliz branch has outlying areas (computer and public meeting rooms) away from the main door that do not have door count systems installed in those areas. Thus, patrons accessing such areas are not accounted for or included in the library visit count.
- The process used to gather annual statistics for the **circulation of materials** (Objectives 6.1 and 6.7) is inefficient and may result in inaccurate results being reported to management. At fiscal year end, a report is generated through the CARL system with 800+ lines of data. Library staff must manually identify the corresponding media codes, calculate, and summarize the statistics by type onto a summary spreadsheet. The process is cumbersome and at risk for human data entry errors. Further, there was no indication that the summary spreadsheet created by staff is reviewed by management for accuracy.
- Statistics on **various programs that library staff present and program attendance** are not separately reported to facilitate results tracking. For example, “Summer Reading Club” and “Grandparents and Books” programs are not clearly or consistently reported on the Monthly Report Summary prepared by branch library staff. Other programs are not identified by subject matter (e.g., preschool, cultural diversity, computer classes or literacy programs) to facilitate compiling data for related objectives.

Monitoring performance outcomes and evaluating the status of the Plan is as important as identifying strategic goals and objectives. During strategic planning and before any implementation efforts begin, an organization should ensure an implementation plan is developed to ensure that both management and staff responsible for achieving the performance objectives are aware of the expectations. The implementation plan should also assign responsibilities for and establish the methods to collect data, monitor and evaluate the results.

Recommendations:

Library Management should:

- 1. Ensure that the Strategic Plan is adequately communicated throughout the Department, and specifically, to those staff responsible for carrying out the activities that correspond to management's goals and objectives so that performance measures are understood.**
- 2. Develop a formal process to capture, monitor and assess performance metric data related to the key objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. The process should define timeframes for the periodic assessment of performance results and the related progress in meeting the Department's goals and objectives.**
- 3. Annually assess the Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and objectives reflect the organization's current priorities and consider any significant changes to available resources or other factors that could impact operations and performance.**
- 4. Ensure performance data are collected in a consistent manner to ensure complete, reliable data will be reported.**

Finding No. 2: The Library does not ensure data collected are accurately reported and adequately supported.

We tested the accuracy of data reported on the FY 2007-08 Survey and Comparative Statistics report that corresponded to Strategic Plan objectives. Based on our testwork, we noted inaccuracies with several performance data or instances where source documentation to support reported data were missing or lacking.

Inaccuracies in Collected and Reported Data

Branch Libraries and Administration Reports

We found inconsistencies and discrepancies throughout the numerous processes used by Library staff to compile and report data. For example, data from the branch libraries' Monthly Report Summaries (Monthly Reports) for "programs" (original source document) were not compiled accurately on the annual programs summary report, which is used for the Survey and Comparative Statistics Report.

We compared individual branch libraries' Monthly Reports for fiscal year 2007-08 to the department-wide programs summary report and noted discrepancies for two of five branches selected. Specifically, per Jefferson's Monthly Reports there were 66 school visits with 1,368 attendees, but the annual summary report showed 78 school visits with 1,581 attendees. Also, we were not able to verify data for Eagle Rock because its Monthly Reports were missing for July to September 2007.

In another instance, we noted differences in data reported for the “Summer Reading Club Program” by the branch libraries and the annual summary statistics report compiled and prepared by the Library’s Children’s Services staff. For example, per Los Feliz’ Monthly Reports there were a total of four programs presented with 128 attendees; the annual summary report showed a total of 11 programs with 188 attendees. We noted similar discrepancies between the Monthly and annual summary reports for the Jefferson, Panorama City and West Los Angeles branches.

According to Department management, discrepancies can occur because branch library staff may revise their Monthly Reports several times and not all of the revised statistics are accounted for in the compiled summary and annual reports. Library management does not have an established cut-off date for accepting revised Monthly Reports. Summary reports should agree with supporting documentation and any differences or changes should be adequately explained and documented. The discrepancies we noted could also be the result of staff using a word processing application rather than a spreadsheet application. We noted that data from the Monthly Reports are manually entered into tables using Microsoft Word, rather than a spreadsheet using automated formulas.

System Reports and Manually Prepared Summary Reports

System-generated data must be manually sorted and accumulated which results in errors. The Library maintains several automated systems – the CARL system which is primarily used for materials circulation and acquisition, internal ancillary systems¹ and 3rd party vendor systems². However, because the systems do not generate reports that can compile data to address specific goals and objectives from the Strategic Plan, library staff must manually extract data from these system reports. Errors occur because of calculation or data entry errors.

For example, by tallying individual statistics contained on over 800 report pages, we recalculated the number of juvenile paperbacks put into circulation and determined the total was 699,944. However, the Library reported 600,249 juvenile paperbacks on the “Circulation by Media Type Report.” In another case, our recalculated juvenile magazines totaled 20,948 although the Library reported 15,359.

We also noted there is no documentation or written description of how data are grouped together to provide totals by category. As a result, the process cannot be easily confirmed for accuracy. In addition, there is no indication of any supervisory review that would help to confirm if reported figures appeared accurate.

Lack of Supporting Documentation

We noted several instances where source documents are not retained or systems do not retain historical information because they are intended to present current, at the moment information.

¹ Library On-line system (pc reservations), Apache system (website hits), On-Line Selection Acquisition (acquisitions), and Tandem Mainframe System (e-mail notifications).

² Ethostream system (public wireless connections), Track It (number of public computers), E-media (downloadable materials), EBSCONET (acquisitions).

Some source documents used to compile annual reports are no longer available for verification. According to Library management, source documents (e.g., monthly reports, pc reservations, email notifications, etc.) were discarded after they were compiled at year end. Also, branch library staff does not consistently maintain supporting documentation to show evidence of their reported activities (e.g., school visits, class visits, program participation, etc.).

Various automated systems used by the Library are not capable of retaining data for long periods of time. For example, data for public wireless internet connections and holds/reserves are purged out of the system within two weeks or a month, respectively. In addition, other CARL reports such as circulation of materials and media, registered borrowers and email notifications do not retain historical or cumulative data and present information only at a current point in time.

Since we found many examples of collected data that were inaccurate or lacked adequate documentation, our assessment of what goals and objectives the Department had accomplished at the end of its first year of plan implementation is significantly different from the Department's recently reported status to its Board. As shown in Exhibit 3, we could verify that only **15** objectives had been achieved by the Department as of FY 2007-08 (or progress was adequate to indicate targeted results would be met by 2009-10). However, the Department reported **30** objectives were achieved.

Exhibit 3
Completed/On Track Performance Objectives as of FY 2007-2008

GOAL	PER AUDIT EVALUATION		LIBRARY REPORTED RESULTS	
	Completed/On Track Objectives	Number of Completed Objectives	Completed Objectives	Number of Completed Objectives
1	1.1 & 1.7	2	1.2, 1.6, & 1.7	3
2	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 & 2.6	6	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6 & 2.7	6
3	3.3, 3.4 & 3.6	3	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, & 3.4	4
4	4.4	1	4.1 & 4.2	2
5	None	0	5.1 & 5.2	2
6	6.10 & 6.11	2	6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.10 & 6.11	8
7	7.4	1	7.4	1
8	None	0	8.1, 8.2, 8.3 & 8.4	4
Total		15		30

A system should be in place to ensure that collected data are accurate, complete, and adequately supported to ensure reported information included in the monthly reports and other annual reports are relevant, reliable, and accurate and whether the Department is actually meeting its intended goals and objectives.

Recommendations:

The Library management should:

- 5. Establish a formal, documented review process to ensure data collected are relevant, reliable and accurate.**
- 6. Develop a formal record retention policy that requires staff to maintain source documents (e.g., proof of school visits, list of program attendees, etc.) for all reported performance efforts.**
- 7. Determine the feasibility of information systems retaining historical data for a reasonable period of time. Consider alternative ways to retain data using other types of media.**
- 8. Determine the feasibility of having the information systems generate reports that automatically compile data to address specific Strategic Plan goals and objectives. At a minimum, a spreadsheet application (e.g., Microsoft Excel) should be utilized to minimize the risk of manual calculation errors.**

Finding No. 3: The Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan does not provide management with a tool that can be readily evaluated to provide an overall assessment of the Department's core functions.

The Library's Strategic Plan has 49 performance objectives. Eleven of these will be assessed by conducting patron surveys in 2010. However, there remain 38 performance objectives that, if monitored appropriately, require management to spend time to capture, report and evaluate their progress. Some of the issues noted in our audit may be the result of the Library having too many performance objectives to adequately manage. These issues make it difficult for the Library to use the Strategic Plan as an effective management tool.

Overlapping Objectives

We noted objectives that seem to overlap one another and track very similar performance. For example, under Goal 5, Objective 5.1 states "*Annually, at least 20,000 teens will attend library sponsored or co-sponsored programs that support lifelong learning and personal growth*". This is similar to and duplicated, in part, as two more objectives of Goal 6 "*Each year, at least 22,000 teens (ages 12-17) will attend programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the library*" (Objective 6.5) and "*Annually, at least 16,000 teens will participate in the library sponsored Summer Reading Program*" (Objective 6.6).

Objectives Not Clearly Defined

We noted that the Library does not track three of the four objectives relating to promoting cultural understanding and celebrating cultural diversity. These objectives relate to tracking attendance at programs promoting cultural diversity or creating

exhibits highlighting cultural diversity. According to Library staff, all programs held at the libraries have “cultural significance” and therefore they do not track these programs separately from reading, school and other community programs. However, there is no management guidance supporting this understanding. Without established criteria, it is difficult to confirm that Library programs that focus on the culinary arts, sports, and knitting promote “cultural diversity.” Management should provide guidance defining how programs meet the criteria for promoting cultural awareness and establish procedures to ensure the objectives can be measured.

Performance Not Effectively Measured

While most of the 49 objectives included in the Strategic Plan are aligned with the Library’s core mission, some objectives do not effectively measure performance. For example, “*patron questions*” are tracked as a performance measure for improving communities. Library staff currently counts any and all questions, regardless of whether a librarian’s expertise is needed. Questions about operating hours, library location, etc. are included in the branch libraries’ reported statistics. Library management indicated this statistic is also reported on the Survey. However, the State also defines questions as those activities requiring the use of library collections and/or training and experience of library staff, but not “simple directional” questions. The Library has not defined criteria to determine what patron questions are relevant and should be counted and monitored by Library staff.

We also determined that using public service hours as a performance measure is not a true indicator of performance since operating hours are established for each branch library and are not the result of the Library’s or a branch library’s efforts. For Survey purposes, at year-end the Library performs a simple calculation to determine department-wide operating hours by using the established operating hours for all branch libraries.

No Corresponding Objective to Meet a Goal

We noted that each of the eight goals had corresponding objectives to enable an assessment of whether the Department met its goals, with the exception of Goal 1 - “*People of all ages will be served by libraries that are vibrant neighborhood centers which are attractive, safe and welcoming places to meet and interact with others.*” There are seven objectives that would provide various data related to whether the public is using library facilities. However, there is no corresponding objective included in the plan related to providing “safe” places. Library staff indicated that public safety is often an issue that staff must deal with to ensure the public will visit the libraries. The Library works with GSD’s Office of Public Safety to deploy public safety staff at branch libraries to provide a safe environment. However, without a way to measure performance in this area, the Library cannot evaluate the results of their safety plans and determine whether this important aspect of the goal has been achieved.

Performance results are specific targets indicating the success or impact of a program or approach. An organization’s operations are determined through results (what level of success does an organization want to achieve) and strategies. Outcome measures and related indicators should be viable, specific and quantifiable to ascertain whether or not program activities are achieving the desired goals.

Currently, the Department has a Strategic Plan but its use as a management tool is not maximized to inform Library decision makers about whether operations are accomplishing departmental goals and objectives. Overlapping, unclear or missing objectives do not ensure that resources are efficiently utilized to capture and report performance data.

Recommendation:

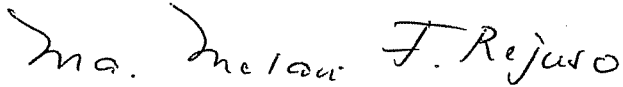
The Library management should:

- 9. Re-examine its current Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and performance objectives remain relevant. Management's review should determine whether overlapping objectives should be consolidated, objectives are clearly defined and are effective performance measures, and that all pertinent aspects of goals have corresponding performance measures.**

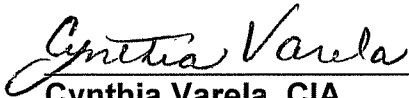
Respectfully submitted,



Maria Ramos-Pheng, CPA
Internal Auditor II



Maria Melani Rejuso, CPA
Internal Auditor III



Cynthia Varela, CIA
Chief Internal Auditor



Siri Khalsa, CPA
Deputy Director of Auditing



for Farid Saffar, CPA
Director of Auditing

March 31, 2009

APPENDIX A

PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY'S 2007-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

Ranking of Recommendations

Finding Number	Description of Finding	Ranking Code	Recommendations
1	The Library does not have a formalized process to monitor and assess its performance in carrying out its 2007-2010 Strategic Plan.	N	The Library management should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the Strategic Plan is adequately communicated throughout the Department, and specifically, to those staff responsible for carrying out the activities that correspond to management's goals and objectives so that performance measures are understood. 2. Develop a formal process to capture, monitor and assess performance metric data related to the key objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. The process should define timeframes for the periodic assessment of performance results and the related progress in meeting the Department's goals and objectives. 3. Annually assess the Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and objectives reflect the organization's current priorities and consider any significant changes to available resources or other factors that could impact operations and performance. 4. Ensure performance data
		N	
		N	
		N	
		N	

Finding Number	Description of Finding	Ranking Code	Recommendations
			are collected in a consistent manner to ensure complete, reliable data will be reported.
2	The Library does not ensure data collected are accurately reported and adequately supported.	<p>N</p> <p>N</p> <p>N</p> <p>N</p>	<p>The Library management should:</p> <p>5. Establish a formal, documented review process to ensure data collected are relevant, reliable and accurate.</p> <p>6. Develop a formal record retention policy that requires staff to maintain source documents (e.g., proof of school visits, list of program attendees, etc.) for all reported performance efforts.</p> <p>7. Determine the feasibility of information systems retaining historical data for a reasonable period of time. Consider alternative ways to retain data using other types of media.</p> <p>8. Determine the feasibility of having the information systems generate reports that automatically compile data to address specific Strategic Plan goals and objectives. At a minimum, a spreadsheet application (e.g., Microsoft Excel) should be utilized to minimize the risk of manual calculation errors.</p>

Finding Number	Description of Finding	Ranking Code	Recommendations
3	The Library's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan does not provide management with a tool that can be readily evaluated to provide an overall assessment of the Department's core functions.	N	The Library management should: 9. Re-examine its current Strategic Plan to ensure the goals and performance objectives remain relevant. Management's review should determine whether overlapping objectives should be consolidated, objectives are clearly defined and are effective performance measures, and that all pertinent aspects of goals have corresponding performance measures.

Description of Recommendation Ranking Codes

U- Urgent-The recommendation pertains to a serious or materially significant audit finding or control weakness. Due to the seriousness or significance of the matter, immediate management attention and appropriate corrective action is warranted.

N- Necessary- The recommendation pertains to a moderately significant or potentially serious audit finding or control weakness. Reasonably prompt corrective action should be taken by management to address the matter. The recommendation should be implemented within six months.

D- Desirable- The recommendation pertains to an audit finding or control weakness of relatively minor significance or concern. The timing of any corrective action is left to management's discretion.

N/A- Not Applicable

APPENDIX B
AUDIT ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Goal/Obj (abbreviated)	Measures Performance?	Is Data Collected?	Reliable & Verifiable?	Adequate Progress?
1 <i>Improve Communities</i>				
Library Hours of Operation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Library Visits	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
A "good place to interact"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Questions answered	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Registered borrowers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Meetings/programs held	Yes	No	No	Unknown
Major exhibitions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 <i>Technology's Benefits</i>				
PC reservations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wireless internet connections	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visits to website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visits to Spanish language site	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Computers for use by public	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Email notices to patrons	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Computer classes provided	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
3 <i>Helping Students</i>				
School presentations	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
School visits to library	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Visits to KidsPath website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visits to Teen Web	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
"Library helped with school work"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Children/teens registered borrowers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4 <i>Reading Readiness</i>				
Preschoolers attend programs	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Presentations to preschools	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
"An important role in helping children"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Volunteers reading to children	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5 <i>Lifelong Learning</i>				
Teens attending programs	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Adults attending programs	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Teens rating the quality of programs	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Adults rating the quality of programs	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A

Goal/Obj (abbreviated)	Measures Performance?	Is Data Collected?	Reliable & Verifiable?	Adequate Progress?
"Found something that met needs"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
6 New and Popular Material				
Circulation for children's materials	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Children attending programs	Yes	Yes	f/n 1	N/A
Children participating in Summer Reading	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Teens "found something good"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Teens attending programs	Yes	Yes	f/n 1	N/A
Teens participating in Summer Reading	Yes	Yes	f/n 1	N/A
Circulation for adult/teen materials	Yes	Yes	f/n 1	N/A
Circulation of intr'l language materials	Yes	Yes	f/n 1	N/A
Adults "found something good"	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Circulation of downloadable items	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customers' reservation requests	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7 Create a Literate City				
Adult Literacy participant satisfaction	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Limited English participant satisfaction	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Families for Literacy satisfaction	Yes	No - 2010 patron survey	N/A	N/A
Visits to literacy website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adult Literacy participant advancement	Yes	No	No	Unknown
8 Expand Cultural Awareness				
Acquiring non-English language books	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Attendees at cultural understanding programs	Yes	No	No	Unknown
Programs highlighting cultural diversity	Yes	No	No	Unknown
Exhibits/displays highlighting diversity	Yes	No	No	Unknown

f/n 1- The Library follows the same process for compiling data for various objectives. Because we found compilation errors with other similar objectives, there is a risk that the data compiled for this objective is also unreliable.

N/A - Inadequate data therefore Controller's Office could not determine reliability and/or progress.

Unknown - No data is collected by LAPL to determine progress.