



SANTA CRUZ  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES



ACCESS



INFORMATION



CONNECTION



INCLUSION

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## FY 2027 – FY 2029

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TRANSFORMING LIVES AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

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# LOOKING FORWARD

“

*There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.”*

~ Andrew Carnegie

”

We are pleased to present to you **Santa Cruz Public Libraries'** newest strategic plan. In some ways it is an evolution of the previous strategy and will guide our work through the next three years. This plan embodies our “North Star” vision of **transforming lives and strengthening communities** by balancing core programs and services with innovations that reflect our institutional values of lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, and, as Andrew Carnegie points out above, our foundational role as a public good freely accessible to all.

Through surveys, interviews and focus groups we gathered ideas and insights from our communities, staff, partners, and stakeholders across **Santa Cruz County**, as well as peer libraries in California and beyond. Your feedback supported the creation of goals and projects that align with the four components of our updated mission: **access, information, connection and inclusion** as well as the flourishing team culture necessary to support those goals. The theme that was underscored in every conversation along the way is that you, our Santa Cruz communities, love and support your libraries. You rely on us not only for books and information, but also for the meaningful connection and life enrichment we provide through programs and meeting spaces. Our service to you is in fact a relationship, one that we must nurture with care and respect.

While we cannot be all things to all people, the next three years give us an opportunity to celebrate and innovate in programs, collections, services, and partnerships that impact more people's lives in measurable ways. In doing so, we honor your support, deliver on our North Star commitments, and position **Santa Cruz Public Libraries** for a strong future in the years to come.

We are grateful to each of you who helped inform our strategic goals and look forward to welcoming you to our branches, outreach partnerships and digital spaces to partake of our work as we round out this decade.



Sincerely,

**Christopher Platt**  
Director of Libraries

# OUR NORTH STAR



Access • Information • Connection • Inclusion

## MISSION



## VISION

Transforming  
lives and  
strengthening  
communities



## VALUES

- Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom
- Public Good



Shark Fin Cove

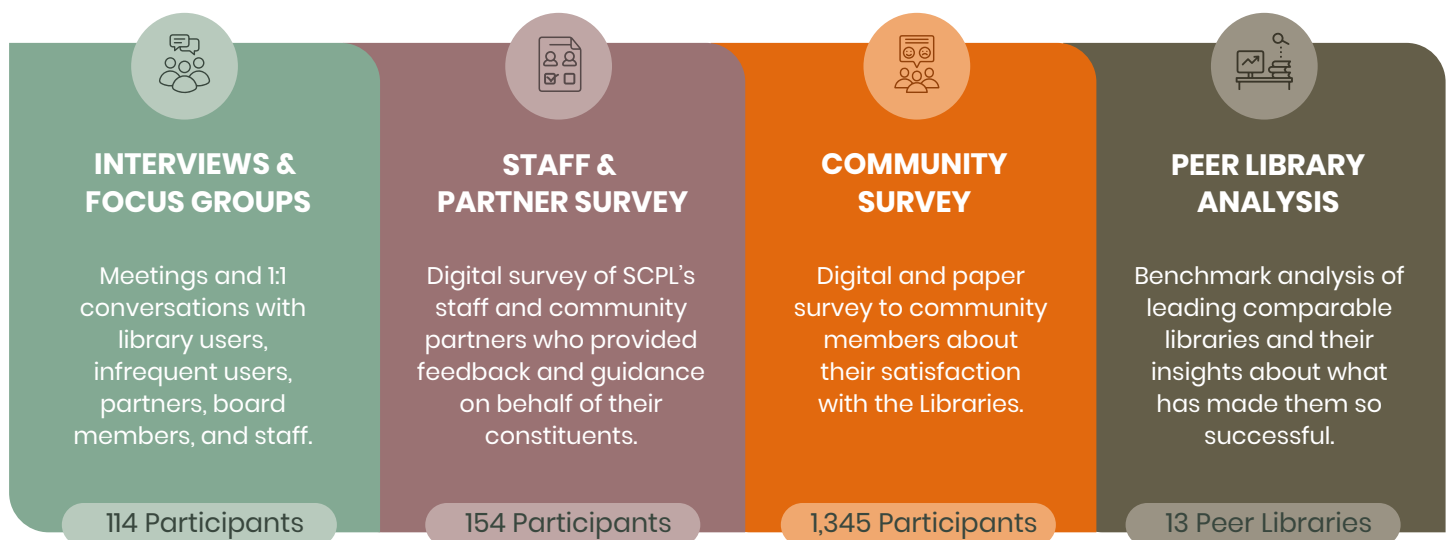
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# ALIGNING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Strategic planning enables public libraries to look ahead with purpose and intention. For Santa Cruz Public Libraries, this three-year plan provides a shared vision and clear direction for meeting the evolving needs of our diverse county and guides how resources, partnerships, and energy are focused to deliver outsized results for our community.

## LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY

To shape our strategic plan, SCPL embarked on an extensive listening process to assess how well we are addressing the needs across our communities and what opportunities exist. Using the following data collection methods, we heard from **over 1,500** different people.



## WHAT WE HEARD

The community confirmed many things we anecdotally knew. Our listening efforts confirmed that patrons love their Libraries. On average, patrons gave the Libraries a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 67 (NPS scores range from -100 to +100). This high level of satisfaction was consistent across nearly all demographic groups, branch locations, and service areas. Patron satisfaction was driven by trust, accessibility, value, and the new and refurbished branches.

Our listening process also identified opportunities for improvement. The most prominent themes from this feedback informed the Priorities and Goals discussed below in this Plan.

# DESIGNING THE STRATEGY

This plan was developed by a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) based on what we heard from residents across Santa Cruz County. The twenty-member SPC included team members from all operational areas of the Libraries. The planning process was facilitated by a team of library strategic planning consultants.

This Plan articulates SCPL's long-term Vision and how we will deploy our limited resources to advance our Mission during fiscal years 2027 - 2029. It aligns our team and external stakeholders so that, together, we can provide the services that are most important to the greater Santa Cruz County community.

The elements of the Plan, shown below, work together to help us achieve our Vision.



The Libraries defined our Mission as: Access • Information • Connection • Inclusion. These areas, along with Team Culture, were also adopted as the Priority areas of the Strategic Plan.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) is a foundational value of Santa Cruz Public Libraries and guides all Library activities and the implementation of this Plan.

# IMPLEMENTATION

A scorecard is the key tool to gauge the success of the Plan. The scorecard shows the elements of the strategy, including the metrics, which help demonstrate the impact of the Libraries' services in numeric terms. By using this data-driven approach, the Libraries can focus on results and impacts (public good) rather than activities alone. This approach empowers the SCPL to add, alter, cancel, or reprioritize projects in response to evolving circumstances.

Goals / Objectives	Metrics	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	Trend ('23-'25)	Status	Project Titles
<b>ACCESS - Free and uninhibited access for all.</b>								
Be a viable and vibrant third space for community members.	Visits	452,532	785,458	852,176			●	• Ensure a welcoming environment at DTN branch
	Meeting Room Utilization (hours)	11,138	16,123	19,951			●	
Promote digital access for all.	Public Internet and WiFi Sessions	64,609	81,665	85,251			●	
Deliver SCPL resources and services outside of the Libraries.	Bookmobile Visitor Count	n/a	n/a	n/a			●	• Increased Service to Spanish Speakers • Spanish-First mobile library
	# of materials checked out from bookmobile or outreach services	36,215	37,128	36,395			●	
	# Outreach library programs delivered	n/a	381	428			●	• Expand Outreach Programming
	Jail Reach checkouts	6,770	6,455	8,863			●	

**Example Scorecard for Access Priority**

Projects are the intentional initiatives the Libraries will undertake to help achieve our Goals. The SPC defined 19 ambitious Projects to be implemented during the three year strategic plan as listed in the Priorities and Roadmap sections that follow.



# OUR PRIORITIES

## ACCESS

**Access** is the foundation of an equitable library system. For **Santa Cruz County**, it means ensuring residents can use library spaces, technology, collections, and services regardless of schedule, income, language, or circumstance – so everyone can benefit from what the Libraries offer.



### WHAT WE HEARD...

Community members consistently emphasized the need for expanded library hours. Working adults and families told us that the current hours limit their ability to fully utilize the libraries' services.

Library staff and community partners prioritized tech lending (PCs and hotspots) as a top priority for meeting patron needs.



### PROJECTS...

- Welcoming environment at Downtown Branch
- Outreach programming expansion



*Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.*

*~ Frederick Douglass*



### GOALS...

- Be a viable and vibrant third space for the community members.
- Promote digital access for all.
- Deliver SCPL resources and service to constituents who have barriers to using physical branches.

Example measures of success...

- SCPL branch visits
- Bookmobile visits
- # of Outreach programs delivered

# INFORMATION

“

*Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress.*

~ Kofi Annan

”



## WHAT WE HEARD...

Expanding the size of the Libraries' collection is the #1 way to increase library usage.



## PROJECTS...

- Robust and sustainable digital library
- Collection alignment and optimization
- Library of Things assessment and alignment



**Information** empowers individuals and strengthens communities. **Santa Cruz Public Libraries** provide trusted, relevant, and diverse collections that support lifelong learning, curiosity, and enjoyment across all ages and backgrounds.



## GOALS...

Offer the materials and resources our communities want.

**Example measures of success...**

- Physical item circulation
- Digital content circulation



# CONNECTION

**Human connection** strengthens the social and civic fabric of **Santa Cruz County**. Through shared spaces, programs, and partnerships, the Libraries foster relationships, belonging, and civic engagement—helping residents connect with one another, their community, and the resources that support a healthy and thriving society.

“  
*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*  
”  
~ Margaret Mead



## WHAT WE HEARD...

- There is strong community demand for programs.
- In FY26, the Libraries delivered 4,700 programming sessions spanning 350 topics but has limited meeting room and staff capacity to offer additional programs.
- The staff observes that some programs are lightly attended and could be scaled back to free up resources for more popular programs.
- The primary reason the public doesn't visit the Libraries more frequently is that visiting doesn't cross their minds, or they're unaware of the Libraries' extensive offerings.



## PROJECTS...

- Program priorities & alignment
- Future Downtown Teen Center plan
- Program evaluation process
- Partner collaboration enhancements
- Newsletters tailored to individual interests



## GOALS...

- Provide meaningful, inclusive, and impactful programming.
- Partner with community organizations to enhance programs or services.
- Participate in community events.
- Connect the community to the Libraries' offering.

### Example measures of success...

- Program attendance
- Community partner count
- Newsletter opens
- Digital patron engagement

# INCLUSION



“  
Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference.  
”

~ Jane Goodall

**Inclusion** ensures library services reflect and serve the full diversity of **Santa Cruz County**. By prioritizing inclusion, the Libraries work to remove barriers, reach underserved communities, and provide welcoming, relevant, and responsive services so all residents feel seen, valued, and supported.



## WHAT WE HEARD...

- Over 30% of Santa Cruz County reports being Hispanic or Latino per the US Census. However, Spanish-speaker engagement with the Libraries is low based on observation and anecdotal feedback. Less than 10% of the strategic planning survey participants reported as Hispanic or Latine origin.
- Some vulnerable patrons (e.g., unhoused, mentally ill, low-income) who could significantly benefit from the Libraries' offerings are either unaware of the available services or have individual concerns (e.g., safety of belongings) that block them from using the Libraries.



## PROJECTS...

- Spanish-first outreach service
- Spanish speakers' programming engagement
- Spanish speakers' collection engagement
- Institutional engagement with Spanish speakers
- Life Literacy Center partnership expansion
- Unhoused patron advisory group
- Vulnerable patron social worker



## GOALS...

- Increase engagement with and service to Spanish speakers.
- Connect vulnerable patrons with library and other relevant services.

## Example metrics of success...

- Spanish/Bilingual program attendance at branches
- Bookmobile Spanish speaker attendance
- Life Literacy Center visitors

# TEAM CULTURE

“  
*People may never remember what you said or what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel.*  
”

~ Maya Angelou

A positive **team culture** is essential to both staff morale and excellent public service. By prioritizing well-being, communication, safety, and growth, **Santa Cruz Public Libraries** empowers staff to do their best work and, in turn, better serve the community.



## WHAT WE HEARD...

- Staff's general satisfaction with the Libraries is strong and exceeds patron satisfaction.
- Staff pressures have caused frustration, burnout, and inefficiencies and, is viewed as unsustainable.
- Staff identified inefficiencies with some existing workflows.
- Internal communications has strong potential for improvement.



## PROJECTS...

- Strong communication = better outcomes
- Organizational assessment and refinement

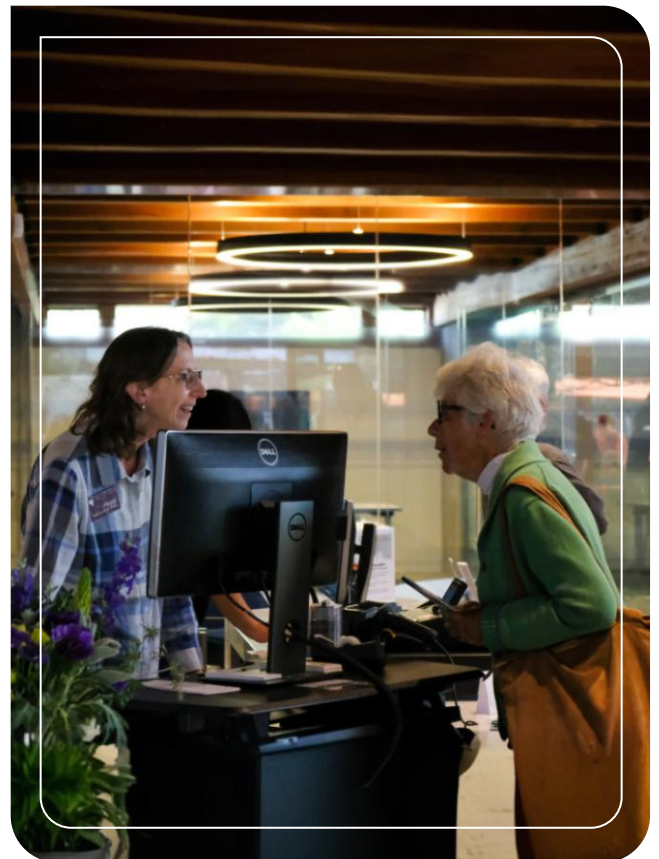


## GOALS...

- Team members are informed and included.
- Team members are satisfied, fulfilled, and safe.
- Team members are lifelong learners who are growing in their profession.

### Example metrics of success...

- Communication satisfaction score
- Staff overall satisfaction score



# STRATEGY AT A GLANCE 2027-2029

**MISSION** Access • Information • Connection • Inclusion

**VISION** Transforming lives and strengthening communities

**VALUES**

- Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom
- Public Good

## ACCESS

- Goals**
- Be a viable and vibrant third space.
  - Promote digital access for all.
  - Deliver SCPL resources and services outside of the Libraries.
- Measures**
- Branch visits
  - Meeting room utilization
  - Public internet use
  - Bookmobile visits
  - Materials checked out from bookmobile and outreach
  - Outreach programs delivered
  - Jail Reach checkouts

## INFORMATION

- Goals**
- Offer the materials and resources our communities want.
- Measures**
- Physical item circulation
  - Digital content circulation

## CONNECTION

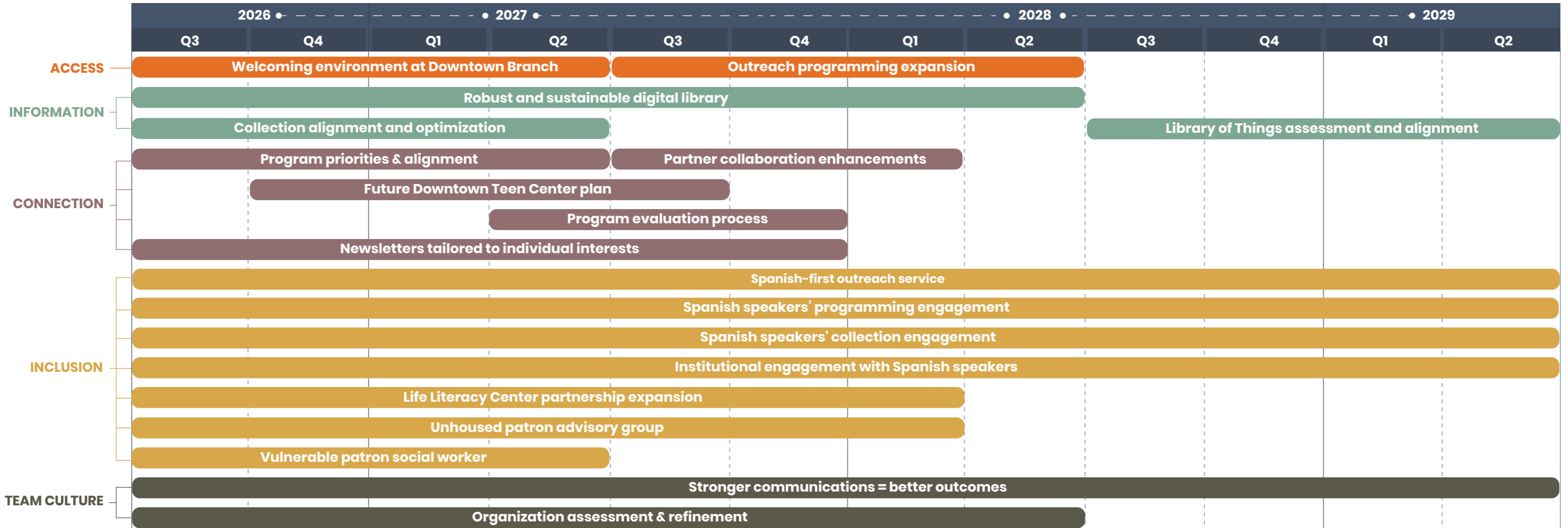
- Goals**
- Provide meaningful, inclusive, and impactful programming.
  - Partner with community organizations to enhance programs or services.
  - Participate in community events.
  - Connect the community to the Libraries' offerings.
- Measures**
- Program attendance
  - Community partner count
  - Offsite program attendance
  - Newsletter opens
  - Digital patron engagement

## INCLUSION

- Goals**
- Increase engagement with and service to Spanish speakers.
  - Connect vulnerable patrons with relevant services.
- Measures**
- Spanish/bilingual program attendance
  - Bookmobile Spanish speaker attendance
  - Life Literacy Center visits

## TEAM CULTURE

- Goals**
- Team members are informed and included.
  - Team members are satisfied, fulfilled, and safe.
  - Team members are lifelong learners who are growing in their profession.
- Measures**
- Communication satisfaction
  - Staff satisfaction



# ABOUT SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**The Santa Cruz Public Libraries (SCPL)** system delivers information, education, enrichment, and inspiration through a network of 10 neighborhood library branches, a web-based digital library, a bookmobile, a library annex, and community-based programs. SCPL serves children, teens and adults with innovative programming, professional services and community facilities that spark imagination and support discovery. Patrons can explore a wide range of interests from academic research, book clubs and literacy programs to digital photography, locally-produced music and local history. Branch locations include Aptos, Boulder Creek, Branciforte, Capitola, Downtown Santa Cruz, Felton, Garfield Park, La Selva Beach, Live Oak and Scotts Valley. (Note: Watsonville is served by its own library separate from the SCPL system.)

## 2025 LIBRARY USE

**852,176**

Visits

**194,958**

Cardholders

**2,146,403**

Total Circulation of Items



### OUTREACH

- Bookmobile – **23,000 items** on board, **32 sites** visited monthly, **36,395 items** circulated
- Jail Reach – **4 sites** visited weekly, **200 participants** served monthly



### MARKETING

- Newsletter Opens – **52,564**
- Digital Patron Engagements – **950,719**



### PROGRAMMING

- Summer Reading – **4,101** participants, **56,402** hours read
- Adult Programs – **22,853** participants, **2,436** programs
- Youth Programs – **40,643** participants, **2,065** programs
- Life Literacies Center – **1,213** participants, **343** programs



Partnerships with **26 local organizations**



Internet Sessions **85,321**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to these individuals who have contributed their valuable insights, energy, and leadership to **Santa Cruz Public Libraries** and this strategic plan.

## LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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## LIBRARY FACILITIES FINANCING AUTHORITY & LIBRARY JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

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- Jamie Goldstein
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- Timothy Lydgate (Supervisory District 5)
- Rena Dubin (Santa Cruz)
- Pamela Woll (Scotts Valley)
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