

THE EFFINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Marketing Plan

2025

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Our Vision

The Effingham Public Library: A catalyst for positive action.

Our Mission

The Effingham Public Library creates unique opportunities to connect with learning, support, and the community.

Our Values

Connection
Service
Leadership

Background

This year the Marketing Plan is being updated at a time that is fully post-COVID-19 pandemic, which began 4 years ago. Prior to the start of the pandemic, the Effingham Public Library was on an upward trajectory in nearly every measured category that had lasted for over a decade. The circumstances of the pandemic changed that and the library has been working to rebuild.

The Effingham Public Library is the tax-supported city library of Effingham, Illinois, serving a population of approximately 12,252 at the 2020 census. Effingham is located in the east-central part of the state, approximately 100 miles east of St. Louis, 200 miles south of Chicago and 140 miles west of Indianapolis.

The Library has over 50,000 books, magazines, and audio-visual materials. It is a member of the Illinois Heartland Library System. It has a nine member board of trustees that set policy and establish services.

In FY2019, circulation reached 269,744. This was the 12th straight year that the library achieved growth in its circulation numbers. This was the last completed fiscal year before the pandemic began and shuttered services for a period of time. In FY2024, circulation reached 222,659, down 17% from the high in FY2019. FY2025 is projected to finish just below 240,000, which would be a 7% increase over FY2024.

Programming has a different story to tell. In FY2019, total programming attendance across all age groups was 18,862 (15,879 youth attendance and 2,983 adult attendance). In FY2024, total programming attendance ended with 30,612 (27,097 youth attendance and 3,515 adult attendance), representing a 62% increase from FY2019. FY2025 is on track to be another record breaking year as well. These numbers are in part due to increased offerings, a Summer Read Program that is back to pre-pandemic form, and a growing outreach network.

The summer reading challenge remains the most popular and heavily attended library program, serving 1,300 children and teens in 2019. In FY2025, 1,640 people registered. This past summer, the team focused on returning to our regular level of programming and heavily promoted the program. All staff members participated in encouraging patrons to register and participate and the hard work paid off with our highest year ever for the Summer Reading Program.

Outreach has seen tremendous growth in the last year, primarily because we have hired a full-time employee that is focused completely on outreach. She has made connections with daycares, schools, adult daycares, and assisted living facilities.

There were a total of 3,958 unexpired library cards as of April 30 2019. City resident cards number 3,546. Non-resident card numbers stood at 412 as of April 30 2019. Currently, there are 3,314 unexpired library cards. City cards stand at 2,837 and non-resident cards number 477. While we are seeing an increase in our non-resident cards, our resident cards have fallen.

Key Developments

Our programming numbers have clearly made a return to their pre-COVID numbers, which has been a huge morale boost for staff. Our next area of focus is on our circulation numbers and unexpired patron count, which are directly connected. One area of hindrance is the decline of physical DVDs and the rise of streaming. While we are still offering DVDs, we have lost huge numbers of circulations of these items because fewer of them are in the marketplace as movies and shows go direct to streaming. At this time, it's not possible to purchase a library copy of a streaming service, so we have to find new users of our other materials to replace what we have lost from our DVD patrons. This has been challenging, but we continue to experiment and have been able to see steady growth in our overall circulation.

Over the last 2 years the library has initiated a large increase in its outreach work which has been warmly received by the community. However, we need to be more proactive in tracking the impact of outreach to see what types of behaviours it is impacting. We also need to track converting outreach visits into library cardholders.

The marketing budget for FY2026 will be \$30,000. The Library no longer has a dedicated Marketing Coordinator and instead uses a group of talented library staff with different levels of design training and experience to create marketing material, images and videos. We also contract out for our social media management and overall brand development. We have been using Imagine This! for the past 5 years and this has worked out well. Improving cohesiveness was a primary goal for last year, and that has been achieved. Materials that go out all have a consistent look and feel and is showing up across our brand. People can recognize our events and services because of this consistency.

New in 2024, we added radio into our offerings. We are awaiting numbers on the return from this investment, but it has been helpful to showcase a different service each month. We would like to add one billboard into the mix of offerings as well—ideally a digital board that would allow us to make periodic changes, but we might only have the budget for a standard billboard.

We also used Orange Boy for a targeted marketing campaign that focused on returning lapsed resident users. This campaign targeted 1,200 households and we say a 25% return to active status for those residents. This is huge in helping us reach our circulation goals as well as expanding our market penetration. We will continue to use them in calendar year 2025 and will likely go under contract for 2 targeted campaigns.

MARKETING GOALS

Increase community awareness throughout Effingham County of the Effingham Public Library and its services.

Increase active cards held by residents by 5% each.

Increase circulation by 5%.

Increase fundraising activity.

Target Markets

The priority targets are:

- Effingham City Residents who are not yet Library Card Holders
- Non-residents in Effingham County that reflect the most active current card-holders.
- Current Card Holders who have not yet used their card.
- Community, education, business and government leaders, whose opinions and influence can enhance perceptions of the library throughout the County.

Positioning Statement

The Effingham Public Library is a vibrant and welcoming Library conveniently located in the downtown area of Effingham. With a 27,000 sq. ft. building, the library and its dedicated staff provide the resources and services of a library one might expect to find in a more urban area. Run by a committed and dynamic team, the library staff strives at all times to make the Effingham Public Library one of the best small libraries in the country.

Marketing Tagline

Marketing should reinforce the brand through use of the new tagline and clear and consistent messages.

“Building Community, Connecting Neighbors”

This tagline represents the connection building that is crucial to our work as well as our desire to make our community stronger through personal connections.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Goal 1

Increase community awareness of the Effingham Public Library to residents in the city of Effingham as well as Effingham County.

Objective

- Increase market penetration to 35%
- Sign up 1,500 children for Summer Reading in 2024

Strategy

- Begin tracking impact of Outreach activities by having a QR code or some other “action” that can be taken by people we’ve connected with.
- Continue building relationships with area schools, non-profits and local businesses through floating libraries at schools, and annual county school visits.
- Make plans to purchase a digital sign for our front yard to advertise library programs and services.
- Purchase an advertising package from the area radio stations that will run throughout the year.

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- Purchase an advertising package for a local billboard
- Initiate two targeted marketing campaigns to increase awareness of the library amongst specific users groups.
- Annual county wide survey for users and non-user.
- Inform local elected officials of all the library is doing.

Goal 2

Increase active cards held by residents by 5% each.

Objective

- Increase resident card redemption by 5% by end of FY2025.

Strategy

- Launch on-boarding email series
- Continue to use the non-resident renewal call/letter and survey
- Refresh the email newsletter
- Patron story campaign—capture stories of what my library does for me.

Goal 3

Increase circulation by 5%.

Objective

- Increase digital downloads by 20% to 30,000 by end of FY 2025
- Increase adult circulation by 10%.
- Increase Summer Reading Program participation (children and teens logging activity in the Beanstack app) by 5%.

Strategy

- Refresh the email newsletter
- Create engaging book displays
- Social Media Posts about benefits of using library card
- Social Media posts about popular items available for download

Goal 4

Increase fundraising activity.

Objective

- Complete the campaign for the Children's Room expansion
- Increase active donor base by 10%

Strategy

- Annual Campaign
- Online giving campaign
- Send communications to donors at least 4 times/year
- Donor Thank You Event

Evaluation Strategy

We will use the Annual Progress Report and fundraising report to measure success. The Progress Report includes statistics on circulation, ILL, new library cards issued, computer users, programming, etc.

The Director will write a report yearly to update the Board on the Marketing Plan implementation.