

# EPA NATIONAL LIBRARY NETWORK



## STRATEGIC PLAN: FY 2020 - 2025

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# INTRODUCTION

The *EPA National Library Network Strategic Plan: FY 2020-2025* provides a roadmap that builds on past success and embraces new opportunities to continually evolve the EPA National Library Network (Library Network or Network) to meet new information needs.

The Library Network provides essential resources, services and information to support the EPA community. The Library Network is a collaborative organization of highly skilled librarians who acquire, organize and deliver timely information to EPA employees and the public. The Network provides many resources, including:

- Librarians with expertise in chemistry, water, air, business, law, etc.
- Curated collections of resources.
- Research and knowledge management support.
- Superb customer service.

The Library Network strives to be EPA’s essential information resource in which they are regarded as the one stop shop for information by, about and for EPA. Through ongoing support and the implementation of this plan, the Library Network will continue to be recognized as an integral part of EPA’s information landscape. Composed of highly qualified professional librarians and support staff, the Library Network’s information experts are employees’ partners in research, enforcement, and regulatory and policy making.

This plan builds on the Network’s many achievements and successes, including its collaborative working model and its highly skilled workforce. The Network’s efforts have resulted in:

- Increased accessibility to resources through specialized librarians.
- Digitization of decades of EPA reports, organizing and cataloging collections.
- The procurement of research tools, publications, electronic books, journals and other targeted e-resources.

In developing this plan, the Network conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

[Appendix B: Drivers for Change](#) presents the results of the analysis.

The plan’s goals build on opportunities identified in the SWOT such as consolidating services, reinventing library space, enhancing the governance structure and providing library staff and employees with training and tools. In addition, the plan builds on the findings in the [2017 Library Needs Assessment](#), which highlights the importance of library services, essential resources and library space, and the need for additional research services, resources, collaboration and outreach.

## LIBRARY NETWORK MISSION

The Library Network provides essential resources, services and information management to support the EPA community.

## LIBRARY NETWORK VISION

EPA’s essential information resource.

## LIBRARY NETWORK RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Digitized an additional 7,022 EPA publications for a total of 43,724.
- Cataloged over 69,000 publications.
- Implemented Summon—a research discovery service.
- Increased e-Resources on the Desktop Library.

This plan lays out seven goals and supporting objectives to address current drivers and achieve the Library Network's future vision:

1. Ensure the Library Network has the right collections in the right format in the right place and that resources are discoverable and accessible.
2. Transform and right-size the Agency's library space and collections to promote collaboration and access to resources and services.
3. Promote awareness of library services through partnerships and outreach.
4. Streamline and centralize core services and resources in support of local information needs.
5. Strengthen and maintain a robust governance structure for the Library Network.
6. Enhance training opportunities.
7. Establish EPA's libraries as the Agency's strategic source for research services.

The Library Network will succeed in fulfilling its mission, vision and goals by continuing to be customer focused and service-oriented. The Network will have Agency-wide reach with custom information solutions. They will optimize EPA teams with Network resources and expertise and will partner with customers in their research and information-seeking efforts. Through partnerships and a customer-service focus, the Library Network will be the Agency's source for authoritative and accurate information.

# LIBRARY NETWORK FY 2020-2025 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



## **1.0 Ensure the Library Network has the right collections in the right format in the right place and that resources are discoverable and accessible.**

A dynamic and well-functioning EPA relies on access to a wide variety of information resources, from scientific data, journals, books and citation databases to news, business, legal, management and information technology (IT)-related materials that are available when and where users are. In addition to access to content, users need a system that allows them to quickly locate resources, and library staff require a mechanism to streamline collection management.

The Library Network will invest in both focused and broad collections of information as well as use commercial delivery systems that allow for the sharing of content from external sources with EPA employees. The Network also will invest in an Integrated Library System (ILS) to replace the current EPA Online Library System (OLS) to take advantage of enhancements that are not available with the existing system. The new ILS will benefit customers by improving their ability to locate resources and will assist librarians with their daily library operations.

### **Goal 1 Objectives:**

- 1.1 Invest in information resources and make them available to all Agency staff.
- 1.2 Implement a new Integrated Library System.



## **2.0 Transform and right-size the Agency's library space and collections to promote collaboration and access to resources and services.**

The Agency has been part of a government-wide initiative to reduce space requirements, particularly in leased environments. As part of this effort, multiple EPA libraries have participated in moves to new and smaller locations. The Library Network strives to provide services and resources at the point of need, which is increasingly online and mobile rather than physical and static. The Library Network will assess space usage within libraries, utilizing data to assist in determining the critical physical footprint needed within libraries.

We will take an enterprise approach to transform Agency libraries to closely align their space and collections with current and future Agency needs. Streamlining library holdings across the Agency's libraries supports the objective of strategic space usage. For more than a decade the EPA libraries have been digitizing EPA publications held in EPA libraries, easing the burden of maintaining large print collections in each location. Looking forward, the Library Network will utilize library data, including circulation statistics and interlibrary loan/document delivery requests, to reduce unnecessary duplication across library collections and to verify library collections contain materials highly relevant to Agency needs. This will allow the Library Network to ensure each location has the right collection while balancing the demands of local needs and space constraints.

### **Goal 2 Objective:**

- 2.1 Utilize library data to make informed collection management decisions.



### **3.0 Promote awareness of library services through partnerships and outreach.**

The Library Network is committed to its goal of disseminating information and connecting people to resources that will substantiate their work. EPA libraries provide services to support the full research and information life-cycle for all employees. Whether the need is for research support, current news or general information, EPA libraries strive to provide services at the point of need. The Library Network will build collaborative partnerships with program offices and regions to facilitate the integration of library services with program planning, enforcement, research and publication processes.

#### **Goal 3 Objectives:**

- 3.1 Increase outreach to EPA staff to promote awareness of library services and resources.
- 3.2 Build partnerships with program offices and regions to integrate library services with information needs.



### **4.0 Streamline and centralize core services and resources in support of local information needs.**

With the ever-increasing demand for library resources on the desktop, libraries are seeing a decreasing number of walk-in customers. Customers more and more frequently require library assistance via their laptop, mobile device or email. Centralizing core services allows for efficient delivery of library services, utilizing teams of professional librarians to disseminate information and connect people to resources they need to support their work. As many libraries right-size their space usage and onsite collections, centralization of core services allows for the delivery of library services to everyone, regardless of local library size or staffing level.

We will re-envision library service delivery to leverage efficiencies and expertise across the Agency. The Library Network has moved toward a centralized approach in some locations and has more than a decade of data touting the effectiveness of this delivery method. Customers who have used centralized reference and document delivery services report high satisfaction rates regarding relevancy of results and fast turnaround times. Customers benefit because they experience greater availability by professional librarians over more hours than when relying solely on local library staffing levels. Centralized cataloging allows local library staff to focus on other areas of expertise, relying upon professional catalogers to complete that specialized, but critical, task.

This goal is not without challenges and will require enhancing the procurement process to ensure services and resources meet the dynamic needs of the Agency. With these changes, however, marketing could bring increased opportunities as new customers begin to utilize library services. This goal also represents a cultural shift in the approach to filling local information needs, even though the fundamental objective of providing information to customers when and where they need it has not changed.

#### **Goal 4 Objectives:**

- 4.1 Centralize key services to leverage efficiencies and expertise and reduce costs.
- 4.2 Explore methods to enhance the procurement process.



## 5.0 Strengthen and maintain a robust governance structure for the Library Network.

EPA librarians and the services they provide are the most valuable asset of the Library Network. As an essential element in the future of EPA's information services, the librarians play a critical role in delivering services that meet the needs and preferences of today's library users. To align with these principles, the Network will continue to emphasize the value of our librarians and the collaborative nature of their work to support the information needs of EPA staff.

The Library Network's governance structure provides oversight for the operation of libraries and facilitates coordination of library services across the Network. With the changing landscape of information needs and continuing resource constraints, a robust governance structure is critical to ensure the libraries operate efficiently and effectively. The Network will seek to resume the National Library Council (NLC), which will be a critical communications channel for library discussions. The NLC provides a formal mechanism for obtaining senior-level and stakeholder points-of-view and expertise. The interaction between the NLC and the Library Network benefits the Network by providing a channel for communication with internal stakeholders to ensure continued access to library resources and funding.

### Goal 5 Objectives:

- 5.1 Emphasize a Network of collaborative librarians.
- 5.2 Reconvene the National Library Council.



## 6.0 Enhance training opportunities.

The Library Network will support training by remaining aware of emerging trends, program priorities, and new technologies and research. Through the National Training Program (NTP), the Library Network will continue to support EPA staff with a suite of e-learning activities that facilitate knowledge discovery and research impact. The Network team will provide introductory and advanced classes, database trainings and customized trainings at the point of need upon request. The Library Network will remain mindful of a human touch for trainings to be able to work with a variety of capabilities/abilities across the workforce.

EPA librarians are the Network's greatest asset, and ongoing learning and professional development is critical for our librarians to maintain their knowledge of best practices and emerging technologies. The Network will encourage EPA librarians to seek opportunities to enhance and maintain their skills. The Network will also continue to support professional development by dedicating a portion of annual meetings to educational seminars.

### Goal 6 Objectives:

- 6.1 Enhance offerings of the National Training Program.
- 6.2 Encourage professional development for librarians.



## **7.0 Establish EPA's libraries as the Agency's strategic source for reference and research services.**

The Library Network consists of librarians who are subject matter experts and have extensive knowledge of information resources. The Library Network is uniquely positioned to provide comprehensive reference and research services to existing EPA customers as well as EPA regions and program offices who currently obtain such services from external research contracts. In many cases, EPA librarians have better access to and knowledge of available resources, plus the internal contacts and context to assist in a wide-range of topical areas. This access and knowledge results in costs savings and the efficient use of Agency resources.

By coordinating with existing EPA library services contracts, offices and programs may find that the information they seek is already available to them at no cost. For more complex or extensive research projects, the Library Network can assist with procurement of reference and research services through existing library service contracts, resulting in further cost savings for regions and program offices.

The Library Network will work with the appropriate contracting leadership to establish the libraries in the Library Network as a strategic source for reference and research services. Only once it is established that the EPA libraries do not have the expertise or bandwidth to take on these specialized services should an external contract be considered.

### **Goal 7 Objective:**

7.1 Establish the Library Network as a listed strategic source for reference and research services.



# APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following is a summary of the *EPA Library Network Strategic Plan: FY 2020 - 2025* Goals and Objectives.

## **1.0 Ensure the Library Network has the right collections in the right format in the right place and that resources are discoverable and accessible.**

- 1.1 Invest in information resources and make them available to all Agency staff.
- 1.2 Implement a new Integrated Library System.

## **2.0 Transform and right-size the Agency's library space and collections to promote collaboration and access to resources and services.**

- 2.1 Utilize library data to make informed collection management decisions.

## **3.0 Promote awareness of library services through partnerships and outreach.**

- 3.1 Increase outreach to EPA staff to promote awareness of library services and resources.
- 3.2 Build partnerships with program offices and regions to integrate library services with information needs.

## **4.0 Streamline and centralize core services and resources in support of local information needs.**

- 4.1 Centralize key services to leverage efficiencies and expertise and reduce costs.
- 4.2 Explore methods to enhance the procurement process.

## **5.0 Strengthen and maintain a robust governance structure for the Library Network.**

- 5.1 Emphasize a Network of collaborative librarians.
- 5.2 Reconvene the National Library Council.

## **6.0 Enhance training opportunities.**

- 6.1 Enhance offerings of the National Training Program.
- 6.2 Encourage professional development for librarians.

## **7.0 Establish EPA's libraries as the Agency's strategic source for reference and research services.**

- 7.1 Establish the Library Network as a listed strategic source for reference and research services.

# APPENDIX B: DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

In developing the *EPA National Library Network Strategic Plan: FY 2020-2025*, EPA conducted an updated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis with Network librarians to highlight drivers for change. The following are the results of this SWOT analysis performed in November 2018.

## Strengths

- Skilled library staff with institutional knowledge.
- Local librarians with knowledge of local needs.
- High customer satisfaction.
- Collaborative service-oriented network of virtual colleagues.
- Critical Agency-wide online resources through the Desktop Library.
- NTP webinars for EPA staff and libraries.
  - Ask a Librarian live chat reference service.
  - Network cataloging service.

## Opportunities

- Creative marketing, outreach and promotion of resources and services.
- Consolidate efforts for services (e.g., Interlibrary Loan [ILL], Research, Cataloging) with centralized point of service for customers (e.g., one central form for requesting ILLs).
- Create Strategic Sourcing Initiative for library services so offices must go through the libraries for research rather than hire outside contractors.
- Provide key library staff with tools to conduct mandatory systematic reviews so offices do not go to outside contractors.
- Leverage librarians' expertise on additional tasks/groups, such as metadata, data visualization, indexing and archival management.
- Change role of library spaces (exhibitions, special meeting space). Make our libraries more innovative.
- Partner with ORD to provide support for publishing both EPA documents and journal articles.
- Coordinate book purchasing to ensure adequate subject coverage throughout the Network.

## Weaknesses

- Lack of good collection management and book budgets have led to large, unused collections that are costly to maintain.
- Lack of access to or ability to purchase key industry standards.
- Inconsistent federal library management expertise and engagement.
- Inconsistent local use of Ask a Librarian live chat.

## Threats

- Decreasing budgets; inadequate and inconsistent funding across libraries.
- Decentralized management and funding of local libraries and resources.
- No active National Library Council resulting in lack of strong senior management support.
- Loss of institutional knowledge as people leave.
- High cost of space; shrinking space for libraries.
- High cost of subscription services and resources.
- Decreasing library usage statistics give the false impression that customers use/need libraries less.
- Questioned relevancy in the digital age. The mindset that everything is findable and accessible on Google.
- Lack of understanding of the full range of librarians' capabilities and services.

# APPENDIX C: LIBRARY NETWORK STRUCTURE

The EPA National Library Network is composed of libraries and document repositories located in EPA’s Headquarters, regions, field offices, research centers and specialized laboratories. The combined Library Network collections contain a range of general information on environmental protection and management, basic and applied sciences and extensive coverage of the statutory mandates that EPA is required to meet. Several Network libraries maintain specialized collections to support specific regional or program office needs. While the libraries differ in function, scope of collections, extent of services and level of public access, the Library Network provides a common framework and enables the libraries to collaborate on the delivery of services to EPA staff and the public.

EPA has a highly skilled library workforce dedicated to delivering quality library services to meet the Agency’s information needs. Professional librarians manage collections and resources and assist EPA staff and the public. A National Program Manager (NPM) in EPA’s Office of Mission Support—Environmental Information is responsible for providing assistance and guidance in the operation of libraries and bringing focus and cohesion to the Library Network community. The NPM also serves as the EPA-appointed representative to work with external library professionals and stakeholders.

Figure 1 shows the EPA libraries in each region across the country. Visit <https://www.epa.gov/libraries/libraries> to find the contact information for each library.

Figure 1. National Library Network Locations

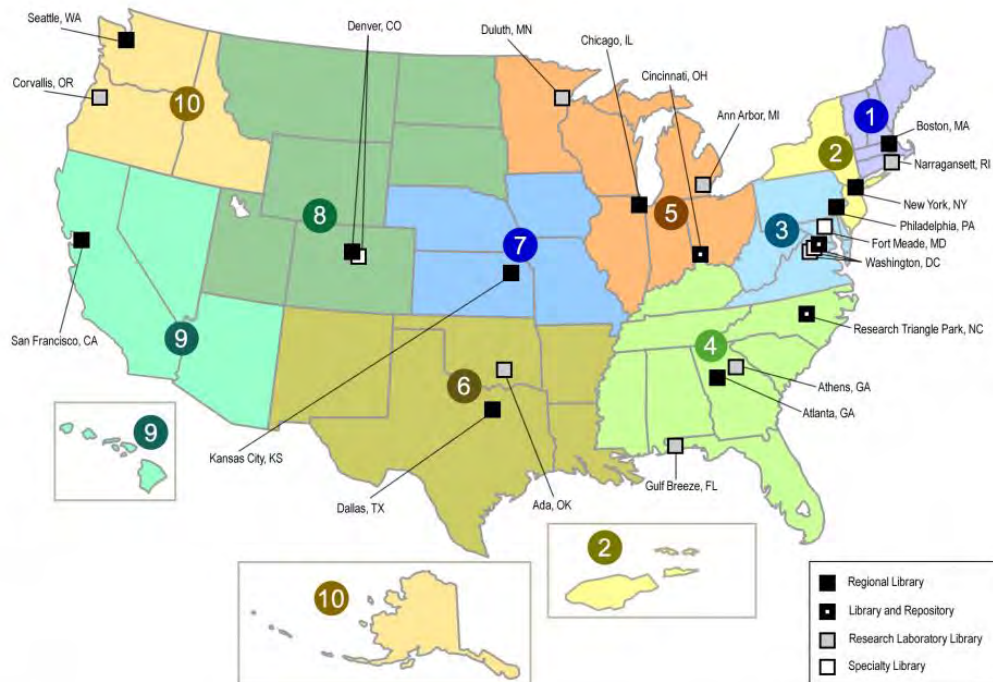
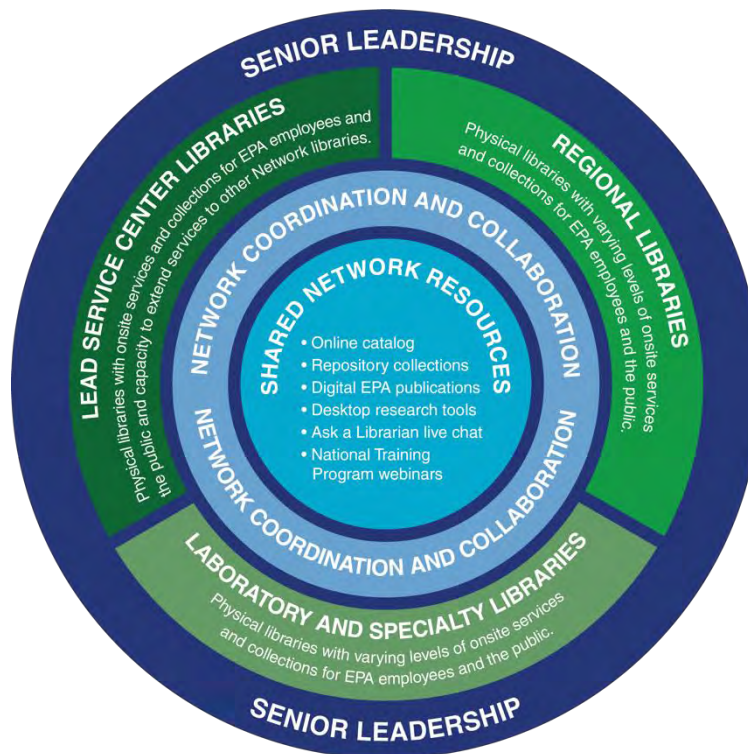


Figure 2 illustrates the interrelationships among EPA’s libraries and resources that form the fully integrated EPA National Library Network. The core of the Library Network is its robust collection of shared resources, including virtual library tools and resources and repository library collections (e.g., the online catalog, digital EPA publications, desktop research tools, Ask a Librarian live chat reference service and the National Training Program webinars). The Network relies heavily on coordination and collaboration among its libraries and resources. The Regional Libraries, the Laboratory and Specialty Libraries and the Lead Service Center Libraries are physical libraries with customized collections and varying levels of onsite services for EPA staff and the public. These libraries are coordinated by the Library Network. Senior leadership input and support is the foundation of maintaining the strength of the Library Network.

Figure 2. National Library Network Model



EPA National Library Network  
Strategic Plan: FY2020 – FY2025



Office of Mission Support  
Office of Enterprise Information Programs  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA 260-R-20-001  
<http://www.epa.gov/libraries>  
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