With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries working group came together to craft and articulate a shared vision for the future of public libraries.

The working group included:
- leaders from the library field,
- executives from businesses,
- officials from various levels of government,
- community development organizations,
- and education experts.

A networked world
Gateway to lifelong learning

“Persistent education and learning are the reality … the library as people, place and platform is the new knowledge institution that can serve all those needs.”

LEE RAINIE

People

Place

Platform

LIBRARY AS PEOPLE

“Take away my people, but leave my factories, and soon grass will grow on the factory floors. Take away my factories, but leave my people, and soon we will have a new and better factory.”

Andrew Carnegie
Aspen Institute’s Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries

LIBRARY AS PLACE

“The public library is first and foremost a place...that promotes development in society. It is the family room of a community.”

Akhtar Badshah

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Aspen Institute’s Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries

LIBRARY AS PLATFORM

THE MILL at San Francisco Public Library

Friends gather to play Majang at the Broadmoor Library in New Orleans.

In the teen room, where kids come daily after school.

A lot of community supporters stepped forward for a video shoot.

Nashville Public Library Makerspace

Library computers at community center.

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1. Aligning with community goals

“The public library has moved from being an institution that primarily services individuals to one that navigates community.”

—TESSIE GUILLERMO
Aspen Institute’s Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries

1/26/2016

2. Provide access to content in all formats
ACCESS IS NOT ENOUGH!

3. Ensuring long-term sustainability

Toward a national digital platform

“With a nationally networked platform, library and other leaders will also have more capacity to think about the work they can do at the national level that so many libraries have been so effective doing at the state and local levels.”

-MAUREEN SULLIVAN
Aspen Institute’s Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries

1/26/2016

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GETTING STARTED

Action Steps For
Library Leaders,
Policymakers &
The Community

Library Leaders

• Define the scope of the library’s programs, services and offerings around community priorities
• Develop partnerships and collaborations
• Measure outcomes and impacts to communicate the library’s value to the community
• Engage the community in planning and decision making

Policymakers

• Define libraries as part of the community’s priority infrastructure
• Develop strategic alliances and partnerships with local library leaders to advance educational, economic and social goals
• Leverage the economic development potential of the public library as a community platform
• Support and accelerate deployment of high-speed broadband & wi-fi to all libraries

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Community Partners

- Connect the community’s knowledge resources to the library’s networks & platform
- Volunteer organizational and technical expertise to mentor and support learning that takes place in library spaces and on its platform
- Develop strategic partnerships and alliances with public libraries

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