

The South Central Library System: For a Hundred Years, 1990-2090

Libraries are surprisingly ancient human institutions, having been in the business of conserving and disseminating much of the information upon which our civilization is based for several millennia. Even the comparatively recent American public library tradition is now well over 200 years old. Yet despite this evidence for the longevity of libraries and the continuing value of the information they provide, most modern library mission statements and service plans only scratch the surface of the future, as if one to five years were all libraries really had to worry about. This kind of planning effort serves a vital immediate need, especially where funding processes are concerned, but a total focus on the "trees" rather than the "forest" may actually limit rather than enhance what we will be able to achieve in the years and decades to come.

Our staff, member libraries, and Board of Trustees considered these issues over several months. The following long-range mission statement was adopted in July of 1989. It is intended to serve as a broad background within which our other planning efforts will take place and against which our service programs will be measured. It is reconsidered annually and revised as required.

1. **INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES:** By the year 2090, the South Central Library System and its members will make freely available to each area resident a complete selection of the informational resources and services needed or desired by that resident for the purposes of education, recreation, and the acquisition of knowledge.
2. **PUBLIC USE:** The South Central Library System and its members will regularly inform every resident of our area of the full range of library and informational resources and services available to them, and will seek to ensure, by the year 2090, that each resident makes extensive and regular use of these resources and services as a basic and integral part of everyday life.
3. **PUBLIC ACCESS:** By the year 2090, the South Central Library System and its members will ensure free and open access for every area resident not only to all library and informational materials located within our geographic area, but also to all such informational resources as our residents shall need or desire which are located outside our area, regardless of where such location shall be.
4. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION:** For the duration of this plan, the South Central Library System and its members will ensure that all area residents have easy and protected access to the widest possible range of information on every side of every question and issue before our society,

- no matter what governmental or popular views, sentiments, or restrictions concerning any of these issues shall from time to time come to prevail.
5. INFORMATION EXPERTISE: By the year 2090, the South Central Library System and its members will ensure that every resident of our area has free and ready access to the professional services of highly-qualified information providers able to direct those residents to the widest possible range of information services, sources, materials, and discrete elements of knowledge required to meet their individual needs.
 6. PRESERVATION OF KNOWLEDGE: For the duration of this plan, the South Central Library System and its members will ensure that there is readily available within our area informational materials representing enough of the basic core of human knowledge to re-establish effectively functioning human society in the event that natural or other catastrophic events destroy existing human social institutions as we know them.