

In 1905, around the time that the first Rotary Club was founded in Chicago, the people of Lawrence had just opened their new library. The library had been built with a gift from Andrew Carnegie, who asked for little more than the promise that the community would support a library that was free and open to all. Their approaches differed, but both the Rotary Club and the Lawrence Public Library shared as their founding principle the notion that their work would be beneficial to society, and despite changing times both have continued to hold this notion as central to their operations.

But how do you know if your work is meeting this benchmark--being beneficial to society? Since the 1930s, Rotary Club members have used the Four-Way Test—a test made up of four questions devised by a Chicago businessman—as a yardstick for evaluating whether or not an organization’s way of doing business was consistent with this ideal of serving the greater good.

So if we apply the Four-Way Test to the services provided by the Lawrence Public Library, how do they stack up?

1. Is it the Truth?

1. Some say the internet has made public libraries obsolete.
 1. With a universe of information available instantaneously everywhere, what purpose do libraries serve?
2. But consider the staggering immensity of that universe of information:
 1. A BBC project to measure the internet estimated that 6 new connections are made every second.
 2. More than 600,000 new blog posts every day.
3. How are people to make sense of this information overload, to find the information they need, to identify the information that is reliable?
4. Librarians help people find not just information, but reliable information—accurate information—information that is true.
 1. Every day, the librarians here at the Lawrence Public Library field an astonishing array of questions (library staff have fielded over 70,000 questions so far this year): These questions range from “Does the library have this book” to “Where can I find an obituary for my great-aunt Edna” to “How do I register to vote? Who can help me with my taxes? How do I get a passport?” People seeking answers can come in
 1. In person, or
 2. Reach a librarian by email, chat, social media
 3. If our librarians don’t have the answer, they will direct you to the source that does.
 2. The library also makes available a number of databases on a wide array of topics that offer our patrons information that has been vetted and verified as being reliable. So whether you are looking for

1. medical information,
2. or doing a report for school,
3. or researching your family's history,
4. or needing a repair manual for your car, the library's databases can provide you with information that you can trust. Information that is accurate, reliable, true.

2. Is it Fair to all concerned?

1. Not only is the internet a rapidly expanding universe of information, Internet access is becoming essential to conducting the business of day-to-day life. More and more, the information that people need to conduct their daily lives, or to be informed, engaged citizens, is available only online.
 1. Applying for a job? Odds are your prospective employer will require you to Apply by email or through electronic portal
 2. Applying for a loan, or to go to college? Probably encouraged to do that online
 3. Researching a medical condition, and want the most up-to-date information? It's Likely published in journals that are made available through electronic databases, and which may not come out in print at all
 4. Some Newspapers have ceased print publication, and are only available online
 5. Even the Encyclopedia Britannica, in print for nearly 250 years, is now available only online.
 6. Or consider the legislative session in the Kansas statehouse: for those Kansans following its twists and

turns—an internet connection is essential. There is no broadcast of the legislature—only streaming audio, and Twitter updates from legislators, journalists, and other observers provide real-time play-by-play.

7. Enter the digital divide—the traditional definition of the digital divide is that on one side, there are those who have internet access, and on the other, those who do not.
8. Lawrence, like many college communities, actually has an above average number of residents who have internet access at home—
 1. according to the most recent American Community Survey by the US Census Bureau, approximately 88% of Lawrence residents have internet access at home.
9. But in a community of over 90,000 people, that still means around 10,000 people do not have internet access, and
10. Studies consistently show that
 1. low-income residents,
 2. residents with less education, and
 3. older residents tend to end up on the have-not side of the digital divide.
11. Last year the Lawrence Public Library welcomed nearly 700,000 visitors. Over 100,000 of those visitors logged into a library computer during their visit, demonstrating that publicly accessible connections to the internet remain in high demand.

2. Like all things digital, The digital divide is evolving, and some definitions now include not just access to the internet but also tech savvy:
 1. Those who know how to use a variety of digital devices, and those who don't.
 2. Those who know how to use digital platforms to communicate and to create, and those who don't.
3. The Lawrence Public Library works to level this playing field as well, providing
 1. drop-in sessions for patrons who have questions about how to use digital devices and for those interested in learning more about the basics of computer use and various software programs. (email, excel, dropbox, etc).
 2. The library also offers patrons free access to a database called Lynda.com, which provides video courses on a variety of technology-related issues.
 3. This summer we'll be partnering with Code.org to offer coding workshops for elementary school teachers.
 4. And the piece de resistance is The library's Sound + Vision Studio, which offers patrons free use of a technology-rich recording studio and creative suites for experimenting and creating. This summer we've launched a series of filmmaking classes to more fully address the Vision side of the studio.
4. Of course, equity of access doesn't just apply to digital information
 1. the circulating collections—books, movies, music, audio books—see plenty of use. Over 1.3 million items were checked out in 2015.

1. The most recent data from the State Library of Kansas shows that LPL had the highest per capita circulation among the ten largest libraries in Kansas.
2. Circulating collections provide patrons with access to thousands of titles, and the opportunity to go beyond bestseller lists; personalized book suggestions from librarians assist patrons as they explore these vast collections
3. The library also offers access to less traditional collections such as the Seed library we offered this spring to make seeds available for those interested in trying their hands at gardening, and the
4. Lawrence Music Project which preserves and promotes the vibrant local music scene.
5. Interlibrary loan expands the universe of accessible materials to include those held by a vast network of lending libraries at little or no cost to patrons.
5. And the Library does its best to make sure nobody is left out:
 1. The library has been offering Home delivery to the disabled since 1965.
 2. And a regular circuit of Book talks and book van visits to local retirement homes brings the library out into the community.
 3. We're also offering book recommendations in Spanish and Chinese to the ESL students at USD 497's Adult Learning Center.

3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

1. LPL has highest average program attendance among the ten largest public libraries in Kansas, with over 50,000 people attending library programs last year. This indicates that the library has become a central hub for people seeking opportunities to learn, to engage with ideas, and to meet new friends.
 1. The library offers a variety of Book Clubs: Book Club in a Bag for DIYers who want to organize their own clubs, and a series of regular books clubs organized by the library on topics such as “Great Books,” and Cookbooks.
 2. The Sound + Vision Studio provides families and friends interested in recording oral histories with a free and well-equipped sound studio and assistance with recording technologies.
 3. Meeting rooms—provide free meeting space to all in order to encourage discussion, collaboration
 4. And Programs like Genealogy and Local History Drop-ins, TedxLawrencePublicLibrary, and the Diverse Dialogues series, which has included discussion of topics such as racial profiling and Ebola, offer an opportunity for people to share their creativity, make new friends and to discuss issues that are important to the community.

5. One of the upcoming projects I'm most excited about is the digital local history portal we're building. The Digital Douglas County History portal is in beta mode right now, but we'll be launching it this fall and growing it through partnerships with Watkins Community Museum, the Douglas County Genealogical Society, and the other historical societies within the county. We'll also be reaching out to the community at large to build a collection that reflects the diversity of our community.

4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

1. At the most basic level, the library is free and open to all, and an impressive number of Lawrence residents are making use of its services: over 75,000 Lawrence residents have a library card.
2. Beyond just being a resource for local residents, Library resources and programs improve quality of life throughout the community by supporting the key elements that contribute to happy communities: better health, opportunities to create and develop social ties, educational opportunities and economic development initiatives that support job growth and local entrepreneurship.
 1. Health Spot (partnership with Lawrence Memorial Hospital) provides information and programming that promotes healthy lifestyles
 2. Summer Reading Program theme this year— Exercise Your Mind--ties into the goals of the Health Spot. Fitness Fridays, Walk through

History on the Burroughs Creek Trail with Henry Fortunato, Walk/Bike to Rivendell.

3. Again this summer the library will serve as a site for the Summer Food Program, which provides free lunches for children ages 1-18, and low cost lunches for adults.
4. Career Clinics (in partnership with Douglas County United Way) offer assistance with researching job opportunities, completing applications, writing resumes, dressing for success, and interview skills.
5. Recognizing that Small businesses are the engine of economic growth—the library has chosen to partner with the City of Lawrence, Douglas County, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation, and KU Small Business Development Center to create the BizFuel initiative which seeks to support the development of local entrepreneurship.
6. The library also participates in a partnership with the Foundation Center, a national authority on philanthropy and grant funding. Through this partnership, the library provides access to tools such as directories of grant programs and workshops for those seeking grants.
7. And, in order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our community, the library is currently in the beginning stages of a community needs assessment. We'll be surveying Lawrence residents, interviewing key community partners,

and holding a series of focus groups to better understand the service gaps and information needs in our community.

2. Whether on a national or a local level, individual well-being is intrinsically tied to the well-being of those around us. Health, education, economic development are all intimately intertwined, and improving these elements, especially for the most vulnerable members of our community, ultimately improves the well-being of our entire community.

After learning more about the information services and programs provided by the Lawrence Public Library, and their impact on our community, I hope you will agree with me that we have passed the Four-Way Test.

Thank you.