Key Themes from Major Library Studies

*Libraries are essential to success and progress in the digital age.* – The Aspen Institute report

**Challenges/Trends**

- Continued advances in digital media and technologies
- Competition
- Demographic transformation
- Financial constraints

**The Assets of Public Libraries**

The assets that will allow libraries to thrive in the 21st century are the same qualities that helped them survive and flourish in the past:

**People:** People are the library’s greatest advantage. The library is a hub of civic engagement, fostering new relationships and strengthening the human capital of the community. Librarians connect individuals to resources and facilitate learning and creating for children and adults alike.

**Place:** The public library is a welcoming space for a wide range of purposes – reading, communicating, learning, playing, meeting, and getting business done. It recognizes that people are not merely consumers but creators and citizens as well. The library is also a virtual space where individuals can gain access to information and resources. Libraries continue to offer the physical facilities that are quiet, private, and comfortable for reading and reflection as well as meeting places for groups.

**Platform:** The public library is user-centered. It provides opportunity for individuals and the community to gain access to a variety of tools and resources with which to discover and create new knowledge.

**Price:** Virtually all libraries provide services to their patrons at no charge, a price that is difficult for their competitors to meet.
Strategies for Success

- Aligning Library services in support of community goals
- Providing access to content in all forms
- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of libraries
- Cultivating leadership

Sources:
Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries – The Aspen Institute

Creating a Nation of Learners – Institute of Museum and Library Services

Confronting the Future: Strategic Visions for 21st Century Public Library – ALA

Compiled by Margot Helphand