Planning is an important part of the work of librarians and library boards. With limited resources, it is important that your library use what it has in a strategic, systematic matter. Unplanned changes usually cost more in time and money than changes that are thought out in advance.

Planning can help secure funds from outside sources. A well-constructed plan shows funders that the library knows what needs to be done for the community. It also is an indicator of a fiscally responsible agency.

Planning is considered to be so important by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) that Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants are not available to libraries without written plans.

In our dynamically changing environment, strategic planning helps a library be more responsive than the traditional long-range plan of the past. Writing a strategic plan is not enough, however. Once the plan is written, you have to follow it and monitor it. If your library already has a written plan, you and your board should be using it as you make decisions throughout the year.

To find out if you have a plan, look for a copy in your policy manual or other materials that you obtained from the previous director. If you cannot find a plan, ask your board chairperson if such a plan has been written. If it has been written, ask for a copy.

In a well-written plan, you will find activities for each year. You can use these activities to help you make decisions about what your library will be doing. Sometimes activities cannot be carried out, in which case your board should decide whether to continue, modify, or drop the activity. This should be done on a regular basis, with an overall review of the plan at least once a year.

If your library has not yet written a plan, you need to think about doing so. One planning process that is recommended for public libraries appears in a book entitled *Strategic Planning for Results*, by Sandra Nelson for the Public Library Division of the American Library Association. There are other planning models that also can be used.

Planning is a large task for a new librarian to take on. If your board needs to write a long range plan, call your ICfL area field Consultant for help in getting started.