

## **Strategic Plan for Newbury Public Library – 2014-2018      A working draft.**

In 2013, the Newbury Public Library board of trustees began the task of creating a strategic plan for the library. With the help of a library consultant (hired through a warrant article supported by the voters in March 2013), we assessed our space and services, our staffing and program needs, and studied emerging library trends.

We recognize that library operations and even the concept of the place of libraries in the community are changing across the country. Many of these changes are driven by the rapid proliferation of new technologies and new communication media. But other changes are the result of changing expectations of library users. We are and will always be, we believe, the most extensive and cost-effective source of books in our community. However, many people see the library's computers and computer access as the resource they rely on most often. Others value our programs, for tots thru adults, as a free and fun way to spend time in town. Some people come for the social aspect, finding conversation with staff and other patrons to be just as important as the books they check out.

The library is many things to many people, and we are fortunate to have such a charming, well-equipped and well-stocked library in Newbury. Our staff are gems, and our patrons are vocal in their praise. In other words, we want to continue doing those things we do well. But we also want to meet the changing needs and expectations of our patrons.

To that end, we are sharing with you the four specific objectives that we see at the heart of making Newbury Public Library a resource to be enjoyed and treasured now and in the future.

- Improve the patron experience
- Expand services to youth and families
- Integrate the library with the rest of the community
- Plan for future expansion

### **Objective 1 Improve the Patron Experience**

***Staffing and hours:*** We will attempt to have two staff members on duty for as many of our open hours as we can, so that patrons do not have to wait for service. Checking books in and out is only one small part of the librarians' work, but it must be done quickly and accurately by someone at the circulation desk. The other staff member will be available to assist with research, computer use, finding materials as well as do the behind-the-scenes work of the library.

Focus groups participants and others have indicated for several years a strong desire for Friday evening hours. We are now open from 5 to 8 pm on Fridays, in addition to our otherwise unchanged schedule. *(2015 update: Friday evenings did not prove as popular as expected. In October 2014 we adopted the hours as currently listed on the website, expanding our morning and evening hours 3 days a week.)*

Tasks:

- Publicize the hours in Intertown Record, poster at Information Kiosk in June (monthly)
- Set monthly schedules (monthly)
- Evaluate hours and schedule after 9 months (in September)
- Increase staff hours in 2015 (in September)

### ***Establish patron-friendly policies:***

Part-time visitors to Newbury who wish to use the library were discussed in several consultant interviews and focus groups. The Trustees have created a policy for visitors who wish to buy 2-months

borrowing privilege, as well as a policy for property owners who might wish to authorize their renters/visiting families to use the library.

Tasks:

- Publicize the visitor use policy via articles in the Intertown Record, on notice board at Blodgett's Landing if possible, fliers to rental realtors, and posters at the Information Kiosk (in May/June/July)
- Evaluate after summer 2014 experience (in September)

Refreshment availability: Trustees rescinded our policy of prohibiting drinks and food brought in by patrons. Trustees expect patrons to use care with beverages in vicinity of computers and to be tidy regarding food.

Tasks:

- Define what simple refreshments we will offer for sale, set prices to be a small profit or at least not a loss, set up a plan for purchase and sale protocols (by early May.)
- Purchase a Keurig-type beverage dispenser. (by early April).
- Evaluate after 3 months, again after 6 months.

Delivery to the homebound: Trustees agreed that library should extend its outreach to home-bound individuals with deliveries twice a month. Two volunteers will take one turn each month providing this service.

Tasks:

- Formalize this service as a policy; write out procedure for volunteers and staff (by early May).
- Recruit and train two volunteers (by June 1)
- Publicize in the library and via Intertown articles and notices sent to Newbury residents via Meals on Wheels (after volunteers are trained)
- Evaluate at end of summer (in September)

### ***Maintain and improve technology***

Training in use of electronic readers, etc. Some patrons may not know that books can be downloaded to e-readers and to audio devices. The library staff and volunteers have been offering instruction as requested. More publicity and some structure re timing would be helpful to patrons.

Tasks:

- Set up a plan and a schedule for instruction (by early May)
- Purchase an e-reader for patrons to try (by early June)

Computers—laptop and/or Ipad: Purchase a laptop and/or Ipad for patron use when other computers are busy or when someone needs more privacy for computer tasks.

Tasks:

- Recommend equipment to purchase; get cost estimates (by early June)
- Write policy and procedures for use of laptop (by early June)
- Publicize in library (after equipment has arrived)

### ***Improve access to the collection:***

Weeding and signage: Space is tight, but improving the appearance of the collection will encourage patrons to use materials.

Tasks:

- Improve signage (non-fiction room with topics as well as Dewey numbers; replace all faded paper signs; “If you can't find it, we can get it; ask a librarian” signs, etc.) (during the summer)

- Weed the collection: No shelf too tight for easy removal/insertion of books, no shelf with books laid horizontally on others, no obviously worn paperbacks (by July 1)
- Store lesser used books in basement (prolific authors, for example) (by July 1)
- Work with the Historical Society to weed the NH/Local History section ( by August 1)
- Discard RSA books, encyclopedia. (by July 1)
- Evaluate storage system (by August 1)

Display materials to attract interest:

Display books related to programs, to school themes, to special occasions, etc. Find ways to display some materials (face-forward) in other areas too.

Tasks:

- Find out more about end-cap display racks; figure out where they could be used (by June 1)
- Monthly or more frequent change of displays on counter near circulation (ongoing)
- Employ face-out display in areas where there is some room (audio, above videos, new books, children's room, YA room in display case, maybe non-fiction room) (ongoing)
- Use area under bulletin board for display (develop a plan by July 1)

***Improve consistency in staff procedures and communication:***

Patrons will appreciate this consistency, and staff will feel more comfortable, if procedures are clearly spelled out and followed by all. Procedures can change over time, but not without discussion and communication.

Tasks:

- Continue work on procedures manual
- Create a physical manual; create a place for the manual; have needed forms accessible (by June 1)
- Create a designated staff message area (by June 1)
- Hold an annual staff meeting for all staff
- Support the annual staff meeting with a luncheon or breakfast (Trustees)
- Hold primary staff meetings every two months for Rosie, Lea, & Shannon

***Volunteers:***

Many people are willing to volunteer, under their own terms. In the past we have had volunteers who did the plastic book jackets, put on labels after librarian had printed them, came in regularly to shelve books, read shelves, dust shelves, etc. In addition some parents are willing to volunteer for children's events if they are given the opportunity. Volunteers can free up staff time for other things.

Tasks:

- Recruit and train 2 volunteers for home-bound delivery
- Recruit and train 2 volunteers for other library work (by August 1)
- Have volunteers sign volunteer agreements; file them (ongoing)
- Have volunteers record their hours (ongoing)
- Recognize volunteers for service with an event (by November)

***Coffee hours:***

Having a place to meet for informal conversation, coffee and a simple snack, was mentioned often in the focus groups.

Tasks:

- Research conflicts with other senior activities in the area (by early April)

- Set dates based on research; publicize in the library, in the Intertown, via poster in Post Office and Bradford CC senior room (within a month of getting the Keurig set up)

## **Objective 2**

### **Expand Service for Youth and Families**

***Increase youth programs:*** Our pre-school story hour is always successful, but we realize in order to hold onto school-aged patrons, we need to offer more programs that will capture their imaginations and, in the process, keep alive their love of books and libraries.

Tasks:

- Friday evening events-- Offer regular schedule of events to children ages 7 to 12 (ongoing)
- Friday evening for tweens—Offer monthly activity (ongoing) *2015 update: these are not after-school programs*
- Homework club weekly (ongoing)
- Vacation week and summer programs for various age groups (ongoing)
- Evaluation at end of summer

***School outreach:*** Improve communication and services between the local schools and the library.

Tasks:

- Liaison with schools to find out materials students will need for big projects, display materials, offer related programs if feasible (implement in fall 2014)

#### ***After school programs***

Tasks:

- Create a program plan (during the summer)
- Recruit & train volunteer tutors, if that is part of the plan (late summer and early fall)
- Publicize and implement plan (in fall 2014)

***Children's room furnishings:*** The consultant helped us realize that the children's room is not user friendly for adults accompanying children; no seating for older adults. Donated furniture was installed in November; it is being replaced by more suitable seating as funding allows.

Tasks:

- Purchase some furniture with a donation received early 2014 (done)
- Seek donations from area banks and businesses for purchases (done)
- Purchase custom built window seats from GraniteCor Industries (done)
- Purchase rolling bookshelves for children's room, so space can be expanded for programs (done)

## **Objective 3**

### **Integrate the Library with the rest of the community**

***Link library and playground:*** Many of our pre-schoolers already assume a visit to the library and a visit to the playground just naturally go together. Increase that feeling.

Tasks:

- Create and install three colorful, child-attracting signs between Library and Playground (by June)

- Ensure that the path between the sites remains free of obstructions and vegetation is kept in check
- Post notices of library events in the “train station” at the playground and in summer at the Information Kiosk (ongoing Spring thru Fall)

***Link with local and regional organizations:*** We already utilize local expertise and regional organizations such as LSPA, the Fells, SRK Greenway, etc. to co-host programs. This should continue.  
Tasks:

- Continue existing partnerships/programs (ongoing)
- Identify other organizations whose members might bring new perspectives to library programs (ongoing)
- Identify local business people who might be able to offer interesting programs free in exchange for raising awareness among our patrons of their services (ongoing)

***Public Relations/Publicity:*** Our loyal patrons know what our library has to offer. Spreading the word about services, programs, computer access, etc. is important for those who don't already know.

Tasks:

- Develop a public relations/publicity plan (by June 1)
- Implement the plan (details and time frame to be defined by June 1)
- Increase budget for publicity (by 2015)

#### **Objective 4 Plan for Future Expansion**

***Building expansion:*** There is no doubt that our building has served Newbury for 15 years but is bursting at the seams as library use and patrons' expectations increase in this era of expanding roles for libraries. To solve that will require expansion.

Tasks:

- Visit other libraries, continue to do research on 21<sup>st</sup> century library trends (ongoing)
- Write a program for space needs, taking into account suggestions from the 2013 consultant, from staff and patrons, and from obvious needs (Trustees and a volunteer advisory board, 2015-16)
- Include in the town warrant an article to hire a development consultant and an architect (Trustees, in 2015 or 2016)
- Fund-raising (Friends and Trustees, beginning in 2016)