



Merrimack Public Library  
Strategic Plan  
Merrimack, NH

2014-2020

Acceptance Date  
June 6, 2017

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	8
Approval from the Library Board of Trustees.....	9
Methodology.....	10
Executive Summary, <i>outlining Service Priorities and Measurable Outcomes</i> .....	11
Appendix .....	19

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## Introduction

*"I buy most of my books online for my nook. When I went [to the library], that was the only source of books but not anymore."*

*"Basically I'm not a book reader, number one. So I do research online."*

*"My kids are grown."*

The MPL Development Fund Committee funded a telephone survey conducted by the UNH Survey Center between September 26 and October 3, 2013<sup>1</sup> during which 400 adults were asked a series of questions regarding their use and satisfaction of the services provided by the Merrimack Public Library. When asked if they used the Library, 61% of responders described themselves as "non-users," visiting the library only a few times a year, if at all. A majority of those surveyed, 75% actually, reported having a library card.

Meanwhile, of those who used the library monthly, 74% came to the library to check out print books, 14% used the library for children's events and activities, 13% to check out media, and 10% to use the photocopier or a public computer. There was no mention of taking advantage of adult technology instruction, teen events, digital collections and databases, museum passes, our telescope or eReaders.

**These results suggest a strong disconnect between what the library is currently providing in services, events and materials and what our community reports as knowledge about them;** in essence, these results suggest evidence of a sharp breakdown in the staff's communication with our community. The high percentage of residents registered with library cards suggests some initial awareness of the library, perhaps lingering from a nostalgic memory of having visited a library in their youth, while answers to open-ended questions show many adults admitting that they find no usefulness in visiting the library today.

How did this great divide occur? Perhaps it is because, in recent years, we have focused more on advocating for the brick and mortar aspect of our library and less on communicating how we have implemented new digital services despite the limitations of our physical space. Perhaps staff have been too consumed with recent budget cuts and staffing shortages to muster the stamina required for innovation. However, it is time for us to identify critical issues, set priorities and create opportunities. We are poised to set a course toward modernization and change in a day of information competitors.

Living in an "information age" is both wonderful and terrifying. Access to information on the Internet via a computer or mobile device has become easier, yes, but primarily for those with the means and technical knowledge to utilize such technology. Each day, our staff help people who are struggling to sift through a barrage of information. We instruct many who are seeking opportunities to improve their computer literacy skills or simply decipher the trick to using the fancy eReader received as a gift so they can download an eBook from the library's vast digital collection. We provide comfortable space to those who hunger for community and facilitate weekly cribbage games, Adult art workshops and knitting groups. We instruct parents and

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<sup>1</sup> See UNH Survey Results, Appendix p 20

caregivers alongside their infants and toddlers in early literacy classes. We supervise teens during our after-hours “Nerf Wars” and suggest their next read waiting to be discovered in our new Teen Room. From my vantage point, the library is busier than ever.

This Strategic Plan is the work of the library’s Board of Trustees, Staff and many of Merrimack’s residents who participated in a series of planning sessions as well as a telephone survey in 2013 to define what the Merrimack Public Library is, can, and should be. I’m proud to say that we have already implemented many of the suggestions that were highlighted during those sessions.

## **Looking Back**

The Merrimack Public Library was established in 1893. The Lowell Memorial Library (4,924 square feet) was built in 1925, a gift from the daughters of Levi Lowell in memory of their father. A 7,740 square foot addition was built in 1979, bringing the total square footage to 12,664, with 36 parking spaces.

By 1996, the Library was open for 68 hours per week during October through May, and 64 hours per week during June and September and 60 hours per week during July and August. Materials circulation had increased 400% between 1979 and 1995, from 62,781 to 242,360 annually. This could be attributed to the development of collaborative services throughout the region; in 1990, the Library became a founding member of the Greater Manchester Interlibrary Cooperative System (GMILCS), a non-profit consortium of 12 public and academic libraries in Southern New Hampshire, sharing an integrated system, materials and access to some online resources. The Library also participates in the Hillstown Library Cooperative, a state designated district, promoting planning and cooperation among member libraries as well as in the Urban Public Library Consortium.

Some of you will remember plans for a new building began in 1990 when the Library Board of Trustees realized the extent of crowding in the current facility after additional bookstacks were placed in the Reading Room of the Lowell Building and the non-fiction section, shrinking the available space for people. Certain parts of the collection were being stored remotely, causing a delay of 24 hours to allow for staff to retrieve the requested item. At that time, the Library Trustees were also aware of the need for additional parking. Additionally, modest population growth projections estimated that by 2015, Merrimack’s population would grow to 30,847 if growth remained on trend. Nolan Lushington, a Library Consultant, was hired to assess the current space needs at the Library and a Building Committee of 21 community representatives was formed.<sup>2</sup> In 1995, a Site Selection Committee was created to investigate a suitable location for the new library, following site criteria as stated by Lushington.<sup>3</sup> After extensive research, the Building Committee proposed a 32,500 square foot, one-story building to be constructed on a 3.1 acre piece of land just south of the United States Post Office, with parking available to accommodate 100 cars.<sup>4</sup> The new building would address space, safety and accommodation issues while providing improved, modern services to the community. The Library’s roles in the

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<sup>2</sup> Merrimack Public Library Building Report, April 1996 p. 8-10

<sup>3</sup> Report to the Trustees of the Merrimack Public Library, Subcommittee Site Selection, 1995, p 4

<sup>4</sup> Merrimack Public Library Building Report, April 1996 p. 8-10

community centered around offering popular materials, serving as a pre-schooler's "Door to Learning," providing information and reference services, and being a central focus point for community activities, meetings and services.<sup>5</sup> The estimated project cost of the land acquisition, planning and construction of the new Library was \$4,625,000 (1997 dollars). Staffing projections included the existing 16.025 FTE plus a part-time custodian, a part-time reference librarian and planned for the hiring of 3 FTE staff.<sup>6</sup>

In 1996, the Merrimack Public Library Development Fund, Inc. (MPLDF), a voluntary, not-for-profit corporation, organized to receive and administer gifts for the benefit of the Merrimack Public Library. The Committee embarked on a "Buy a Brick" fundraising campaign with good success.

The cost of the new building proved to be too steep for the community and by 1999, the building plan was modified to respond to the community's request. The size of the building shrunk from 32,500 square feet to 27,800 square feet, projected to meet 10 year needs vs. 20 year needs, while still allowing for parking to accommodate 128 cars.

In 2003, the Trustees had contracted with Tappé Associates, a Boston, MA architectural firm to develop a new building blueprint, which again expanded the building footprint to 38,800 square feet to include non-program space, at an estimated cost of \$7,965,714 for the project.

While many agreed the town needed a new library, they objected to the cost of the project, expressing concerns about how the proposed \$5.6 million bond article would impact taxes. As a result, these building plans were cancelled when the project did not win approval of the voters in 2006, when at a Town Deliberative Session, the residents voted to discontinue the Library Construction Capital Reserve Fund and returned the money to the General Fund, which eventually was disbursed to the people of Merrimack.<sup>7</sup> This sparked a season of strained relations between the Library administration and Trustee Board versus Town officials and many residents. Nevertheless, the Trustees continued to seek a solution and in 2009, hired The Turner Group to investigate the possibility of adding a second floor or an addition.<sup>8</sup> Without necessary funding, though, this project too, would have to be put on hold indefinitely.

The Library experienced several years of budget cuts that gave rise to a reduction in staffing levels and in hours of operation. As a result, our remaining staff had limited ability to advance more innovative services and activities desired by our community, and we were unable to provide more hours to meet demand. In July 2011, the Board of Trustees interviewed several professional fundraisers<sup>9</sup> for input about how to launch a capital campaign, but the Board ultimately voted to put this project on hold as well as they recognized additional groundwork was needed before embarking on a fundraising feasibility study.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Merrimack Public Library Building report, April 1996 p. 11-12

<sup>6</sup> Merrimack Public Library Building report, April 1996 p. 21

<sup>7</sup> "Single Vote Determines Cut in Town's Proposed Operating Budget," Janet Segedy, Merrimack Connection, Tuesday, March 14, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Merrimack Public Library Structural Assessment Project, The H.L. Turner Group Inc, August, 21, 2009

<sup>9</sup> See Study Proposal for the Merrimack Public Library, July 2011, by Campaign Associates

<sup>10</sup> See Trustee minutes from February 8, 2012

## Looking Ahead

When a new Library Director was hired in 2012, we seized upon an opportunity to pick up where we had left off. We re-examined the limitations of the current building, assessed our current staffing and services, and worked to improve our relationship with our colleagues on the Town Council. The time was ripe for change.

The groundwork for this Strategic Plan was completed in 2013 during Committee meetings, Focus Groups, and by conducting a telephone survey; in the years since, the staff and Trustees have worked to address many of the concerns that were brought up and you will see these marked in our Service Priorities as completed. A few of these projects include:

- Weeding the collection and increasing our digital holdings as part of a larger project to increase our patron public spaces while continuing to provide access to research materials in multiple formats.
- Installing a new circuit breaker box to increase the electric capacity and allow for additional electrical outlets and access points.
- Observing how our patrons dictate the use of the space and responding by clustering the existing reference computers away from the reference desk to allow for better patron privacy.
- Increasing our wifi throughout the building to accommodate the multiple and varied mobile devices our patrons use while here.
- Offering more digital services including digital music, magazines, ebooks and eaudio books.
- Lending different kits and realia including Legos, circuit kits, and signage; unique items that respond to our patron's needs.
- Making repairs to our building when appropriate, including: renovating the flat roof, replacing the large north window, repairing the skylights and making repairs to the HVAC and dry sprinkler systems as sections fail.
- Exchanging large, outdated patron access catalog (PAC) computer terminals with endcap-mounted mini-computers.
- Swapping collections and rearranging furniture to create a dedicated Teen Space and a bright and welcoming magazine reading area.

Clearly, Merrimack residents are echoing the national trend shifting libraries away from existing merely as material repositories and toward being gathering spaces and maker spaces. Residents are looking for high-tech services imparted by expert information providers in a building that is convenient and offers flexible space and opportunities for partnership with other Town agencies.

We are pleased to present the Merrimack Public Library Strategic Plan, 2014-2020. We hope that our updated mission and goals will focus on the library's role in connecting our community with one another and the world.

Respectfully submitted,  
Yvette Couser  
Library Director

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks to members of the Strategic Planning Committee who attended meetings in 2013:

Bess Arnold	Susan Gustafson*	Town Councilor Finlay Rothhaus
Jefferson Burson	Jennifer Jobin	Wendy Thomas*
Bill Cantwell	Emily Otterman	Maureen Trimper
Pat Flynn	Debbie Robinson	Library Director Yvette Couser
Sam Gustafson	Gina Rosati	

*\*Library Board Members during the Strategic Planning process*

Thanks to former staff members Natasha Bairamova, Mary Ann Blauert, Michael Cappuccio, Peter Duke, Fran Keenan, Liz Gotauco, Lisa Jose, Marguerite Kidder, Ashley O'Keefe, Robin Spencer, Kathy Starr, and Allison Steele for their contributions during the Staff Focus groups.

Thanks to former and current Department Heads Alex Estabrook, Liz Gotauco, Jennifer Greene, Joanne Marston and Nancy Vigezzi for their work on the Service Priorities section of this plan.

Thanks to the over 400 anonymous Merrimack residents who participated in the UNH Community Survey in 2013 which helped us create our goals for the next chapter in the library's history.

And finally, thanks to our consultant, Deborah Hoadley, from the Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System, for her facilitation and guidance during the planning process.

## Current Merrimack Public Library Staff

### Adult Services-Reference

(open), Department Head  
& eResources Librarian  
Lee Gilmore, Library Assistant, ILL  
Michele Ricca, PT Reference Aide

### Technical Services

Brittney Buckland, Department Head  
Jennifer Stover, PT Aide

### Administration

Yvette Couser, Library Director  
Arefe Koushki, PT Administrative Aide  
Joanne Marston, Office Manager  
Jered Ulrich, PT Maintenance Aide  
Bizhan Shadlou, PT Custodial Aide

### Circulation

Jennifer Greene, Department Head  
& Reference Librarian  
Gigi Dahl, PT Aide  
Sheila Lippman, PT Aide  
Susan McGowan, PT Aide  
Angela Putnam, PT Aide  
Jennifer Schaefer, PT Aide  
Meghan Ham, PT Aide  
Bret Sarbieski, PT Page/Aide

### Youth Services

Emily Sennott, Department Head  
Suzanne Wall, Library Assistant  
Cathy Walter, PT Aide  
Trish Glavin, PT Aide  
Reggie Bourne, PT Page/Aide  
Beatrice Couser, PT Page/Aide (seasonal)

## Approval of the Board of Library Trustees

The Merrimack Public Library Board of Trustees accepted and adopted this Strategic Plan 2014-2020 on June 6, 2017

The Library Board of Trustees continues to explore all opportunities for either renovating and expanding the current library facility or for identifying space where the library can build to meet the needs and demands of the modern community it serves. This plan provides details about the planning process that led to the recommendations detailed in the report as well as specific actions that should be taken over the next few years to ensure that Merrimack residents have the modern library they need and deserve.

This strategic plan however, is not simply about a renovated or new building, for a library is much more than brick and mortar and stacks and books. Our library carries a special responsibility for the community - a library is about knowledge, yes, but more importantly, ***the library is about connecting our community to resources that instruct and inspire while providing a place for the community to meet and learn.*** The Merrimack Library is about people: children taking home their first books, teenagers receiving for help with school projects and having a safe place to gather with friends, adults downloading their favorite author's best seller as a way to momentarily escape from a hectic day, or seniors learning how to research their genealogy or gather for a game of cribbage. We believe you will find these exact themes throughout this strategic plan.

In a very real sense, our library needs to modernize and we are limited within the existing conditions of its current building. The opportunities now presented by technology and the needs demanded by a changing community mean more people can benefit from using the Merrimack Library today than ever before. Over the past years, there have been discussions, meetings and certainly hopes for a new library building; until this is realized, the staff and Trustees are committed to being good stewards of our current building while we continue to push the boundaries of service within this space and give our constituents a glimpse of what a future, modern library could be.

Thank you for your support.

### Current Board of Trustees:

Rick Barnes, Chair  
Karen Freed, Secretary  
Janet Krupp, Treasurer  
Jennifer Jobin  
Lora Philp  
Janice Tibbetts, Alternate

## Methodology

Information generated during the planning committee discussions, staff focus groups, and a community survey informed the development of the plan. Details of each of these planning steps are available in the Appendix.

Specific planning steps included:

- **Telephone Survey**
  - Over 400 people participated in the 2013 telephone survey conducted by the UNH Survey Center. This survey provided detailed information about the services and features the community would like to include in a modern library, as well as identified underserved areas of our population.
- **Strategic Planning Committee Meetings**
  - A strategic planning committee consisting of members of the Board of Trustees, Merrimack residents, and library staff met with our planning consultant to help determine strategic directions, goals and objectives for the next few years. The planning committee identified a community vision for Merrimack, considered the library's strengths and capacity to deliver high quality library services within the confines of the current facility, and agreed upon a vision to guide the Library's future development.
- **Data analysis**
  - This included a review of library use statistics and Merrimack's 2013 Town Master Plan.<sup>11</sup>
- **Focus Groups**
  - The Library conducted focus groups with the staff to identify our Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results.
  - Working with the Director, the Department Heads identified a number of emerging trends that needed to be considered in developing the library's plan. These trends all have the potential to reshape the way in which library service is delivered.

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<sup>11</sup> Please see the Town Master Plan Update, 2013 for detailed descriptions of Merrimack demographics.

## **Executive Summary**

In the past, when conducting a “user satisfaction” survey, the library administration and Trustee Board primarily sought feedback from library users by providing paper surveys to those already coming to the building. While certainly useful and, quite honestly, inexpensive, this method will inevitably generate a disproportionate amount of “high satisfaction” responses because responders are residents already using the library. However, this method doesn’t allow the surveyor to hear from non-users, dissatisfied customers, and those for whom the library is obsolete. To approach any kind of significant change, those in an organization must be able to look at it objectively. The results of our planning sessions, telephone survey and focus groups provided an opportunity to hear from residents and staff about where we were lacking and target our shortcomings, failings and weaknesses, which, while difficult to acknowledge, is invaluable when making a plan to change.

Several themes rose to the top:

### **“learning center” and “information hub”**

On the positive side, our residents knew very well what a library should be. Residents reported that they envisioned the library as a “downtown...destination” and a “learning center” that can provide a variety of educational and cultural classes, programming and displays. The library can commit to hiring staff who are professional and experts who will seek out opportunities to bring a variety of programming events to our community. Staff can offer group classes and individual instruction on electronic devices, computers, and can improve our electronic database collection with products that both educate and entertain users.

### **“lack of space” and “clutter”**

The biggest complaint centered on the cluttered look and feel of the building, an overall lack of space and, outside, the lack of parking. Residents reported that they wanted space for small group meetings, for teens and for mobile workers. The library can commit to being better stewards of our historic building and to improving our current space by decluttering excess furniture, committing to a regular and vigorous collection maintenance schedule, and by creating new seating and shelving arrangements. Unfortunately, at our current location, the property boundaries prevent any increase in parking spaces. This lack of parking will inevitably discourage potential users or, conversely, may cause an unsafe overload in our already small lot and unsafe parking along our Church Street exit driveway.

### **“lack of communication”**

While staff complained about poor communication from Administration as well as both within and across Departments, the responses from the UNH Telephone Survey participants reveal a lack of communication from within the library to those outside the walls - those residents for whom the library had already become obsolete. The library can improve internal communication by providing regular staff meetings, training and staff announcements, and can provide better external communication through improved email communication, an updated website and by participating in outreach services.

## **“collaboration”**

Our residents want to see a commitment to partnering with existing Town Departments, organizations, businesses, the Merrimack schools. Not only is this an excellent use of resources, this type of collaboration will also help us target and reach the population that was revealed as not utilizing the library, including, males, young adults, those residents with a high school education or less, residents without children at home, senior citizens and those that are homebound.

## **Service Priorities**

These Services Priorities were developed as a response to our community’s assessment of user satisfaction and staff analysis of the library’s strengths and weaknesses. As reported previously, many of these have already been implemented. A timeline suggesting when these objectives will be addressed can be found in the Appendix.

### **Goal 1. Be a cultural and educational center**

As the Town’s learning center, the library will acquire and provide access to a variety of information sources and will offer a robust slate of programming to promote life-long learning.

#### **Objectives**

- Provide a desirable and current collection in both physical and electronic formats
- Preserve an assortment of historic materials, e.g. “The New Hampshire Collection” and local newspapers
- Retain a quantity of municipal reports and documents
- Continuously review holdings to ensure the library retains an active collection that is current, relevant and in good condition
- Remain mindful of space restrictions by maintaining a vigorous collection with 0% growth
- Maintain membership in the GMLCS Library Consortium and provide Merrimack cardholders with access to collections of member libraries
- Continue to build digital resources, including curating digital collection of local interest on Biblioboard and offering online courses through Atomic Training
- Provide outreach to underserved populations
- Improve external communication by creating a marketing plan to advertise these services and holdings across a variety of media platforms, including email, social media and an updated library website
- Display work by local artists in lower hallway
- Offer in-house classes, events and activities for all ages across a variety of disciplines

### **Goal 2. Cultivate technology to create a generation of tinkerers and citizen scientists**

The library will be a technology leader, providing instruction and access to cutting edge technology, and creating a generation of tinkerers and citizen scientists.

#### **Objectives**

- Select and maintain a collection in a variety of formats including print, electronic, and audio visual that can be easily accessed through various devices.

- Subscribe to and maintain electronic databases
- Offer STEAM-themed classes, activities and events for all ages.
- Develop Makerspace options
- Provide seismologist presentations to enhance our EQ1 Seismograph
- Develop Technology Plan for hardware and software maintenance

### **Goal 3. Invest in staff to maximize service to our patrons**

The library will recruit and retain knowledgeable, excellent staff and provide for continued professional development to ensure our workforce can adequately and expertly serve our patrons.

#### **Objectives**

- Continue to perform vigorous interview process and evaluation schedule
- Evaluate current salary levels and update salary schedule as needed
- Train staff on future GMILCS ILS platforms
- Improve inter-departmental and top-down communication; provide team-building and coaching
- Allow staff to attend professional development
- Update Professional collection
- Create Staff Succession Plan

### **Goal 4. Improve the patron experience**

The library will improve the patron experience by keeping abreast of technology and service developments, increasing patron convenience by adding both self-directed service and staff-led training opportunities. The library will continue to create attractive and comfortable individual and group spaces.

#### **Objectives**

- Provide the right level of staffing for the services we offer
- Train staff to provide excellent customer service to patrons
- Streamline Circulation procedures to allow for self-return system
- Investigate feasibility of installing book drop for parking lot
- Provide opportunities for individual technology instruction to patrons
- Implement online tracking for the Summer Reading Challenge
- Expand service hours
- Investigate library card smart phone app
- Create more patron spaces - work space, comfortable seating, declutter areas
- Provide both noisy and quiet areas
- Investigate offering unique services to the public, e.g. disc cleaning services, VHS to DVD/electronic file format conversion
- Replace old XP laptops in computer lab/cart
- Create outreach program to provide library materials and services to unreached population

### **Goal 5. Be good stewards of an historic building and grounds**

The library staff and Trustees will address maintenance and repair issues in the building and on the grounds in a timely, cost-effective manner to provide our staff and patrons with a safe, attractive space.

**Objectives**

- Repave parking lot and repair front sidewalk at entrance
- Install security cameras and door passlocks
- Working with Merrimack Police Department and Merrimack Fire and Rescue Department, provide regular staff safety training
- Provide an adequate, safe work space, break space and technology training
- Investigate renovations to address problem areas: archival climate controlled room to house newspapers, HVAC system, dry sprinkler system, flat roof, slate roof
- Investigate cost-saving efficiency programs, e.g. solar panels, LED lights
- Research revenue-generating measures e.g. renting meeting space after hours

**Goal 6. Plan for the library's future needs and services**

The Library staff and Boards will demonstrate fiscal responsibility and transparency as they plan for the library's future needs and services.

**Objectives**

- Purchase a cash register that works with our current ILS software
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and transparency
- Revive MPL Building & Marketing Committee to assess improvements they suggested in the use of internal space
- Explore the possibility of building expansion, renovation, or replacement as future needs dictate
  - When needed, hire structural engineer or architect
  - Investigate feasibility of capital campaign and of targeting major funding partners
- Investigate revenue streams e.g. rent meeting rooms after hours; apply for grants; seek corporate partnerships
- Staff, Friends of the Library, Library Board of Trustees and MPL Development Fund committee should collaborate to determine the future of Buy A Brick program and other capital investments
- Improve both internal and external communication - staff and Boards
- Recruit and maintain volunteers and Board members who act as library ambassadors
- Train all staff to advocate for the role of the library
- Improve our working relationships with the Town Council, Town Manager, and other Town Departments

**Goal 7. Provide outreach to underserved populations**

The Library staff will provide outreach and/or mobile services to Merrimack residents that have been identified as underserved by the Library.

**Objectives**

- Create an effective program to reach underserved populations (Homebound delivery, staff presence at festivals, fairs and other outdoor events)

- Investigate partnership opportunities with existing organizations to provide outreach to schools, senior centers, day care centers, and individuals who are homebound, etc.
- Create Outreach/Marketing position to better publicize our services, hours, collection etc., and/or allocate funding to cover outreach performed by current staff
- Investigate viability of adding bookmobile service
- Investigate opportunities to install Little Free Libraries throughout Town
- Target major funding partners for outreach programs
- Experiment with programming at MMS and MHS to reach teens and at the John O'Leary Adult Community Center to reach senior citizens

## Measureable Outcomes

Members of the focus groups and Strategic Planning committee generated a list of outcomes that they believed would show that we have been successful in addressing these Goals when we see increased usage and positive outcomes in our community, including:

**More visits, in-person and virtual** - An increase in in-person visits to the library and to visits to our website will show that our residents see the library as a valuable and useful resource, that the library is both attractive and convenient, and that our use of space is practical and useful; an increase in use of our digital resources via our website will show that our online services are easy to navigate and offer value to our digital consumers.

**More circulations** – while our statistics confirm that the library is following the national trend of an increase in electronic materials circulation displacing a decrease in printed materials circulation, we anticipate that an increase in general usage and generally more items being borrowed will show that our residents are responding positively to updates throughout our collection and that our membership in the GMILCS library consortium and partnership with the State Library is a prudent use of local funding.

**More residents opening accounts** - an increase in user accounts by residents who have and use their library cards both in person and through our digital resources will show that residents see value in what the library is offering and that staff is curating current information.

**More community partnerships** - when we see an increase in local businesses and community groups using our services and seeking partnerships with the library, we will know that the library's reputation has improved and we will be recognized as a valuable resource; we will also know that our communication to those outside our walls has improved.

**Evidence of improved quality of life and of life-long learning** - demand for cultural and educational resources and events will be robust and we will see an increased use of resources and attendance at events that facilitate and enhance self-driven learning opportunities.

**Sustainable financial commitment from community and local government without a future risk** - The library has experienced harsh criticism for not developing into a "modern library" and residents have voiced their dissatisfaction by voting against new building projects. Necessary cuts have slashed hours, which in turn, affects the available hours the library building can be used, and our statistics certainly reflect this. We will know that our vision and mission aligns with our community's needs when residents, stakeholders and municipal leaders express their support of the mission of the library by voting for increases in our budget, for future capital improvements, or otherwise work to ensure that the library will serve Merrimack residents for years to come.

## Conclusion

Despite - and perhaps because of - the reductions of previous years, our staff and Board of Trustees have become very resilient in the face of change. We have, quite honestly, embraced the fact that change is inevitable, and when the library implements change, it is an opportunity to sharpen our focus on serving our community.

Libraries level the playing field by providing resources that every individual can access regardless of income, education or social status, giving every individual equal opportunities for improvement, be it personal growth or contributing to the improvement of our Town.

Our community spoke - loudly - and we listened. We revamped essential library procedures to become more efficient; we automated to improve the customer experience and streamline staff resources; and, where possible, we shifted spending to purchase contemporary products and services that our customers want.

In the coming years there is so much more to do. This plan outlines where your library is headed based on what we heard from you. You are invited to let us know what you think as we work together on these goals and specific work plan objectives.

Thank you.

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## Appendix

UNH Telephone Survey – Summary.....	20
UNH Telephone Survey – Questions.....	23
Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summaries.....	31
Data Analysis.....	40
Staff Focus Groups .....	42
Emerging Trends .....	48
Community Profile .....	50
Mission and Vision Statements .....	52
Multi-Year Action Plan.....	54
Technology Plan.....	62
5 Year Statistics Comparison FY 2009/10-FY 2013/14.....	64

## **Summary of UNH Telephone Survey**

In October 2013, the Library Board of Trustees contracted with the UNH Survey Center, an independent, non-partisan academic survey research organization, to conduct a telephone survey. This survey was funded by the Merrimack Public Library Development Fund. The specific areas of interest were the residents' attitudes about the library services and their usage habits. A survey of four hundred (400) Merrimack, NH adults was conducted by telephone between September 26 and October 3, 2013.

### **Residents' Knowledge of Library Services**

There is moderate familiarity with the library.

Males, older adults (65+), those with a high school education or less, and households with incomes below \$45,000 are more likely to be not at all familiar with the library

Households with children between 5 and 13 years old are more likely to be very familiar with the library

The majority of residents do not use the library regularly and they report the reason is they read online, through an eReader, or buy books

The main reason those who do use the library do so is for checking out books

Email and the library website were cited as the two most preferred ways to get information about the library.

97% of respondents reported having Internet access at home

### **Residents' Usage Habits**

#### **Library Card Holders**

Three quarters of residents report having a library card.

Females, those with postgraduate educations, households earning less than \$45,000 or between \$75,000-\$100,000 and households with children of any age are more likely to report having a library card

Males, young adults (under 35), those with a high school education or less, and households with no children are more likely to report not having a library card

#### **Frequency of Library Use**

4% of residents surveyed use the library weekly, 12% once a week, and 23% once or twice a month. of those who go to the library at least monthly, the reason they use the library is to read or check out books.

Young adults, under 35, households earning between \$45,000 and \$100,000 and households with children under age 5 are more likely to report they use the library to check out books.

Adults between 35 and 49, and households earning over \$100,000 and households with children under 14 are more likely to report that they use the library for programs for kids.

However 61%, the majority of residents surveyed reported using the library only a few times a year or never. Males, young adults (under 35), and those with a high school education or less are more likely to report that they never use the library. Households earning less than \$45,000 and households with children between 5 and 10 years old are more likely to report using the library at least once a week.

Of those who go to the library a few times a year or never report the reason why they don't use the library more is because they use a kindle or the internet to read or to do research, or they buy their books. 29% said they have no need for or interest in the library.

Adults who are age 50+ were more likely to report that they don't use the library because they are reading books in other ways.

Households earning between \$45,000 and \$75,000 and those with children under age 5 report that they don't use the library because they have no time.

#### Residents' Suggestions for Improvements

The majority of Improvements to the library that would lead to more usage included more evening or weekend hours (51%), additional programs and clubs and an increased variety of programs (suggestions of movies, music or dance programs 48% and 46% suggested book clubs, writing clubs or author visits); improved materials and more comfortable space (46%), and improved parking.

Additional suggested services were home delivery (42%), designated food areas/vending machines or a cafe (36%), a drive up book drop (34%), more computers (31%), and adding handicapped accessibility (30%)

6% of the residents surveyed said they are happy with the library as it is.

27% of residents surveyed said nothing would lead them to use the library more and 26% said they couldn't think of anything.

Young adults (under 35) and households with children age 14 and under said more children and teen programs; households with children age 5 to 13 are more likely to say better or improved space, parking or hours.

#### **User Satisfaction**

Those who knew enough about the library to rate it responded with high satisfaction in most areas with lower satisfaction for the amount of space in the current building (54%); lack of available space in the current building had the highest dissatisfaction (28%).

76% of those surveyed reported a moderately high satisfaction with the knowledge and helpfulness of the staff, followed by a moderate satisfaction with the selection of print materials (73%), availability of parking (71%) and hours of operation (66%)

There is less satisfaction for events and activities offered at the library (57%) and the availability of online materials (41%) but each has low awareness (38% and 50% said don't know)

### **Preferred Means of Communication**

Those surveyed said that the best way for the library to provide information to residents is by email (67%) or the website (58%). Less preferred means included via the library staff (38%), in-library flyers and signs (37%), the newspaper (35%), the library newsletter (34%), the Merrimack Patch (31%), the library's Facebook page (30%), through friends or neighbors (29%), the library blog (22%) or by local access TV (15%).

Merrimack Public Library  
Strategic Plan Survey Questions  
FINAL 8/30/13

INTRO:

"Good evening / afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling for the Merrimack Public Library from the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. This month, the University is conducting a confidential study of attitudes and opinions about library usage in the Merrimack area of NH, and we'd really appreciate your help and cooperation."

TOWN

"First, in what town do you live?"

- 1 MERRIMACK → SKIPTO CELL1
- 997 OTHER → SKIPTO THANKS1
- 998 DK DO NOT PROBE → SKIPTO THANKS1
- \* 999 NA / REFUSED → SKIPTO THANKS1

THANKS1

"Thank you, we are not interviewing in your town today."

CELL1

"First, to confirm, have I reached you on your cell phone or a land line?"

- 1 CELL PHONE → SKIPTO CELL2
- 2 LAND LINE → SKIPTO BIR1
- 99 REFUSED → TERMINATE

CELL2

"Are you currently driving a car or doing any activity that requires your full attention?"

- 1 IF YES: "Can I call back at a later time?" MAKE APPOINTMENT
- 2 NO → SKIPTO AGE18
- 99 NA / REFUSED → TERMINATE

AGE18

"And are you 18 years old or older?"

- 1 YES → SKIP TO SEX
- 2 NO → "Thank you very much, we are only interviewing adults 18 years old or older."

\* 99 REFUSAL → "Thank you very much, we are only interviewing adults 18 years old or older."

#### BIR1

"In order to determine who to interview, could you tell me, of the adults aged 18 or older who currently live in your household including yourself who had the most recent birthday? I don't mean who is the youngest, but rather, who had the most recent birthday?"

1 INFORMANT → SKIP TO SEX  
2 SOMEONE ELSE (SPECIFY): \_\_\_\_\_ → SKIP TO INT2  
3 DON'T KNOW ALL BIRTHDAYS, ONLY SOME → CONTINUE WITH BIR2  
BELOW  
4 DON'T KNOW ANY BIRTHDAYS OTHER THAN OWN → SKIP TO SEX

\* 99 REFUSED → ENTER NON RESPONSE INFORMATION

#### BIR2

"Of the ones that you do know, who had the most recent birthday?"

1 INFORMANT \_\_\_\_\_ → SKIP TO SEX  
2 SOMEONE ELSE (SPECIFY): \_\_\_\_\_ → GO TO INT2  
3 PERSON NOT AVAILABLE → MAKE APPOINTMENT  
\* 99 REFUSED

#### INT2

ASK TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON

"Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ calling for the Merrimack Public Library from the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. This month, the University is conducting a confidential study of attitudes and opinions about library usage in the Merrimack area of NH, and we'd really appreciate your help and cooperation. You have been identified as the adult in your household who had the most recent birthday. Is this correct?"

1 YES → SKIP TO SEX  
2 APPOINTMENT  
\* 99 REFUSAL → TERMINATE

#### SEX

"Thank you very much for helping us with this important study. Before we begin I want to assure you that all of your answers are strictly confidential. They will be combined with answers from other people from across the state. Your telephone number was randomly selected from all families in Merrimack. This call may be monitored for quality assurance."

“Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question or end the interview at any time.”

IF ASKED: “This survey will take about 5 minutes to complete.”

RECORD SEX OF RESPONDENT

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE
- 3 REFUSES TO DO SURVEY

\* 99 NA

Q1

“I’d like to ask you some questions about your local public library. How familiar are you with the programs and services offered at the Merrimack Public Library?” Would you say you are very familiar ... somewhat familiar ... not very familiar ... or not at all familiar?”

- 1 VERY FAMILIAR
- 2 SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR
- 3 NOT VERY FAMILIAR
- 4 NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR
- 98 DON’T KNOW
- 99 NA / REFUSED

Q2

“Do you personally have a Merrimack Public Library card?”

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 98 DON’T KNOW – DO NOT PROBE
- 99 NA/REFUSED

Q3

“How often do you use the Merrimack Public Library ... more than once a week ... once a week ... once or twice a month ... a few times a year ... or never?”

- 1 MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK →SKIPTO Q5
- 2 ONCE A WEEK →SKIPTO Q5
- 3 ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH →SKIPTO Q5
- 4 A FEW TIMES A YEAR
- 5 NEVER
- 98 DK (DO NOT PROBE) →SKIPTO Q5

\* 99 NA / REFUSED →SKIPTO Q5

Q4

“Please tell me the reasons why you do not use the Merrimack Public Library more often.” “Are there any other reasons?”

RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE

SKIPTO Q6

Q5

“What are your main reasons for using the Merrimack Public Library?” “Are there any other reasons?”

RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE

Q6

“What *programs or services* could the Merrimack Public Library offer that would lead you to use the library more often?”

RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE

Q7

“I am going to read a list of *possible improvements* to the Merrimack Public Library. Please tell me which of these would encourage you to use to the Merrimack Public Library more often?”

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Larger more comfortable space,
- 2 More computers,
- 3 Providing a designated food area, vending area, or café,
- 4 Availability of movies, music or dance programs,
- 5 Activities like book clubs, writing clubs, or author visits,
- 6 More evening and weekend hours,
- 7 Providing a drive up book drop,
- 8 Home delivery for those who cannot get to the library,
- 9 Adding handicap accessibility,
- 13 or, some other improvement?” (SPECIFY)
- 14 NONE
- 15 DON’T KNOW
- 16 REFUSED

Q8

"I would like to ask you about how satisfied you are with the Merrimack Library in the following areas. For each one, please tell me if you are very satisfied ... somewhat satisfied ... not very satisfied ... not at all satisfied, or don't you know enough about this to say?"

PRESS '1' TO CONTINUE

Q8A

"Hours of operation"

- 1 VERY SATISFIED
- 2 SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
- 3 NOT VERY SATISFIED
- 4 NOT AT ALL SATISFIED

- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 NA / REFUSED

Q8B

"Amount of available space in the current building"

Q8C

"Availability of parking"

Q8D

"Availability of print materials, such as books, magazines, and newspapers"

Q8E

"Availability of online materials, such as electronic books and journals."

Q8F

"Knowledge and helpfulness of the Staff"

Q8G

"Events and activities offered at the library"

Q9

"Now I'd like you to think about where you get information. What would be the best way for Merrimack Public Library to provide you with information about library events and services?"

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Email
- 2 Newspaper
- 3 Local public access television
- 4 Library Blog

- 5 Library newsletter
- 6 Library website
- 7 Library Facebook page
- 8 In-library flyers and signs
- 9 Library staff
- 10 Friends/neighbors
- 11 Merrimack Patch
- 12 Other (SPECIFY)
  
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 NA/REFUSED

D1

"Now, a few final questions ..."

"What is the highest grade in school, or level of education that you've completed and got credit for ..."

[READ RESPONSES]

- 1 "Eighth grade or less,
- 2 Some high school,
- 3 High school graduate, (INCLUDES G.E.D.)
- 4 Technical school,
- 5 Some college,
- 6 College graduate,
- 7 Or postgraduate work?"
  
- 98 DK (DO NOT PROBE)
- \* 99 NA / REFUSED

D2

"And what is your current age?"

(RECORD EXACT NUMBER OF YEARS OLD -- E.G., 45)

- 96 NINETY-SIX YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER
- 97 REFUSED
- 98 DK
- \* 99 NA

D3

"Do you have children in your household?"

IF YES: READ LIST ...

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- |    |                              |
|----|------------------------------|
| 0  | NO CHILDREN IN HH            |
| 1  | Under the age of 5?          |
| 2  | Between the ages of 5 – 10?  |
| 3  | Between the ages of 11 - 13? |
| 4  | Between the ages of 14 - 18? |
| 99 | REFUSED                      |

D4

“Including yourself, how many adults CURRENTLY live in your household?”

- |      |               |
|------|---------------|
| 1    | ONE           |
| 2    | TWO           |
| 3    | THREE         |
| 4    | FOUR          |
| 5    | FIVE          |
| 6    | SIX           |
| 7    | SEVEN OR MORE |
| 98   | DK            |
| * 99 | NA / REFUSED  |

D5

“Do you have access to the Internet at home?”

- |      |                              |
|------|------------------------------|
| 1    | Yes                          |
| 2    | No                           |
| 98   | DK / NOT SURE (DO NOT PROBE) |
| * 99 | NA / REFUSED                 |

D6

“Not counting business lines, extension phones, or cellular phones -- on how many different telephone NUMBERS can your household be reached?”

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 0 | NO LANDLINE |
| 1 | ONE         |
| 2 | TWO         |
| 3 | THREE       |
| 4 | FOUR        |
| 5 | FIVE        |
| 6 | SIX         |

- 7 SEVEN OR MORE
- 98 DK
- \* 99 NA / REFUSED

D7

“And on how many different cellphone NUMBERS can your household be reached?”

- 0 NO CELL PHONE
- 1 ONE
- 2 TWO
- 3 THREE
- 4 FOUR
- 5 FIVE
- 6 SIX
- 7 SEVEN OR MORE
- 98 DK
- \* 99 NA / REFUSED

D8

“How much TOTAL income did you and your family receive in 2012, not just from wages or salaries but from ALL sources -- that is, before taxes and other deductions were made? Was it ... (READ CATEGORIES)

- |      | ANNUAL                  | MONTHLY EQUIVALENT |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1    | Less than \$15,000,     | LESS THAN \$1,250  |
| 2    | \$15,000 - \$29,999,    | \$1,250 - \$2,499  |
| 3    | \$30,000 - \$44,999,    | \$2,500 - \$3,749  |
| 4    | \$45,000 - \$59,999,    | \$3,750 - \$4,999  |
| 5    | \$60,000 - \$74,999,    | \$5,000 - \$6,249  |
| 6    | \$75,000 - \$99,999, or | \$6,250 - \$8,333  |
| 7    | \$100,000 and over?”    | \$8,334 AND OVER   |
| 97   | REFUSED                 |                    |
| 98   | DK                      |                    |
| * 99 | NA                      |                    |

Q:END

“Thank you for your time and participation. Your input has been very valuable. Goodbye.”

## Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee met three times during 2013, during which facilitator Deborah Hoadley led the committee in a S.O.A.R. exercise, identifying Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results about the library. The Committee also created a vision of the community and the library's place in it. Finally, the Committee drafted mission & vision statements as well as brainstorming some of the possible main goals and objectives.

### **Meeting 1: February 7, 2013 - SOAR Analysis**<sup>12</sup>

Library strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results were identified by members of the Committee during this brainstorming meeting.

#### **Community Perception of The Library's Strengths included:**

- Staff
  - Does the best they can with what they have
  - Responsive
  - Open 7 days a week
- Services
  - Programming
    - For children & adults
    - Reading Dogs
    - Book group
    - Teen group
    - Summer Reading Program
    - Holiday Tea
    - July 4th Parade participation
  - Varied and modern services
  - Community Outreach
  - Online Newsletter
  - Provide Internet access - mobile environment
- Collection
  - Access to electronic resources
  - Museum Passes
  - DVDs
  - Common Borrow Card/membership in GMILCS - Greater Manchester Integrated Library Cooperative System
  - Video games/Wii games
  - Manga
  - eReaders
- Building
  - Centrally located in town/near several schools
  - Available to provide power during storm outages
  - Meeting room with TV
  - Place to connect with other people

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<sup>12</sup> Copies of the SOAR word clouds are included in the Appendix

- Community information in entryway
- Use of Kelley System for notices

Community Perception of the Library's Opportunities in the face of Weaknesses or Obstacles included:

- Market and advocate library services
  - Advertising
  - Users become ambassadors
- Outreach
  - To senior audience
    - Market Large print collection
    - Talking Books program
    - Relocated to area easy to get to
  - To Teens
- Education
  - Technology (classes, skills, job skills, resume, interview)
  - Downloadable classes/instruction on apps
  - Text-a-Librarian/Phone call/online chat
  - 211 Referral Resource
  - Fill in the summer gap for Adult Education offerings
  - Offer education opportunities for kids/summer courses
- Build Digital Collection
  - Different formats allowing more space
  - MP3 Collection
  - "Discovery-Cafe"/"Genius Bar"
  - Update technical books online (Safari Database)
- Acquisition of unique check out items (American Girl, Lego Sets, Art work)
- Space Needs
  - Provide a place for mobile workers besides Swan's Chocolates Restaurant
  - Create cafe
- Programs
  - Author Events
- Community Partnerships:
  - Schools
    - Include school textbooks in collection
    - Meet with school librarians for reader's advisory (collaborate on collections)
    - Outreach to High School
  - Other town boards and committees
  - Businesses
    - Reciprocal/sponsorship programs in return for space
  - Use Volunteers

Community Aspirations for the Library included:

- Drive through/drive up window - easy drop off or pick up of materials; don't have to get out of car; addresses problem of patrons leaving car running with kids inside
- More meeting space for small group activities
- Cross platform
- Collaborative workspaces
- Hands on activities
- Place for Individuals and gatherings
- Sustainable commitment from community without a future risk
- Building is easy to reach (central and place where people can come and go easily)
- Connected to other organizations in town; partnerships
- Corporate sponsors
- Business center (create a place that includes tables, electrical outlets, business supplies)
- Revenue stream
- More parking
- Garden areas developed (create beautiful outside space)
- Rental cube incubator space
- Collection formats developed as need demands
- Patron driven acquisitions
- Command center for information
- Improved website; Reference portal for town
- Social media expansion - touchpoints
- Teen area designed for them (comfortable and convenient)
- Staff utilization - use technology to help
- Marketing person on staff

Community-Identified Results that would demonstrate Aspirations have been achieved:

- Library statistics would reflect increased usage
- Residents would be talking about the library - a "buzz"
- There would be less opposition to the budget process
- Priorities will be developed
- Evidence of corporate engagement
- Construction of a new building
- Noticeable impact outside the library building; improving quality of life; instrumental in residents' life-long learning
- Services would be more relevant to the needs of the community
- The library would continue to gather community input

**Meeting 2: March 7, 2013 - Community Vision**

The Strategic Planning Committee participated in a Community Visioning Exercise on March 7, 2013 that was facilitated by Deb Hoadley, during which the Committee brainstormed and ranked

ideas that would improve the quality of life in Merrimack.<sup>13</sup> The group then wrote how the library could partner, support, or play a priority role in making these things happen.

#### Teen Center/Teen Hang Out:

- Library could play a priority role by providing a space for teens, with activities & interests of teens in mind
- Library will play a partnership role in teen center
- Library will play a supporting role in a “hanging out” space (teen center, etc.) by providing program support and homework help. Possible a new library could house this space
- Library will play a supportive/priority role in creating a teen center – with things like a media center, hangout space, coffee house and partnering with local businesses to advertise events that will appeal to teens and young adults
- Library will play a priority role in creating a teen hang out area by creating a real, bigger teen area within the library

#### Vibrant Downtown Center:

- Library will play a priority role in the vibrant downtown center as an information hub and a very active part of our town/community
- Library will play a supportive role in building a vibrant downtown as a destination that people can walk to from a job or home or café
- Library will play a priority role in creating vibrant town center through offering a variety of programs for many community groups
- Library will play a priority role in providing a downtown center by being a “hub” a destination that serves all ages in a central space (with walking trails surrounding it)
- Library will play a priority role in providing business space for meetings, training and be a hub

#### Art Center:

- Library can house performances, art shows, music and plays
- Library will play a supportive role in advertising programs/events for the Arts Community and a partnership role in hosting some events and gallery shows, etc.
- Library will play a priority role as a community arts center through programming, classes and display area. This could be done in the current facility or a new facility could have area designated for this role
- Library will play a priority role as arts center – performance, visual, creating and sharing (model: Portsmouth Public Library)
- Library could play a priority role in an Art Center. A space could be created to display art and hold events related to the arts (concerts, recitals, plays)
- Library will play a priority role in an arts center/art gallery by having a fabulous space to have performances and space on beautiful walls to hang art

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<sup>13</sup> For the full brainstorming list, see Appendix p 31

- Library will play partnership role with an arts center/community by sharing space; collaborating; communications; and display
- Library will play a supporting role in creating an arts community/center by offering art/music programs and a gallery for visual arts
- Library will play a supportive role in encouraging a young arts community by allowing teens to perform, showcase writing, and display artwork in the library

Outdoor/Nature:

- Library could support this by having books about topics; have outdoor library events like the cardboard boat race

**Meeting 3: November 13, 2013 - Review and Identification**

The Strategic Planning Committee met on November 13, 2013 to review the results of the UNH Phone Survey and the staff SWOT exercise (Strengths, Weaknesses, Obstacles, Threats). The Committee then reviewed the current Mission Statement and identified several vision statements and goals.

**Mission Statement- approved by the Library Board of Trustees, 2012**

*As the town's learning center, the Merrimack Public Library provides dynamic and responsive service to its information consumers through both physical and virtual environments to build a strong, literate community and to improve the quality of life in Merrimack.*

Deb Hoadley suggested that the Library's current mission statement reads more like a vision statement, in that a library's vision statement is a description of what the world would look like if the library did its job perfectly.

The Committee envisioned the library as:

- A learning center/A resource center
- A hub/social environment/a place of excitement/fun
- Patrons are exposed to opportunities/exposure to new things
- A place that is supportive/where there is an exchange of ideas
- A place that provides access to materials
- A place that provides a meeting room
- Where people can share town expertise/research expertise/instruct patrons about early literacy

Some Vision Statements generated included:

- The Merrimack Public Library provides a community place for the Town of Merrimack by maintaining an inviting, modern facility where people want to gather.

- The Merrimack Public Library anticipates and responds to the needs of our community by providing relevant programs for all ages, other in-library activities, and outreach programs.
- The Merrimack Public Library supports diversity within the community by offering relevant materials, resources and learning opportunities.
- The Merrimack Public Library builds relationships with the Town of Merrimack, businesses, non-profits and other organizations to enhance activities and communications.
- The Merrimack Public Library promotes the resources and services available to the community through effective marketing and branding campaigns.
- The Merrimack Public Library adopts new technologies to enhance timely access to quality information and create patron independence.
- The Merrimack Public Library provides excellent customer service and core library services by strengthening staff development & training.





Aspirations



Results

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## **Data Analysis<sup>14</sup>**

### Merrimack Public Library Statistics 2010-2011

Provided by library staff

Library cardholders	12,071 (2,500 unique borrowers/month)
Customer visits	126,335 (average 346 visits/day)
Annual circulation	277,822
Circulation with eBooks	282,734
Database and HTML requests	329,896
MPL items loaned through GMILCS	14,087
Public computer use	18,348
Adult program attendance	1,087
Teen program attendance	163
Children's program attendance	9,474

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<sup>14</sup> For complete statistics comparisons over 5 years, FY 2009-10 to FY 2013-14, see Appendix p 64

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## **Focus Groups**

Library Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats were identified by members of the staff members during this S.W.O.T. Exercise on October 1, 2013. The staff was divided into four small groups and discussion was facilitated by Department Heads; their responses have been compiled below.

### Staff Perception of the Library's Strengths included:

- Staff that is
  - knowledgeable, personable, helpful, flexible, friendly
  - familiar with patrons
  - Generational continuity
  - Sense of community
- Programs - many events
- Community involvement
- Respond to community
  - Recent changes/recent improvements
  - Strive to improve/staying updated
- Generational continuity
- Library's collection/materials - processed quickly
  - eBooks
- Support from other libraries
  - GMILCS
  - Inter-Library Loans
- Making technology available
- Location

### Staff Perception of the Library's Weaknesses included:

- Building
  - ongoing maintenance
  - Aging building
  - No room
  - Limited parking
  - Layout
  - Size
  - Landscaping
  - Storage
  - Old furniture
  - Location
  - Clutter
- Lack of funding
  - No raises
  - Lack of support from Town Council
  - Lack of staff/short staffed especially on the weekends
- Lack of publicity

- Lack of communication about educational workshops and library resources
- Entrenched in old or outdated procedures
  - Clutter
  - Old equipment
  - Outdated website
  - Materials processing is inconsistent (Tech Dept vs. Children's Dept)
  - Circulation technology is behind/limited PAC
  - Getting patrons to Reference
  - Not enough time to do work
  - Outdated phone system
  - Book drop
- Not enough hours
  - Not enough time to do work
  - Confusing hours
- Other activities compete with library use
  - Our community doesn't read
- Poor communication
  - Communication to staff is slow - both inter-departmental and top-down
  - Conflict resolution with staff
  - Conflict resolution with community

Staff Perception of Library's Opportunities for Change in Light of Weaknesses:

- Library is educational
- Openness to provide services where needed
- Use our strengths to offer new ideas
- Community outreach
  - Create partnerships with Town Departments and Organizations
  - Partner with businesses; ask for financial partnership
- Building
  - New building
  - rearrange existing building space
    - Continue efforts to maximize our current building
- Databases
- Public support/goodwill
- Technology
  - More digital resources to offer/use
  - Databases
- Better marketing
- Expanded events to reach more patrons
- outreach/partnership with businesses
- Businesses to add money
- Seek grants and fundraising
- Lease space during closed hours
- Trends in reading (eBooks)
- Trustees

- Create partnerships with Town Departments and Organizations
- Work with other network libraries
- Work closer with our Friends Group
- Encourage our allies to play a more active role in Town as supporters
- Engage patrons to try new services
- More team building activities for staff
- Could GMILCS policies be more similar?

Staff Perception of Library's Threats:

- Relationship with Town Council
- Digital resources
- Public perception of library's role
- Economy - competing with other Town Departments for funding
- Patron's perception that "I can get everything online"; perception that the library isn't necessary
- Fines & Fees
- Individual complaints
- Keeping up with changing technology
- More budget cuts
- Staff lay-offs
- Building maintenance affecting the budget
- Aging population - perception of next generation
- Non-members bringing library reputation down
- Lack of protection for our funds
- Inter-staff conflicts - staff isn't unified
- People perceive our improvements as us doing fine
- Size of building
- Staff retention

S.W.O.T Exercise Word Clouds, October 1, 2013



## Strengths



## Weaknesses



## Opportunities



## Threats

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## Emerging Trends

The staff identified a number of trends that need to be considered in developing the library's plan. These trends all have the potential to reshape the way in which library service is delivered.

- ***The way in which people use the library is changing.*** People are increasingly coming to the library to attend adult, teen and children's events and take out popular and current materials. People are attempting to use the library in a more community focused and leisurely way.
- ***The way in which people search for information is changing.*** The balance between information in books and in digital formats has shifted. Access to a computer and the technology skills needed to use databases are essential, but so are basic skills of using tablets, smartphones and other electronic devices. The library has a role in training users to be competent in the use of computers and other information technology devices.
- ***Media formats are rapidly changing.*** placing more demand on the library to purchase new formats to accommodate the demand. Now the library has to use its resources to purchase books and media in both physical and digital or electronic formats to keep up with demand.
- ***Business models are influencing the library.*** People want libraries to consider using space for library-related merchandise, used books (e.g. ongoing Friends' Book Sale Shelf), cafe-type refreshments, as well as offering business center services, maker and creator spaces.
- ***People want greater connectivity*** to a variety of technical devices - laptops, wireless access to the Internet, ability to download information to hand-held devices.
- ***People expect more from the library*** than just books. An educational and cultural center and a place where people can come together as a community are as important as checking out books. There is a need for more adult, teen, and children's events, more computers, more space to work on projects, and the creation of a public Makerspace.

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## Community Profile

*“Merrimack is a community that cherishes its rural residential town character, school system, vast open spaces, and the natural resources that provide numerous cultural and recreational opportunities...Merrimack is a great community to raise a family and live regardless of whether you are single, younger or elder community member. Merrimack believes that its identity and sense of place is what attracts people who would like to live, work, shop, and play in the community.”<sup>15</sup>*

### **Merrimack Residents Data**

(based on 2010 Census Information)

#### **Population**

	25,494
Male	12,685 (49.8%)
Female	12,809 (50.2%)

#### **Age**

Median Age	40.7
Younger than 5 years	1,368 (5.4%)
Younger than 18 years	6,257 (24.5%)
Older than 65 years	2,638 (10.3%)

#### **Income**

Census median HH income	\$88,371
Median HH income 2012	\$95,206*
Population below poverty	860 (3.4%)

#### **Race/Ethnicity**

White	24,230 (95.0%)
1 race not white	860 (3.4%)

#### **Housing**

Housing Units	9,818
Total households	9,503
Family HH	7,150
Non-family HH	2,353
Live alone	1,789

#### **Language**

English only	22,854 (91.8%)
Other Languages	2,033 (8.2%)

#### **Education**

Population over 25	17,858
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<sup>15</sup> 2013 Master Plan Update, Merrimack, NH. January 7, 2014. p 1

no diploma	1,085
HS diploma	4,297
Some college	3,192 (17.9%)
Associate Deg.	2,207 (12.4%)
Bachelor's Deg.	4,810 (26.9%)
Advanced Deg.	2,267 (12.7%)

69% of the adult population has had some college training

### **Employment**

Labor force	15,700
Employed	14,940 (94.9%)
Unemployed	760
Not in the labor force	4,706

### **Interesting Facts**

Merrimack is 32.6 square miles

65.3% of adults are married\*

8.7% of adults are divorced\*

There are 49 libraries within 15 miles of Merrimack<sup>16</sup>

There are 8 museums within 30 miles of Merrimack<sup>17</sup>

There are 52 ski resorts within 100 miles of Merrimack<sup>18</sup>

13,931 people commute out of Merrimack for work<sup>19</sup>

98.6% of households have one or more cars

Hillsborough county continues to be the fastest growing county on a numerical basis. The three most populous places continue to be Manchester, Nashua and Concord. In the remainder of the top ten most populous, however, some patterns have changed markedly. In 1980, three old population centers, Portsmouth, Keene, and Laconia, made the top ten ranking. The 2010 numbers show that all three have now dropped out. *They were replaced by Londonderry, Hudson and Merrimack.* In 1980, the top twenty most populous municipalities contained 50% of the state total. By 2010, it required 24 municipalities to reach that level. This could be another indicator that in-migrants prefer to live in smaller communities, or at least outside traditional population centers.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Money Magazine's list of top small towns, September 2011

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> (press Release 2010 Census Results for Municipalities

<http://www.nh.gov/oep/programs/DataCenter/2010Census/index.htm> Accessed 2.7.2013)

## **Mission**

As the town's learning center, the Merrimack Public Library will acquire and provide access to a variety of information sources and will offer a robust slate of programming to promote life-long learning. The staff provides dynamic and responsive service to its information consumers through both physical and virtual environments to build a strong and literate community and to improve the quality of life in Merrimack. *Approved June 6, 2017*

## **Vision**

The Merrimack Library will:

- maintain a depository of sources that is of historic, artistic, educational or other significance
- provide unrestricted access to this record of information to the community it serves.
- promote literacy for all ages
- be a cultural and educational center by providing a variety of relevant programs and learning opportunities for all ages, either through in-library activities and/or outreach programs
- adopt new technologies to enhance timely access to quality information and create patron independence
- provide excellent customer service and core library services by strengthening staff development and training
- be fiscally responsible and transparent
- provide a community place by maintaining an inviting, modern facility where people want to gather
- be good stewards of an historic building
- build relationships with the Town of Merrimack, its businesses, non-profits and other organizations to enhance activities and communications
- promote the resources and services available to the community through effective marketing and branding campaigns

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## Merrimack Public Library Strategic Plan

### Multi-year Action Plan<sup>21</sup>

#### Goal 1. Be a cultural and educational center

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Maintain active collection while being mindful of space restrictions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Assess zero growth vs. keeping items in storage in a community that prefers to browse.				x			
Assess needed additional space, e.g. determine square footage needed to have 100% of collection not in storage				x			
Assess needed additional space, e.g., determine additional square footage needed to lower height of shelves (safety, better view of corners?)				x			
Preserve assortment of historic and local government materials - NH Collection, local newspapers, municipal reports					x		
Digitize local newspapers that are stored in Periodical Storage					x		
Add braille books to CR (Girl Scout request/partnership)			✓				
Maintain GMILCS membership	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

<sup>21</sup> x denotes ongoing project or work; ✓ denotes completed

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Curate digital collection of local interest (Biblioboard) Student work				x			
Lower Hallway Gallery: update hardware				x			
Display case: re-evaluate need?				✓			
Interactive displays/QR codes				x			
Offer in-house classes, activities and events for all ages across a variety of disciplines			x	x	x	x	x
Create marketing plan to advertise library services and holdings across a variety of disciplines					x		

**Goal 2. Cultivate technology to create a generation of tinkerers and citizen scientists**

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Select and maintain a collection in a variety of formats including electronic, audio visual that can be easily accessed	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subscribe to and maintain electronic databases	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Offer in-house technology classes, activities and events for all ages (from word processing to coding)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop Makerspace options - develop circulating kits; training; events		✓					

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Assess need to purchase 2nd 3D Printer				x			
Provide seismologist presentations to enhance our EQ1 Seismograph		✓					

**Goal 3. Invest in staff to maximize service to our patrons**

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Continue to perform vigorous interview process and evaluation schedule			x	x	x	x	x
Improve internal communication - multi-direction (top down/peer/inter-Departmental)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Train Dept Heads in evaluation standards/professional development workshop				x	x		
Evaluate current salary levels and update salary schedule as needed			x	✓			
Train staff on shelving/shifting - shelving as "fluid concept"			x	x	x	x	x
Allow staff to attend professional development; create regular/monthly in-house training facilitated by Dept Heads				x	x	x	x
Update Professional collection				x	x	x	x
Assess need to hire Outreach/Marketing position and/or need for additional					x		

hours to cover outreach for Dept Heads.							
Create Staff Succession plan						x	
Purchase time clock				x	x		
Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020

#### Goal 4. Improve the patron experience

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Streamline Circulation procedures with self-return system						x	x
Install drive-up book drop in parking lot					x	x	
Professional staff provide individual instruction				✓			
Expand service hours - track busy/quiet times					x	x	
Investigate library card smart phone app				x	x		
Create more patron spaces - work space, comfortable seating; declutter	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Relocate PACs to endcaps, opening up floor space for potential patron seating.		✓	✓				
Provide both noisy and quiet areas; investigate Lowell Room to designate quiet hours				x	x		
Train staff to provide excellent customer service to patrons	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Create outreach program to provide library materials and services to unreached population			x	x			
Replace public computers with micro PCs						x	
Investigate replacing copier with new machine - print/copier with print release function & coin box			x	✓			
Investigate moving fax from exclusive staff use to public use					x	x	

#### Goal 5. Be good stewards of an historic building & grounds

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
CIP Repave parking lot and repair entrance sidewalk				✓			
CIP Replace HVAC						x	x
CIP Replace sprinkler system						x	x
CIP Install security cameras and door passlocks				✓			
Investigate renovation to address problem areas: archival climate controlled room to house newspaper						x	x
Investigate cost-saving programs, e.g. solar panels					x	x	x
Research revenue-generating options/renting space when closed				x			

Better utilize storage areas			x	x			
Investigate and invest in any green initiatives - geothermal heating & AC (Bedford 2016); electric car parking spaces						x	x
Update Readerboard						x	x
Install additional sign on Baboosic/DW Library corner					x	x	x
Decluttering	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Investigate repair of slate roof & Lowell attic			x	x	x	x	
Grounds maintenance			x	x	x	x	x
Add outdoor seating			x	x			

#### Goal 6. Plan for the library's future needs and services

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Demonstrate fiscal responsibility & transparency	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Revive MPL Building & Marketing Committee to assess improvements				x	x		
Purchase cash register that works with current ILS				x	x		
Hire consultant to explore building expansion					x	x	x
Investigate need to convert restrooms to family or unisex; replace urinal with toilet and complete closed stall with door.				✓			

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Investigate viability of adding bookmobile service							x
Investigate feasibility of capital campaign							x
Investigate revenue streams e.g. renting space during off hours, grants & corporate partnerships. Does the money go to the Town or Trustees?					x		
Send staff to grantwriting training (requested Youth Services)				x	x		
Work with Library Board of Trustees and MPLDF Committee to determine future of Buy A Brick program & other building investments					x	x	
Recruit volunteers and Board members who act as library ambassadors			x	x	x	x	x
Staff & Boards to attend training to learn how to advocate for the role of the Library			x	x	x	x	x
Develop our relationships with Town Council, Town Manager and other Town Departments	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop our relationships with schools - explore possibilities of having library staff presence at school-affiliated staff gatherings (e.g. teacher training days, School Board meetings)				x	x	x	x

## Goal 7. Provide Outreach to Underserved Populations

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Investigate effective programs to reach underserved populations				x	x	x	x
Investigate viability of adding bookmobile service					x	x	x
Target major funding partners (pending building plan)							x
Experiment with programming at MMS and MHS to reach different students there				x	x	x	x
Provide outreach to underserved population by partnering with town organizations and groups				x	x	x	x
Target: men, seniors, HS education; under \$45K income				x	x	x	x
Partner with Meals on Wheels for outreach				x	x	x	x
Outreach to MHS				x	x	x	x
Outreach to Homeschoolers				x	x	x	x
Bookmobile - visits to TFS, RFS							x
Hire staff to market and advertise these services and holdings across a variety of media platforms				x	x		
Schedule more events that partner with local businesses			x	x	x	x	x
Conduct social media survey				x	x		

## Technology Plan

Action	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Investigate streaming video				x			
Research CoolNerd eBook Kiosk; provides easy self-service access to our eBooks				x	x		
Install Engenius Access Points to bolster public WiFi				✓			
Upgrade Public Internet connection				✓			
Change staff internet from DSL to Firstlight FIOS				✓			
Research loaning Hotspots (Sprint or other phone companies?)		x	x	x			
Purchase back up micro PCs/monitors, giving us extra hardware in case of failure					x	x	
Implement online tracking for Summer Reading Challenge			✓				
Develop Makerspace options - develop circulating kits; training; events; additional 3D printer?		✓					
Create timeline to replace public PCs with micro PCs				x	x		
Create timeline to replace staff PCs				x	x		
Purchase new scanners (that work with driver's licenses, library card app)				x	x	x	
Investigate moving fax from exclusive staff use to public				x	x		

Purchase tablets for Staff use (collection management) and Instruction				x			
Investigate replacing copier with new machine - print/copier with print release function & coin box			x	✓			
Create timeline to update Staff and Public Office Suites and update software as needed				x	x		
With GMILCS: Create timeline to replace server; investigate Cloud; investigate server backup							x
Switch staff email hosting to CEJ				✓			