

Forbush Memorial Library Long Range Plan

Fiscal Years 2019 - 2024



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Forbush Memorial Library

Long Range Plan

Fiscal Years 2019 – 2024

*Submitted to the citizens of the
Town of Westminster, Massachusetts
and the*

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 14, 2019

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Introduction

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners emphasizes the necessity and utility of long-range planning for the public libraries of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the Trustees of the Forbush Memorial Library recognize that the process of preparing and producing a long-range plan provides the opportunity to critically reflect on the Library's mission, its programs, and its appropriate place in the larger Westminister community.

Engaging in this process has been of enormous benefit thus far; taking the time to "step back" from the day-to-day operations of the Library, to undertake various assessments with its constituents, and to ask not only "How," but "Why" questions has provided insight into our community's needs, and how the Library may fulfill them.

Institutions must strive to move forward, or risk becoming obsolete, or worse, overlooked. In the case of the Forbush Memorial Library, this long-range planning process has provided the impetus to candidly evaluate how this respected community resource can remain not only relevant, but also vibrant, in the rapidly changing world of information technology.

We have asked the questions, patiently heard the answers, and been thoughtful in our deliberations regarding moving the Forbush Memorial Library forward. We hope that what follows can serve as a "living document," and a flexible guide for the next five years in the life of this important Westminister institution.

The Community of Westminister, Massachusetts

The land that is now Westminister was designated by the Commonwealth as compensation to the veterans and their heirs of King Phillip's War of 1675-76. Grantees received 60-acre tracts for farming and gradually began to settle the area in the early 1700s. But it was the creation of the Sunderland Road (now Main Street) in 1734 that concentrated settlement in the present town center, initially on Academy Hill where the first meetinghouse was erected in 1739. Population had grown sufficiently that Westminister was incorporated in 1759.

A major stimulus to the creation of the village center along Main Street came with the construction of the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike in 1799, a toll road which ran from Leominster along Westminister's present Main Street and on through south Gardner as far as Northfield. Since no tolls were collected within Westminister, the improved road attracted homes and businesses to the eastern end of Main Street. After a few years, the turnpike was rerouted to the north around Academy Hill (the path of the present Leominster Street), and this caused virtually all new construction of homes and businesses to occur along Main Street between South and Eaton streets. The prosperity of the 1830s and 40s is reflected in the many homes and businesses that are still extant in this area. Near Main Street the Town Hall was built in 1839, the First

Parish Church (Congregational) moved from the Hill and rebuilt at its present site in 1837, the Universalists relocated their church building from the north common to Main Street in 1833 and the Baptists left their original building south of Meetinghouse Pond, building a new church on Main Street in 1863, along with many new shops and homes. But this growth was accompanied by the abandonment of more distant farms: the town-wide population reached 1,696 in 1830, peaked at 1,979 in 1855 then slowly sank to a low of 1,348 in 1905.

By 1840, Westminster's early prosperity was nearly over. Both Gardner and Fitchburg were growing more rapidly and in 1843, a railroad was chartered in Fitchburg to run toward the Connecticut River valley. Over vigorous protests from Westminster investors, the line ran well north of the village, owing to its high altitude, "where it would be of comparatively little value...as a factor in the growth and prosperity of the town". (Heywood, *History of Westminster* p. 231) The railroad opened in 1848 with a station at the north end of Batherick Road and its northerly course enabled the growth of Whitmanville as a small industrial enclave. However, most local industries in need of access to rail for supplies and product shipment moved their operations to Fitchburg or Gardner. Westminster village settled into quietude that would last for generations.

The turn of the 20th century saw three significant developments in Westminster: first, the beginning of the large migration of Finnish families who purchased and farmed many of the abandoned rural homesteads; they were soon joined by Italian and French-Canadian migrants as well. Second, the establishment of the Gardner, Westminster and Fitchburg Street Railway which ran along Main Street concentrating retail activity there, which stimulated the conversion of residences into shops and stores, which is still in evidence. Third was the construction of a new library which opened in 1902. But Westminster added only about 700 to its population in the following forty years.

After World War II, the rising popularity of automobile traffic stimulated residential development which continues into the present. Outlying lands became more easily accessible and Westminster had open land for homes for those who found employment in larger towns and cities. Traffic congestion on Main Street, which was then Route 2, became a serious problem as it connected Boston area travelers to the Mohawk Trail and points west. It was not until 1966 that Rt. 2 was relocated north of the town center allowing through traffic to avoid local streets. Further improvements to make the road a fully limited access highway were made in 1980 and 1987. While Route 2's new route substantially lessened traffic on Main Street, it was the primary generator of Westminster's population growth, which now stands at 7,570 according to the most recent demographics data available from the Census Bureau released in December of 2018.

Forbush Memorial Library's 4,000 square feet of space was adequate for its first 75 years, but the steadily increasing population required increased services and created the serious overcrowding that led, ultimately, to the substantial expansion of 1996.

Revised by Nicholas Langhart, Director of the Forbush Memorial Library, January 2019

History and State of the Forbush Memorial Library

Westminster's love of libraries precedes even its incorporation in 1759: in 1739 there was organized a "social library", a fee-paying membership which purchased books for loaning to one another and kept at one member's house. But by 1835 the group had dissolved, and the collection sold. Doubtless Westminster's small and very widely distributed farming population made it difficult to support a central library.

The Young Peoples Literary Society was founded in 1853, as another dues-paying membership club and discussion group which merged with the Farmers Club library in 1865 with a combined membership of 140. As the Westminster Library Association, it petitioned the Town for annual municipal support, but was repeatedly refused until 1868, when it received its first annual appropriation of \$50.00. It was not until 1878, however, that a committee (later the Board of Trustees) was elected to manage its activities. After being housed in various private residences and stores, the collection found a permanent home in the newly-expanded Town Hall. By raising that structure and adding another story beneath in 1886, a new space was created which included a library room where the library would remain until 1902.

The Forbush Memorial Library Building was funded by a \$10,000 bequest from Charles A. Forbush in memory of his cousin Joseph W. Forbush, with an additional \$6,000 raised from 80 other citizens. The Forbush fortune came from chair-making and other industrial activities located in Whitmanville, well north of the village center. The site selected for the new building, on Main Street at the corner of Bacon, was already occupied by the large Phineas Reed house which closely resembled the Joseph Whitman house (now Sawyer-Miller- Masciarelli Funeral Home) which still stands on the opposite side of Main Street. In 1900, the Reed house was moved from its site west to the northwest corner of Main and Eaton Street where it served as the Westminster Tavern (later Hotel) until destroyed by fire in 1948.

The new library's architects were Frost, Briggs and Chamberlain of Worcester. The building of public libraries was occurring in towns and cities all over America during this period. Over 2,000 were assisted by grants from Andrew Carnegie's Foundation; he was the founder of the United States Steel Corporation. In this active building period, a standard 4-5,000 square foot floor plan design emerged which is well represented by the Forbush: a central hall, a reading room on one side with fireplace and opposite, a reference room. At the back of the hall was the receiving desk over which the librarian handed the patron whatever book was requested. All books were shelved behind the librarian. There was no browsing of the stacks, no meeting space and no facilities for children. But as an institution which represented the highest aspirations of a town towards learning and improved literacy for the newly-arrived immigrant population, it was a point of enormous civic pride.

But the design of our library included a special feature: Charles Forbush specified a museum on the second floor “designed for a repository of relics or artifacts suggestive of the early history of the town and its people” even including natural history specimens. The townspeople donated generously, but as was said at the dedication in August of 1902, “there is still room for more!” Among the donations were numerous early 19th-century portraits and landscapes, many of exceptional quality. Larger gifts, such as looms and early farm implements, were stored in the basement. But the library was open only two afternoons per week.

As the population gradually began to grow – it would not exceed 2,000 until 1945 – library services were increased. Eventually the stacks were opened for browsing, inter-library loaning was begun in the 1950s, and children’s programs introduced. In 1976, the Town appropriated funds for the conversion of the basement into a children’s room, which was a great success and that opened up more main floor space for book shelving. But with town growth came serious overcrowding in the library. The introduction of computer workstations increased the strain even further.

When the Commonwealth of Massachusetts initiated a library construction assistance program in 1988, the trustees retained the Preservation Partnership as architects to design an expansion of 12,000 square feet to the existing building and applied to the Board of Library Commissioners for a construction grant, however, the necessary Proposition 2 ½ override for the local match was defeated in a town-wide vote. Undaunted, the trustees authorized redrawn plans, an updated needs study and the preparation of a massive application for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program written by Library Director Alfreda Altobelli. In October of 1995, the Commissioners awarded \$817,112., and voters approved a \$930,000. Proposition 2 ½ override for renovation and construction. Local fundraising brought in another \$250,000. that included a \$40,000. gift from Simplex Time Recorder, a local business. The addition that opened in August of 1997 included a complete renovation of the original building, as well as a three-story addition fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

By 2006, problems with the addition were becoming apparent: a portion of the newer roof was resting on the original roof causing structural problems and water penetration through the walls, windows and roof resulted in internal mold growth. A comprehensive repair proposal was approved at the 2007 Town Meeting, allocating \$94,000. for repairs. In December of that same year, the Advisory Board authorized an additional \$28,000. to replace the furnace. Then, in January 2008, a frozen sprinkler pipe in the attic burst, flooding the interior of the building. Library operations were moved to the closed Simplex facility, and an expanded renovation program was initiated and funded with \$2,105,000. approved at a Special Town Meeting in February. These funds, plus insurance reimbursements, covered the costs of a replacement heating system, new roof, new windows and a new brick exterior for the addition. The work began in May and was completed in March of 2009, when library operations were moved back to Main Street. Major credit for negotiating the financing, supervising the renovations and managing the library during this difficult time goes to past director Margaret Howe-Soper and

trustee/building committee chair Dana Altobelli, who was given the Outstanding Trustee Award by the Massachusetts Library Trustee Association for his work.

Shortly after Nicholas Langhart became director in 2011, the library board of trustees prepared a five-year long range plan document for 2012-2017 under the leadership of chair Robert Hynes. Its public survey results revealed, among other things, that the face of the library building, including its front lawn, was indistinct and not particularly well-maintained. Some complained that the library was hard to find, as it had neither a sign nor a flag. The trustees were determined to institute improvements.

In 2013, to help create an overall site plan, trustees turned to the department of drafting technology at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School. The students flew a photographic drone over the library, made a 3D model of the site and prepared a presentation board with their landscape suggestions. Director Nicholas Langhart and the board of trustees thank them and their teacher, Genevieve Castillo.

First, with contributions from Kevin and Elaine Jones, the Yraola family, and Leominster business owner and mayor Dean Mazzarella, a 25' high fiberglass pole was installed and formally dedicated in December 2014, to the memory of 1st Lt Ryan Patrick Jones, a native son and casualty of the war in Iraq.

Immediately after, Scott and Kim Samson began planning for a permanent library sign and signboard as a major gift to the library. Steve McAnney of McAnney Signs crafted the sign and Peterborough Marble & Granite completed the installation in August of 2015.

The wooden fence at the parking lot needed replacement after more than 20 years, and for this project, the board solicited competitive bids and chose Builtwell Fence of Fitchburg. They installed a commercial grade solid vinyl fence at the parking lot and an open metal fence around the Bacon Street lawn in the summer of 2016, funded by a gift from the estate of Marilyn Van Saun. Trustees Hee Shee Jim Eagle and Robert Hynes reconstructed the window well covers at the front of the library with Director Nicholas Langhart.

To make the grounds more comfortable, benches for seating had been considered from the beginning. Plans were made for memorial benches to honor three library supporters, Ambassador George Lane, Dick & Elaine Lawrence, and past employee Mary Bassett. Family donations defrayed the costs and design, and installation was completed by Peterborough Marble & Granite in the fall of 2017.

Through these years, substantial garden renovation was carried out by volunteers ML Altobelli and her crew of horticulturists. Plants were relocated, replaced and nourished under their care and the results have been widely praised. Of greater concern, however, was the aging of the pair of European Copper Beech trees, now over 100 years old. ML and Jeff Hehman of Bartlett Tree

Experts prepared and implemented a plan to re-grade the soil, fertilize the trees and to remove a concrete sidewalk too close to their roots. The trees have responded with new growth.

The Agricultural Commission sought permission to install raised beds demonstrating the productive potential of intense small gardening and they needed a sunny and highly visible space. The trustees concurred and the first beds were planted on the library lawn in 2017 and again in 2018.

As early as 2013, efforts were begun to solicit local artists to create an imaginative paint scheme with local themes for the state-owned traffic signal box in front of the library. State Department of Transportation permission was secured, but artists were few. At long last, Gregory Barry, visual arts educator at Oakmont High School, offered that his senior art students could design and paint the box as a team. In the summer of 2017, six students from his class invested many hours demonstrating their considerable talents and dedication to finishing the job.

Plans are to complete the Library Improvement Project with an irrigation system for the lawn and garden and illumination for the sign and entrance.

This work, and the sustained effort to bring it about, can be credited to the insights realized from the 2012-17 Long Range Plan. It is anticipated that this current long range planning process and the resulting report will continue to encourage progressive improvements into the future.

Today, Forbush Memorial Library occupies a 16,000 square foot, fully accessible facility, is open 42 hours/week, and serves the community with a collection of 117,000 circulating items. In 2017, over 36,000 people visited the library and 72,000 items were loaned.

Revised by Nicholas Langhart, Director of the Forbush Memorial Library, January 2019

Mission Statement

The mission of the Forbush Memorial Library is to serve the Town of Westminster as a center for education, culture, recreation and information through its collection of materials, and by making available technological resources both at the library and via remote access. The library also provides access to programming and serves as a community gathering space for people of all ages.

(Adopted by the Forbush Memorial Library Board of Trustees, March 12, 2019)

At its March 12, 2019 meeting, the current Board of Trustees reviewed the above Mission Statement. Discussion took place as to its continued inclusiveness, and appropriateness given the needs of the Westminster community. A motion passed to continue to endorse this Mission Statement, as it is viewed as sufficiently concise and comprehensive to warrant continued use.

The Long Range Planning Process

The Trustees of the Forbush Library took seriously the charge to create a meaningful, comprehensive, and workable long range plan for the next five years. Beginning with an assessment of the current plan, the Trustees discussed areas of effectiveness, success, and completion, as well as areas needing further attention. Sufficient time and resources were allocated to the task at hand, in the hopes that a thoughtful planning process could occur.

From the beginning of this project, Trustees were adamant that the *process* that went into the development of this plan be afforded the same level of commitment (and respect) as the final *product*. After several months of discussion, in February 2018, the Trustee Chair moved to formally reconstitute a subcommittee charged to develop this Long Range Plan. Trustees Leola Leger, Martha Rainville, and Kimberly Samson served on this subcommittee, though it should also be noted that other Trustees (as well as the Director, other staff of the library and library patrons) were valued contributors to the development of this plan.

Our first thought was to look at the value Forbush Memorial Library brings to the community of Westminster. Through the reevaluation of the previous 5-year plan, discussions about the library's current state of affairs, offerings, and services, as well as its potential for the future, the committee gained a better understanding of what Westminster's library means to the town. Our library means many things to different people and meets a variety of needs. It is not becoming obsolete and although some uses of the library have shifted their relevance in today's society, selecting and borrowing books, having a place to gather, and appreciating a valued resource, remain consistently relevant in our town.

NYU professor Eric Klinenberg published a book in September 2018 that offered a timely piece touting the value of libraries in today's society. In *Palaces for the People*, Klinenberg wrote:

“Neighborhood libraries and librarians do all kinds of unexpected things for surprisingly large numbers of people. Their core mission is to help people elevate themselves and improve their situation. Librarians do this, principally, by providing free access to the widest possible variety of cultural materials to people of all ages, from all ethnicities and groups. For older people, especially widows, widowers, and those who live alone, libraries are places for culture and companionship, through book clubs, movie nights, sewing circles, and classes in art, music, current events, and computing...For many seniors, the library is the main place they interact with people from other generations. It's a place where they can volunteer and feel useful. It's where they can be part of a diverse and robust community, not a homogeneous one where everyone fears decline.

Libraries provide different benefits to young people. They expose infants and toddlers to books and stories that would otherwise be inaccessible. They help youths inch toward independence, giving them library cards and letting them choose how to use them. Libraries offer refuge and

safe space to teenagers who'd rather study or socialize than hang out in the streets. Librarians help students with research and offer after school programs. They recommend books, authors, even entire genres to young people who are searching for something different but can't yet name it. Libraries help children and teenagers feel responsible, to themselves and to their neighbors, by teaching them what it means to borrow and take care of something public, and to return it so others can have it too."

Our charge, as stewards of Forbush Memorial Library, is to identify ways to meet the needs of patrons from this vast range of ages, needs, and interests. The committee carefully crafted our survey instrument to collect data about the library's current efforts, patron satisfaction, wants and needs, and to address opportunities for the future. The sixteen questions selected for the survey offered opportunities for patrons to provide valuable feedback for our planning process. Some relevant themes that emerged included the following:

- Regarding the customer service they receive at Forbush, patrons were very satisfied with the helpfulness, friendliness, and professionalism of the staff, and they appreciated the staff's knowledge of the collection. Patrons did express a wish for more openness to new ideas and knowledge of technology by the staff.
- As in previous years and supporting our belief that libraries are still viable and sustainable, patrons overwhelmingly indicated that their primary reason for visiting the library was to borrow materials. Patrons appreciated timely additions to the collection and valued the inter-library loan option for acquiring materials.
- Patrons were overwhelmingly satisfied with the hours of operation at Forbush. A few respondents indicated a wish for additional hours on Saturday and/or the addition of hours on Sunday or Monday, if possible.
- Respondents were very satisfied with the library facilities and found them safe, well-lit, comfortable, and at an acceptable noise level. Also, notably, respondents rated the library's signage as very good, an identified category that trustees worked hard to address during the last long range plan. We are pleased with this result. Again, frustration with a lack of adequate parking options for patrons permeated this and other response categories.
- Patrons are accessing the library via the internet frequently to reserve materials, search the catalog and monitor their accounts. The on-line events calendar is an additional draw and patrons expressed a wish for further options in advancement with respect to the use of technology to showcase Forbush offerings, programs, services, etc.
- Respondents felt that the library needs to move ahead more quickly in the area of technology, identifying the need for staff to become versed in the use of technology platforms and options and for the library to offer more technologically advanced services.
- Lack of adequate parking again permeated the responses to questions about why respondents do not use the library and what would make a patron a more frequent library user. Patrons expressed frustration during high traffic times or when programs are

scheduled at the lack of parking options. While trustees do not have a solution, we believe it is very important to document these frustrations as they affect parents with small children, patrons with mobility impairments, and our patron population as a whole.

- There seems to be a genuine interest by the overall population in having Forbush increase its programming options for all age groups and interests. General interest programs for adults, book clubs for children and adults, additional programs for children and crafts/how-to programs for adults top the lists. Patrons are looking for additional reasons to come to the library on a regular basis. Respondents were solidly positive in their assessment of programs for young children, but noted comparatively less programming aimed at other age groups and constituents. Responses offered multiple suggestions for consideration in this area.
- Respondents expressed the wish that the library would do a better job of marketing all that it has to offer patrons/residents. Many do not believe general citizens are aware of everything that they could access at the library.
- Upgrading and updating our emerging technologies and embracing new technological advances were suggested as responses to many of our questions. Patrons would like library staff to be a solid resource for them on e-book platforms and would like the library to offer programs on the latest technologies.
- Collection areas of interest that patrons hoped the library would continue to focus on for the upcoming years were in augmenting the museum passes program, adult fiction titles, young adult materials, and best sellers. Patrons praised the breadth of the collection for children and adults and welcomed the new titles arriving often. Patrons also enjoyed receiving suggestions from both the Children's and Adult Librarians about new titles at the library or materials that Forbush believes the patrons would appreciate.
- The friendly and helpful staff, welcoming Children's Room area, and the vision of the Forbush Memorial Library as a community center for Westminster and area residents were the identified areas that respondents liked best about the library.
- As staff and trustees are always looking for ways to further meet patrons' needs and improve services offered at Forbush, the answers to the question asking patrons how the library can improve were most anticipated. Access and parking topped the list, but patrons also suggested alternate ways of marketing library offerings and materials, ideas for future programs and events, and substantive suggestions that can make a marked impact.

The committee appreciated the thoughtful responses and suggestions, as well as the general comments, praise for what the library and its staff are doing well, and attention by our patrons to this very important project that will carry us through the next five years and beyond.

Finally, as an additional assessment measure, all current staff of the Library were invited to a dedicated meeting to discuss the above findings and offer additional input for the preparation of this Long Range Plan. All employees (as well as the Director) attended this January 9, 2019

meeting, and the general goals of the exercise (i.e., to provide feedback to the staff, and encourage their input) were achieved. As the day to day front line staff, it is important for the opinions and ideas of staff to reach trustees. Staff were generally receptive to the feedback offered by library patrons and provided extremely valuable input regarding existing concerns and ideas for improving services. Patron opinions and staff comments often meshed, leading the trustees to believe we are on the same page with the establishment of our upcoming goals. Specifically:

Share what you think we do well at the library

Staff discussion offered:

- Staff
- Collection
- Children's room-programs

The survey respondents shared:

- The staff is very helpful, friendly, and professional-people mentioned your willingness to assist them, to share/suggest items of possible interest. Customer service is very important, so this is terrific.
- Comfortable atmosphere, beautiful facility, and good location
- Good selection of books, ease at finding books and easy to order ILL if not available
- Bright, colorful, engaging children's area, nice display of materials
- Children's play area encourages co-play and sharing
- Planned story times with thoughtful/meaningful crafts

Share what the library can do to improve

Staff discussion offered:

- Light filtering shades in non-fiction adult area and new titles
- Added work stations for computers
- More staff members to know how to e-book
- Staff better able to use and show technology
- Passes—more and better publicity for what we have
- Better publicity about library offerings
- Friends

The survey respondents said:

- Better parking, more spaces especially for events
- Extend library hours; longer Saturday, Monday, Sunday

- Improve and update the computers; use more technology, be better informed about technology; e-newsletters--
- Reach the community through direct marketing, better advertising of offerings/services
- More frequent activities and diverse programs for adults
- More programming and events for children; programming during school vacation weeks; longer summer reading program
- Curbside pickup for physically challenged patrons, book delivery services
- Magazine and CD lists, e-book how-to, website FAQ, using online accounts

Share where you see the library in 5 years? How does staff and trustees keep Forbush relevant and vibrant for 5 years and beyond?

Staff discussion offered:

- Circle of Artists display/Artist display
- New programs/events, ways to get new patrons to the library
- Book clubs
- Keep kids involved and engaged

The survey respondents said:

Programming areas 5 years+:

Children's: Programs grades 6-12, book clubs for children/families, programs grades K-6, vacation week programming, reading challenges

General: General interest programs and craft programs for adults; How to programs: smart phone, typing, google, e-book, internet, writer's groups; Programs surrounding historical artifacts in Eloranta Room

Collection Areas 5 years +: Museum passes, young adult materials, best sellers, adult fiction, Rosetta stone, Ancestry, graphic narratives

Technology: Instructions for downloading books, how-to reserve books on line, what is ILL, how to e-books, tablet/e-reader loans, Face book

Specific feedback provided by staff included a desire for updated technology training and hardware/software, more space for collections/the Young Adult area/meeting and programs, a reiteration of the need for revitalizing the Friends group, and better marketing/publicity for current services and offerings.

With the wealth of thoughtful data derived from the above assessment activities, the Long-Range Planning Subcommittee met to review and distill the prominent themes, concerns, and priorities

shared. After considerable discussion, consensus was achieved regarding the six *Service Priorities* that appear in this plan.

Identified Service Priorities (2019-2024)

Goal I – Broaden Programming Efforts

- Broaden the programming activities of the library to reach an even wider audience.
 - Create sustainable platforms (e.g. a “programming committee”) by which to enhance community input into the types of programs held at the library.
 - Cultivate relationships with specific groups of constituents (e.g. public and private schools), with the goal of soliciting and offering programming activities with appropriate appeal to those groups.
 - Expand adult programs & offerings to offer more craft programs for adults, programs featuring town history, music, and general interest.
 - Offer book club discussion group opportunities for adults, teens, and children.
 - Expand program offerings for school aged children after school and/or in the evenings.
 - Building on the success of the Summer Reading Program offered for children at Forbush, create a Summer Reading challenge for adults.
 - Expand on the success of the Agricultural Commission’s Growing Great series by establishing and supporting the Children’s Garden and its programming efforts.

Goal II – Embrace Technology and Innovation

- Research and offer to our patrons (as appropriate) technology information on e-books, CW-Mars, the Forbush web page, Face Book, and other information pertaining to the library
- Offer specific programs to the community that focus on the use of emerging information technologies
- Develop effective strategies for delivering ongoing training that is responsive to community needs.
- Training of staff will enable us to provide more valuable services to patrons and the community at large.

- Create and implement a schedule of regular training opportunities for library staff on the use of emerging technologies, website services, etc.
- Create additional interest in and reason for visiting the library website regularly.
 - Celebrate the offerings of the Forbush Library by updating the library website with a list of magazines subscribed to at Forbush, CDs available at the Forbush library, etc.
 - Link the NY Times Bestseller list on the library website
 - Publish the most popular titles reserved on CW/Mars (updated daily/weekly)
- Assess ongoing information technology hardware needs for staff and patrons and devise a maintenance/improvement plan for technology upgrades and improvements

Goal III –Communications/Publicity/Marketing/Access

- Cultivate multiple avenues for publicity to communicate with patrons about the various programmatic, collections, and resource offerings available at Forbush Memorial Library.
 - Create print and electronic publications highlighting current offerings and services at FML; (e.g. museum passes, Wowbrary!, programs, homeschooling materials, collection highlights, historical artifacts, and displays, etc.)
 - Utilize FML website and electronic/social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter) to raise public awareness for the library’s resources and services and advertise programming efforts.
 - Increase digital access for our community through marketing efforts overviewing online services: (Interlibrary loan networks, e-book offerings, books/services for visually impaired patrons).
 - Increase access to library materials for individuals with mobility limitations with implementation of scheduled pick up/drop off curb services and home delivery services.
 - Utilize library operations to develop patron database for electronic correspondence.
 - Collect emails as residents register for new library cards and renew current accounts.
 - Develop procedures and checklists for publicizing upcoming events and programs.
 - Create an electronic newsletter to be delivered to patrons and posted on website.

- Develop a system for communicating upcoming programs to families with school age children through relationship with Ashburnham/ Westminster regional school district and area preschools.
- Purchase two TV monitors for use in advertising upcoming programs, library news, etc. on the Children’s Room level and Main level.
- Produce a marketing video created by students highlighting the value of the library.
- Create a marketing project and/or summer internship program with a local college and/or high school designed to focus on marketing strategies to highlight the library and its offerings and expand patron participation.

Goal IV – Friends of the Library Group Revitalization

- Use available resources to cultivate a stable, functioning, self-sustaining, and reasonably autonomous group of individuals whose interests and talents will serve the *Friends* group well.
 - The Trustees and Director will put out a call for interested volunteers to join the *Friends of the Library*, and host preliminary meeting(s) for the group.
 - Increase the breadth of activities in which the Friends group participates. Identify further areas in which the *Friends* group could play an important role in the continued success of the Library.
 - Acknowledge and advertise the activities/programs/services that the Friends of Forbush Library supports and promotes at the Library.

Goal V – Space Utilization and Building Improvements

- On an ongoing basis, evaluate, effectively allocate, and optimize available physical space in the Library building.
 - Create a thoughtful plan for the renovation of the currently underutilized “attic” space in the Library. The Trustees’ Building & Grounds Committee will provide a report to the Trustees and Director regarding feasible and practical uses of the “Attic” space to make more space for collections, programs, meeting space, etc.
 - The Board of Trustees will issue an RFP to designers for plans and costs for attic development. As appropriate, a warrant may be prepared for the May 2020/21 Town Meeting to fund this project.
 - Research the feasibility of expanding the young adult/teen area.
 - Investigate possibilities for quiet study areas/rooms for groups of students or others to work on academically-oriented projects.

- Utilize the outside fenced-in space for programming efforts.
 - Plan programs in conjunction with Summer Reading program efforts in this outside space.
 - Support Children’s Garden programming plans initiated for Summer 2019 to establish a learning environment that will act not only as a science laboratory, but also as a space highlighting art, math, engineering, and good citizenship.
- Create an action plan to address maintenance and improvements throughout the building on an ongoing basis.
 - Refresh paint throughout building
 - Assess furniture, shelving, seating, lighting, and window needs
 - Replace area rugs and mats

Goal VI – Nurture Forbush Library’s place as the “Cornerstone of the Community.”

- Fulfill the Library mission to serve as a center for education, fellowship, information, civic engagement, and community activity.

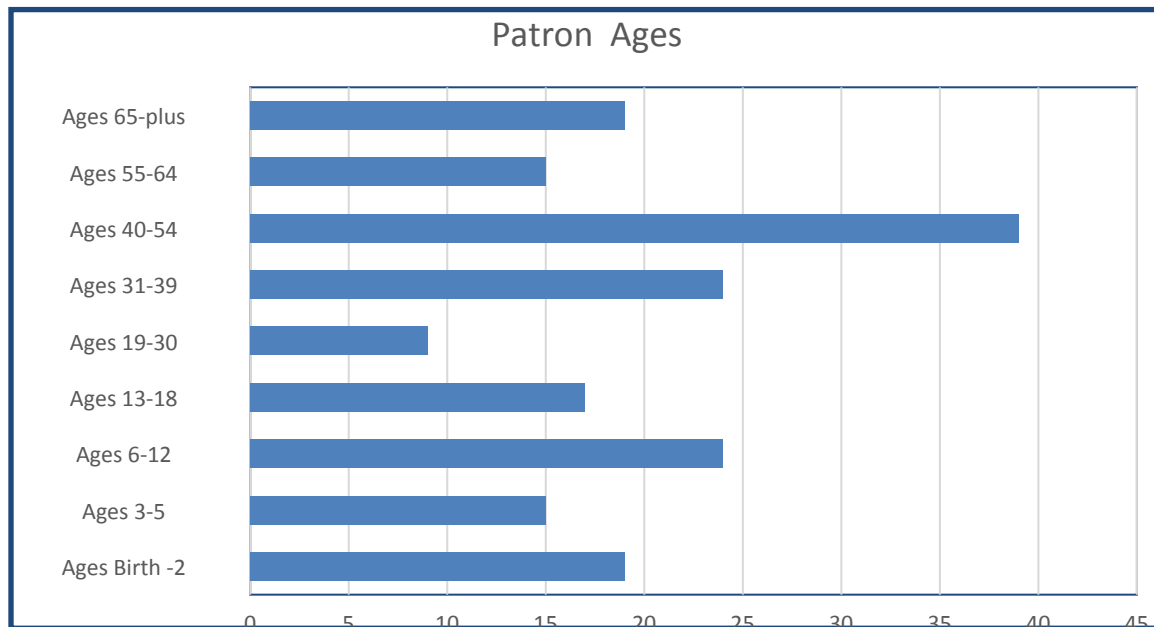
Appendix A

Forbush Memorial Library - Patron Survey Results Report

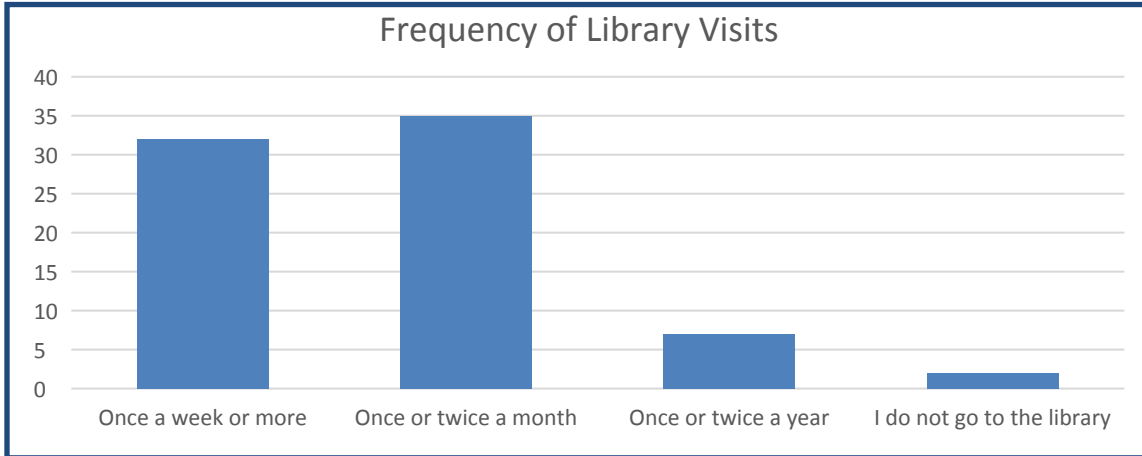
Forbush Memorial Library conducted a community survey from June 5, 2018 until October 30, 2018. The library distributed print surveys and promoted an online version using SurveyMonkey. The library collected data obtained from survey instruments. There were 20 respondents to the online version of the survey and 89 respondents to the paper survey.

SURVEY RESULTS REPORTED BY QUESTION

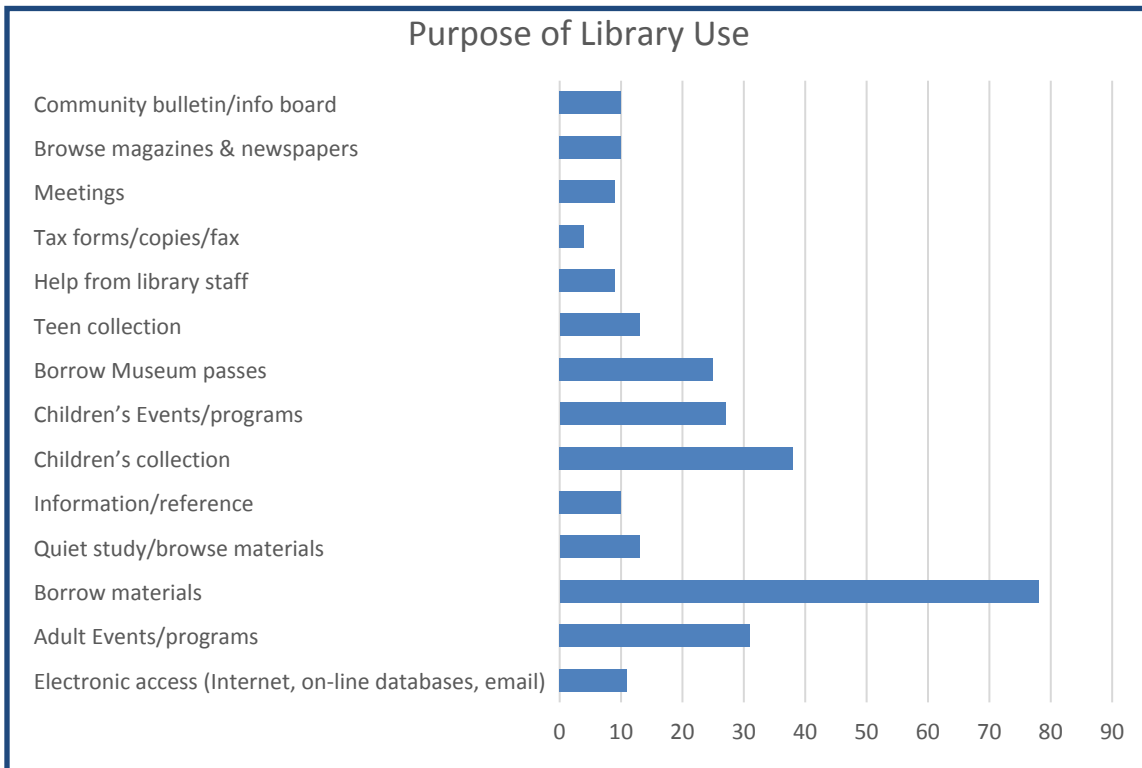
1. What are the ages of the members in your household? (Circle all that apply)



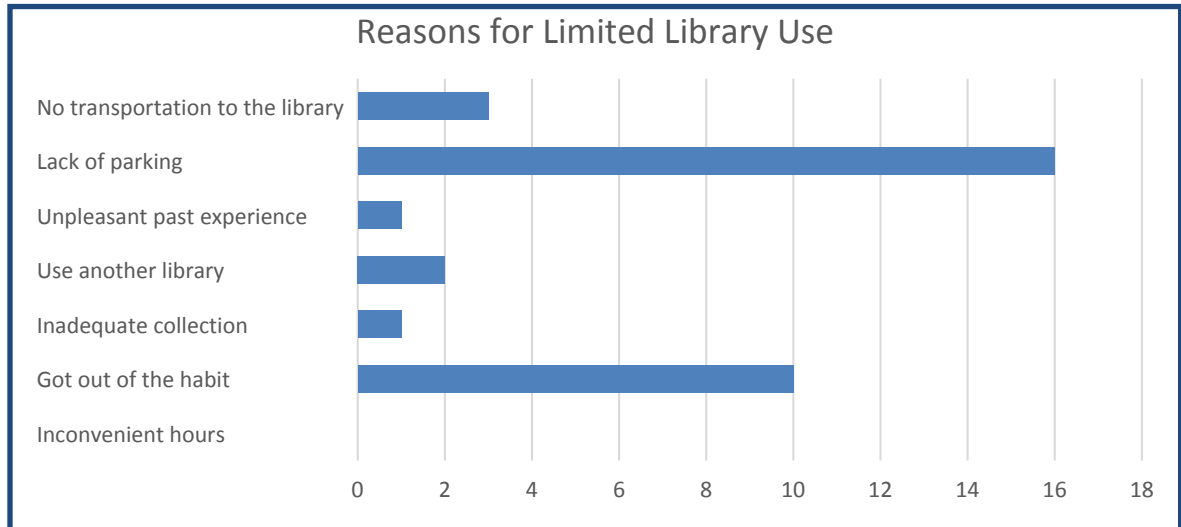
2. How often do you visit the Library?



3. If you do visit the library, for what purpose do you use the library? (Check all that apply)



4. If you don't visit the library very often, or at all, why not?



Additional Responses in "Other" category:

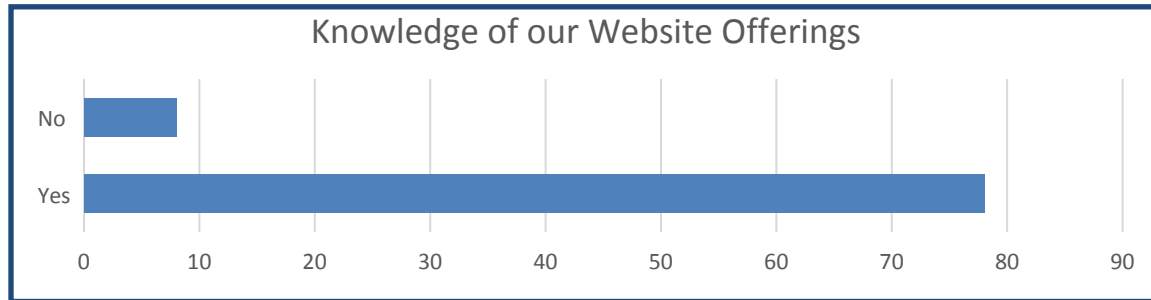
- Kindle, e-books
- Work hours not conducive
- Use library close to work

5. What would make you a more active user of the library and its services?

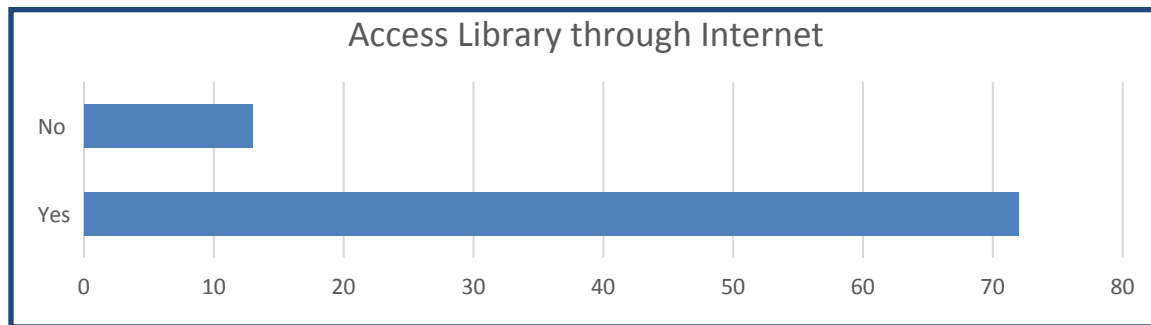
Representative responses fell into three general categories of free responses:

- **Hours of Service**
 - More flexible hours on weekends
 - Library hours are tough w/my schedule
 - Sunday hours or longer Saturday hours would be wonderful
 - Occasional evening hours
 - Mondays
- **Wider Programming options**
 - Speakers, authors, seminars, free training
 - More adult programs, events, discussion groups, crafts, book clubs
 - Coffee/tea hour at night/social
 - More children's programs, craft clubs, games for kids, family fun activities
 - My kids would do a book club if it fit with our schedule
 - Continued events and programs for children, teens, and adults
- **Issues of Access**
 - Access for deaf and hard of hearing for events – ASL interpreters and CART services
 - Hard to get into the library to attend events or pick up books when the parking lot is full

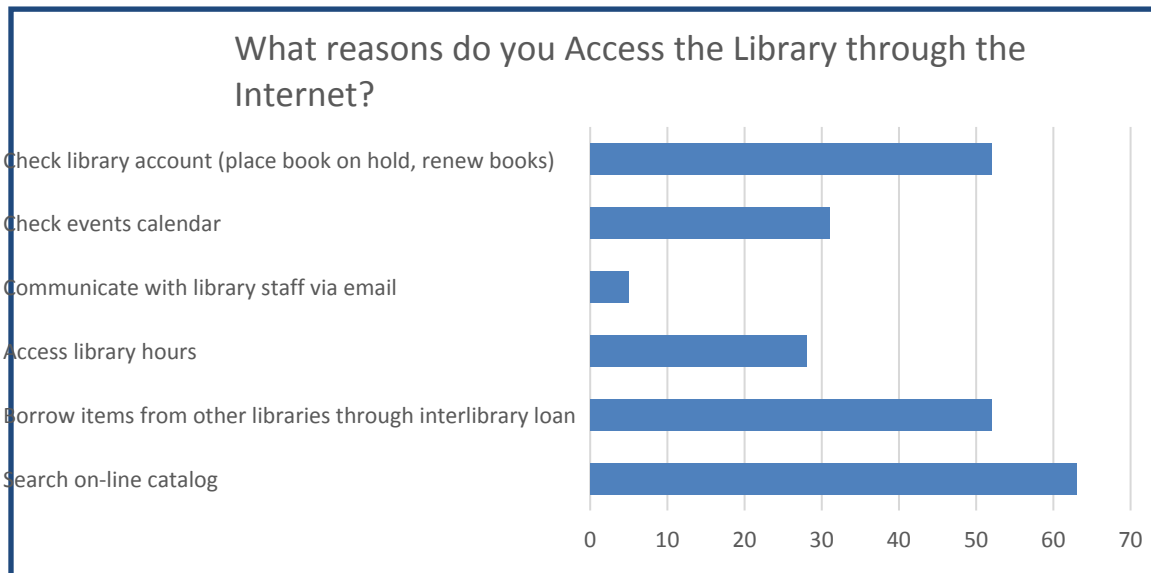
6. Do you know that information about library programs and services is available on our website?



7. Do you access the library through the Internet?



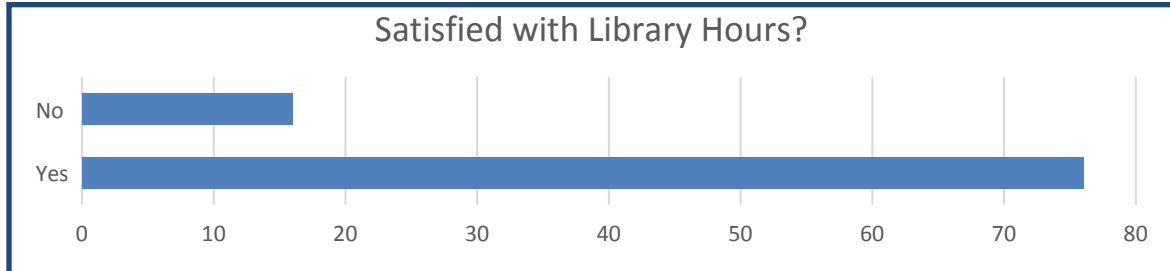
8. If yes, for what reasons do you access the library through the Internet?



Responses provided in "Other" category:

- audio books
- book renewal
- check available museum passes

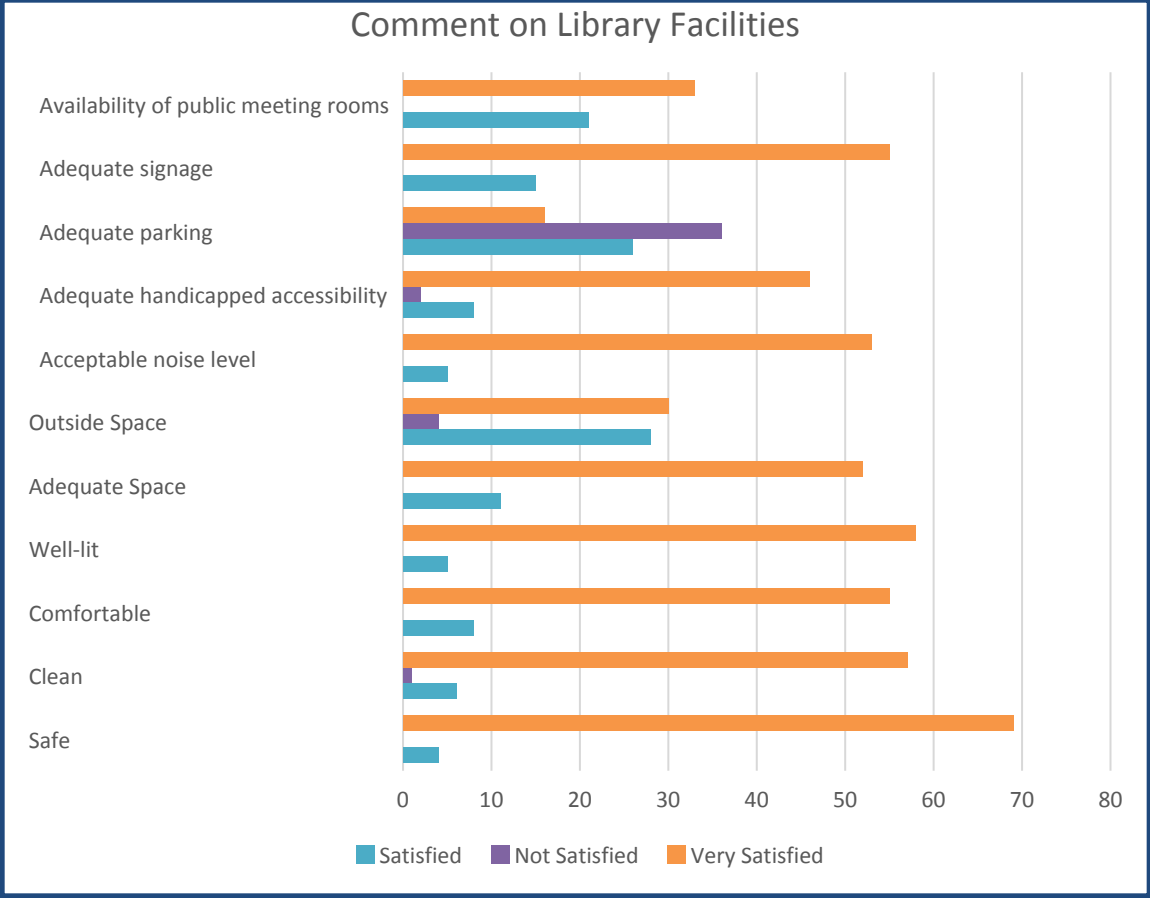
9. Are you satisfied with the current library hours?



Responses provided under "Comments/Suggestions:"

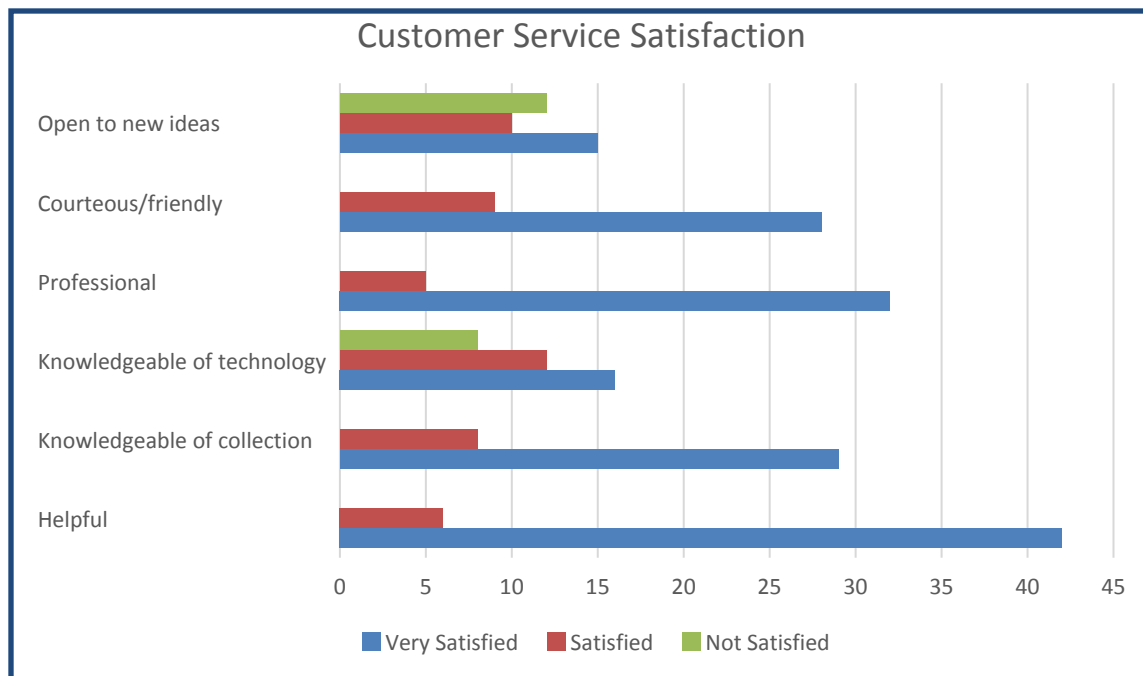
- additional hours on Saturday
- open library on Sunday, Monday

10. Are you satisfied with the library facilities? ___

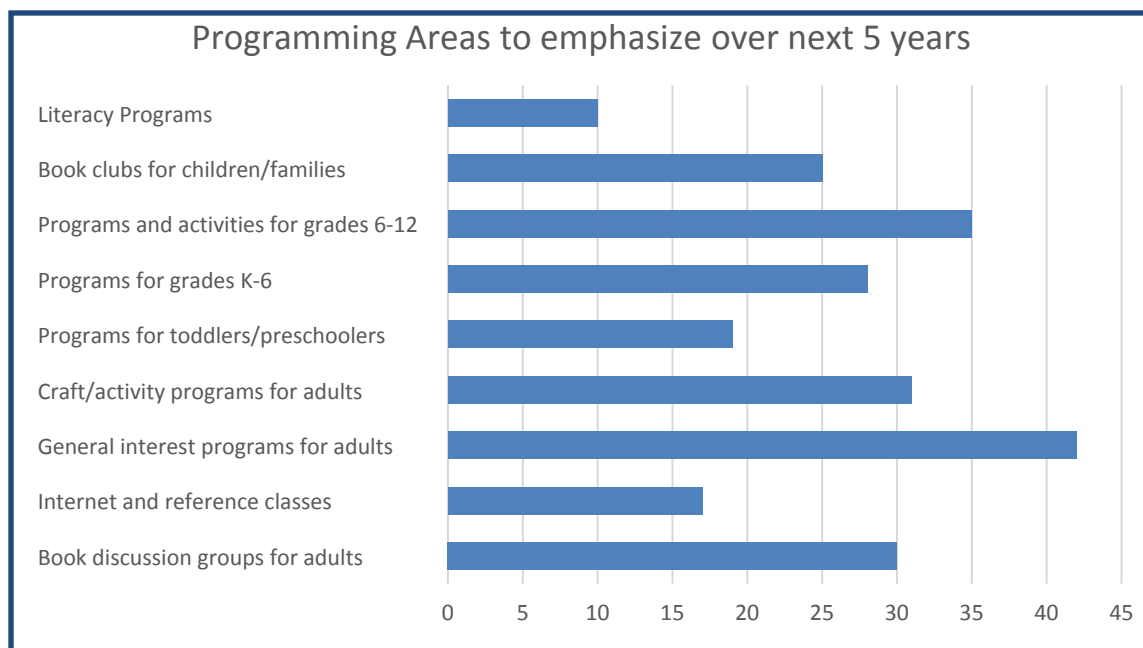


Free Response Comments provided in “Other” category focused primarily on the need for better parking options and a desire for the use of outside spaces for library programs and events.

11. How satisfied are you with customer service at Forbush?



12. Please check off **any programming areas** you would like the library to emphasize during the next 5 years:



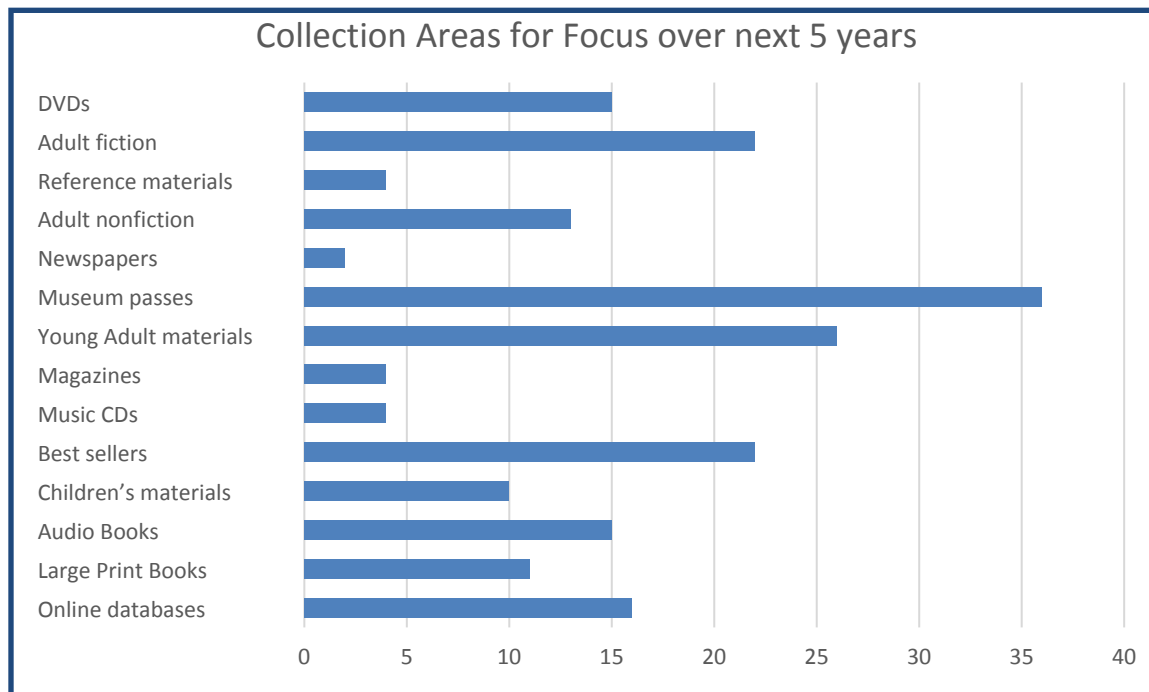
Representative Responses in “Other” category:

- How-to programs i.e. smart phones, social media, internet
- writer’s groups
- winter/spring reading program
- chess club/games

Preferred times/days:

- weekday evenings
- after school
- 10-12 weekdays
- Saturdays

13. Please check **any collection areas** you would like to see us focus on during the next 5 years:



Representative Responses in "Other" category:

- Ancestry, genealogy programs
- graphic narratives
- health/nutrition/cookbooks

14. What do you like best about this library?

Representative responses fell into four general categories of free responses:

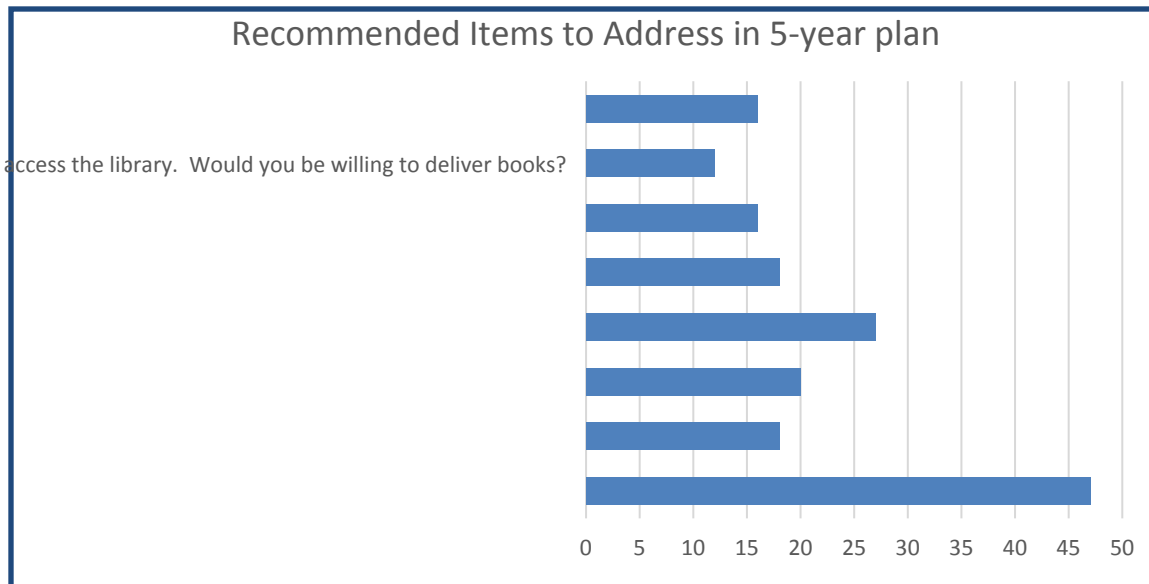
- Friendly, competent, helpful staff
- Children’s Room is a great place for kids and families; excellent space, collection, story times and play area, and family-oriented programming is super.
- Community Center: great location, beautiful facility, “one of the last public meeting places where everyone is welcome.”
- Library Offerings and Interlibrary Loan: the Forbush collection is comprehensive, but when we don’t have an item, the convenient Interlibrary loan program possibilities open many doors for patrons

15. What is the most important thing that this library can do to improve?

Representative responses fell into four general categories of free responses regarding areas for improvement:

- *Parking/Access* Overwhelmingly, parking was the area patrons identified as needing the most improvement. Patrons of all ages expressed frustration accessing the library for story times, programs, or to pick up materials. A book delivery service and curbside pickup were requested.
- *Materials/Circulation* Patrons offered suggestions to better inform patrons of the offerings at Forbush, opportunities to advance patron usage of the services available to them, and desires to learn how to better avail themselves of the offerings within the library system as a whole.
- *Programming Ideas/Thoughts* Patrons offered compliments on the programs offered at Forbush, but requested more varied choices and additional program/event options to bring patrons into the library more often beside those visits for materials selection. Requests for additional programming were made for all age groups.
- *Marketing/Advertisement* Desire by patrons to learn about online account opportunities, about all of the offerings at Forbush, and better advertisement of the programs and events held at the library.

16. Which of these items do you think are important for the library to address in this upcoming plan? (check all that apply)



Responses provided to the survey’s request for specific suggestions in the areas of adult programs, Pre-K to teen programs, and technology are listed below.

Adult Programs: crafts, gardening, book clubs, local history, organization, meal planning

Pre-K to Teen Programs: book clubs, music, family fun, continue story times with crafts, Star Wars programs

Technology: how-to reserve books on-line, e-books, use more technology at the library, more Facebook presence