



Brownell Library Strategic Plan: 2014-2019

Mission Statement

The Brownell Library provides diverse collections and services for all ages in a welcoming and comfortable environment where people come first. The staff's mission is to help patrons to access the library's resources and to provide opportunities for community enrichment and cultural awareness.

Introduction

Based upon the American Community Survey estimates for 2008-2012 provided by the US Census Bureau, the Village of Essex Junction has a population of 9,298, an increase of 8% since 2000. The median age for residents is 37 years of age. The median household income is \$61,629 which is significantly higher than the state median of \$54,168. 11.7% of Village residents speak a language other than English at home compared to 4% state wide and an increase of 1.7% since the 2000 census.

The Brownell Library employs the equivalent of 8.8 full time staff including the full-time director. The Library is very fortunate to have the assistance of a dedicated group of community volunteers who collectively work an average of 69 hours per week.

Each year the Vermont Department of Libraries publishes the *Vermont Public Library Statistics: Annual Report* and according to data in the *2013 Annual Report*, the Brownell Library has a robust collection of 80,233 items which includes adult and children's books, audio-visual materials, and periodical subscriptions. 62.5% of Essex Junction residents have library cards, a figure which is considerably higher than the 51.9% median for libraries serving over 5000 people. At 165,793 the total number of items checked out for use is also well above the state median of 67,659 and represents an increase over the previous year. Programming is another area in which the Brownell Library excels. Brownell reported 510 programs for children, teens, and adults with an overall attendance of 10,747.

In times of economic stress Americans turn to important institutions for assistance and Libraries are one of these institutions. The Essex Junction community's reliance

on the Brownell Library to provide educational materials and cultural programming is clear from the data reported above.

A recent report by the Pew Research Center demonstrates just how valuable libraries are to the communities that they serve. The report states that 63% of survey respondents say that the closing of their public library would have a major impact upon their community.

Nationwide libraries are responding to the economic crisis and changing demographics in numerous creative ways: these include, providing support to job seekers in the form of materials and work spaces that include computers; creating small business hubs where small business people and those who work from home can congregate; providing educationally based programming for all community members from preschoolers through the elderly; supporting English Language Learners by building collections in multiple languages and creating programming that demonstrates the value of new Americans to their communities; by developing programs to loan non-traditional materials such as gardening tools; and more.

In the last two years, the Brownell Library has collaborated with and benefitted from the work of the Heart & Soul of Essex project. This project, to identify community values and build community connections, has had an impact on the Village in numerous ways from the articulation of a shared set of community values to a resurgence in community volunteerism. The Heart & Soul of Essex project provided the Brownell Library with a unique collaborative opportunity.

Another important collaborative opportunity that the Brownell Library is pursuing is communicating and working more closely with the Essex Free Library to provide services and programs for users of both libraries.

The Brownell Library is very fortunate to have a committed and caring staff and has been blessed with a continuity of leadership. For over 25 years Library Director, Penny Pillsbury has served the community of Essex Junction connecting people with books and each other, and inspiring the community by supporting life-long learning opportunities for all. She will be retiring in July of 2015 and over the next year the Village Manager, the Library Trustees, and the Library staff will work together to develop a plan for the challenging task of replacing her.

Other challenges that will be faced by the library in the next five years include the task of finding creative ways to use the existing space to meet changing space needs and the challenge of maintaining and managing an aging building.

A common challenge facing all libraries is the effective management of rapidly changing technology. New technologies require the funding to keep hardware and software up-to-date and in alignment with user expectations. They also require time and human expertise to manage. As libraries become increasingly digital, staff workflows may change but technology does not reduce staffing needs.

Keeping up with the cost of having a current and relevant library collection that meets the information needs of all users from pre-school through the rest of life is also a challenge. The cost of all library materials, with the exception of audio-books, has risen every year for the last decade. The cost of hardcover books and e-books, in particular, has risen in the last few years. Data reported for 2012 (the most recently published), indicates that the cost of hardcover books increased at a rate 2.57 more than the CPI, while e-books costs were 13.43 above the CPI (Bogart & Turock, 2013, p. 405). The collections budget for the Brownell Library has not grown commensurately.

Process

Needs Assessment

The long-range planning process began with the collection and analysis of data from two major sources. The first of these was a survey conducted by the library and the second was the results from the Heart and Soul of Essex community focus groups.

The Brownell Library administered two surveys in 2012 to assess patron opinion about library collections and services, and to gauge areas where the library should grow in the future. The surveys were administered in person and online. (The full results of the survey can be seen in Appendix 1).

According to respondents, the priorities for the Brownell Library should be (respondents could choose three items):

- Providing materials (60.8%)
- Providing literary events (38.5%)
- Promoting literacy among children and adults (36.9)
- Providing programs for children (27.7%)
- Providing community oriented events (26.9%)

Community members' priorities for the Brownell Library were reflected in the ways in which respondents reported using the library. According to respondents, their most frequent reasons for visiting the library were:

- To borrow books or magazines (96.2%)
- To borrow CDs, video, or audio recordings (67.2%)
- To attend a program (60.3%)
- Read books, magazine, or newspapers (57.3)
- Consult a librarian (57.3)

In their comments on the survey, community members indicated great interest in locally oriented events and programs, as well as support for collections in all formats.

Additional data was provided from the Heart & Soul of Essex data collection process. In a series of Community Conversations, residents of Essex Junction repeatedly

voiced their support for the Brownell Library and the work of the Librarians. It is clear from that data that the Brownell is one of the central institutions of our community and that people value the Library.

Strategic Planning Group

In April 2013, Brownell Library staff, Trustees, volunteers, and Friends all met with a consultant to begin the process of developing a new strategic plan. Sue McCormick led this large group of stakeholders through a series of discussion about the strengths of the library and directions it should move in the future in order to support our growing community.

Following this initial meeting, a Planning Committee was convened to identify strategic areas, also known as Service Responses, for the library to focus on in the next few years. After meeting several times and gathering in-depth input from staff, the committee developed a set of Service Responses and corresponding Goals which will guide the library's efforts to serve the public. Working from these Goals, library staff will annually develop a set of measurable Action Steps to work toward each long term Goal.

Service Responses and Goals

The Planning Committee identified 4 Service Responses in which to concentrate the work of the library for the next five years: Education, Community Connections, Health & Recreation, and Local Economy. These reflect both the needs of the community and the work of the library. These Service Responses match some of the Community Values that were identified by Heart and Soul of Essex, and the Planning Committee felt strongly that providing consistency and articulating congruence between organizations would strengthen all of our efforts.

For each Service Response specific goals were developed that will guide the library in its work. Working from these Goals, library staff will annually develop a set of measurable Action Steps to work toward these long term Goals.

1. *Education*

Create opportunities for lifelong learning and exploration, and respond to societal changes with information to help people manage and improve their lives.

- a. Offer diverse programming opportunities incorporating a variety and range of literacy skills.
- b. Collaborate with local schools to support and extend educational offerings in the community.
- c. Train and sustain a friendly, creative and knowledgeable staff to engage with library users in all manner of activities throughout the library and beyond.
- d. Help patrons with evolving technologies in a welcoming environment.

- e. Develop and maintain a collection reflecting community interests and needs that includes ongoing points of view and responds to changing interests and demographics.

2. *Community Connections*

Nurture community spirit in a safe, collaborative and comfortable space.

- a. Improve existing space to meet patrons' needs.
- b. Engage community members in the development and implementation of programming.
- c. Increase publicity and awareness of library services and programming.
- d. Increase outreach efforts to reach underserved populations.
- e. Collaborate with other libraries in all areas of library services, with emphasis on the Essex Free Library.

3. *Health and Recreation*

Support healthy minds and bodies and stimulate imagination.

- a. Partner with local initiatives and organizations to enrich community involvement in health and recreation.
- b. Expand our presence and access outside the building.
- c. Provide services and materials to promote healthy minds and bodies.
- d. Help patrons access health and recreation resources.

4. *Local Economy*

Support the efforts of individuals and groups dedicated to improving the economic vitality of Essex Junction and its residents.

- a. Collaborate with organizations groups and individuals working to improve the community's economic climate.
- b. Develop spaces, resources and trainings to support small businesses and start-ups.
- c. Support financial literacy for all ages.
- d. Provide resources concerning job opportunities and career changes.
- e. Pursue funding opportunities for special projects and initiatives.

Time Frame

The plan will be reviewed in its entirety after five years, but may be amended at any time during the five year period if appropriate or necessary. The intention is to have the plan be a living document that reflects and changes with the needs and requirements of the library and community and which encourages innovation.

The Action Steps shall be created and reviewed on a yearly basis, completed no later than October 1st of each year so that they can be developed in consort with the budget process and implemented on July 1st of the following year. The Action Steps may include ongoing projects that require multiple years for completion.

Membership

Christine Packard, Chair of Brownell Library Trustees

Penny Pillsbury, Director of Brownell Library

Wendy Hysko, Staff Member

Mary Graf, Staff Member

Kat Redniss, Staff Member

Genevieve Melle, Library Trustee

Nina Curtiss, Library Trustee

Linda Costello, Library Trustee

Daisy Benson, Library Trustee

Fran Toomey, Community Member




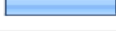
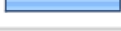



References

Bogart, D., & Turock, B. J. (2013). *Library and book trade almanac*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc.


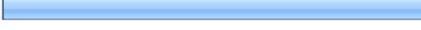
Duggan, M. (2013, December 11). How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities. *Pew Internet Libraries*. Retrieved from <http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/12/11/libraries-in-communities/>.

**Appendix:
Appendix 1 Library Survey Results**

Question 1:

What is your age?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Under 12		0.0%	0
12-17		11.1%	15
18-24		3.7%	5
25-34		9.6%	13
35-44		20.7%	28
45-54		21.5%	29
55-64		15.6%	21
65-74		16.3%	22
75+		1.5%	2

Question 2:

What is your gender?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		20.7%	28
Female		79.3%	107
	Other (specify if you wish)		1

Question 3(4):

In the last year, how frequently did you visit the Brownell Library?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Daily		3.0%	4
4-6 times a week		3.0%	4
2-3 times a week		10.5%	14
1-3 times a month		56.4%	75
About every other month		9.8%	13
3-6 times a year		9.0%	12
1-2 times a year		7.5%	10
Never		1.5%	2

Question 5:

**While visiting the library, which of the following services have you or your family used?
Choose all that apply.**

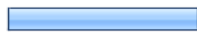

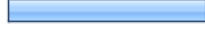
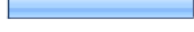





		Response Percent	Response Count
Borrow books or magazines		96.2%	126
Consult a librarian		57.3%	75
Borrow CDs, videos, or audio books		67.2%	88
Read books, magazines, or newspapers		57.3%	75
Attend a program		60.3%	79
Use reference materials/research		23.7%	31
Visit an arts exhibit on display		25.2%	33
Connect to the internet via the library's public computers		22.1%	29
Connect to the internet via the library's free wireless access (wi-fi)		22.1%	29
Borrow a museum pass		8.4%	11

Other (please specify)



9

Question 6:

What is the best way to tell you about library programs and events, or changes to library services? Please select your top 3 choices.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Facebook		35.6%	47
Front Porch Forum		43.2%	57
Library Website		37.1%	49
Library Calendar		34.8%	46
Library Print Materials (posters, fliers, bookmarks...)		19.7%	26
Library e-newsletter or email		67.4%	89
Newspapers		18.9%	25
Other media (radio, television...)		2.3%	3
Word of mouth		11.4%	15
	Other (please specify)		7

Question 7:








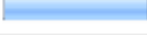

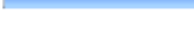
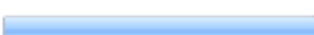

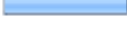
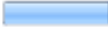
In the last year, did you attend a library-sponsored event or program?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		57.3%	75
No		42.7%	56

Question 8:

Question 9:



Question 11:

Which of the following do you think should be priorities for Brownell? Please select your top 3 choices.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Community-oriented events and/or discussions		26.9%	35
Consumer health, finance, and other how-to topics		6.2%	8
Technology Training		3.1%	4
Cultural Events (music, film, dance, drama, or other arts)		25.4%	33
Hosting events and programs		14.6%	19
Literary events (author readings, book discussions...)		38.5%	50
Programs for adults		10.0%	13
Programs for children		27.7%	36
Programs for teens		20.0%	26
Promoting literacy among children and adults		36.9%	48
Providing materials (books, magazines, digital resources, etc...)		60.8%	79
Providing services for job-seekers and businesses		6.2%	8
Providing technology and materials specifically for people who might not otherwise have access		23.8%	31
Serving as a community gathering place		20.0%	26

Question 7:

In the last year, did you attend a library-sponsored event or program?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		57.3%	75
No		42.7%	56

Question 8:

Question 9:

What programs would you like to see at Brownell?

**Response
Count**

49

Question 9 Comments:

Question 11 Comments:

Page 4, Q1. Which of the following do you think should be priorities for Brownell? Please select your top 3 choices.		
1	I can't pick only three	Sep 27, 2012 12:54 PM
2	They are all important, and the Brownell does an excellent job of balancing the needs of all its patrons.	Sep 27, 2012 11:58 AM
3	Promoting politeness on the part of the desk librarians. I have been treated rudely several times.	Sep 27, 2012 10:26 AM
4	I would love to see you make saving money and reducing your dependence of property taxes a priority!	Sep 27, 2012 6:04 AM
5	and community events -- arrow wouldn't stay in place	Sep 26, 2012 7:43 PM
6	More digital lending, please!	Sep 26, 2012 7:20 PM
7	They're all very valid uses/services for Brownell...but you said I could only check three. :(Sep 26, 2012 5:00 PM
8	So hard to choose-you do a great job with all of this that is and it's all important!	Sep 26, 2012 5:45 AM
9	VERY difficult to choose because virtually all are important.	Sep 25, 2012 3:44 PM

Question 12:

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions on Brownell Library Services?	
	Response Count

