

2012-2017

Scarsdale Public Library Strategic Plan



January 2012

from the president

Letter from the Board President

January 2012

In early 2010, the Scarsdale Library Board of Trustees embarked on a major strategic-planning process, with two ambitious goals: to envision what role the library could and should play in the lives of community members; and to set a course for growth, change, and excellence for the future.

Two years, five focus groups, one open forum, twenty-two board meetings, dozens of brainstorming sessions, hundreds of surveys, and countless conversations with community leaders, staff members, and library experts later, I am proud to present the Scarsdale Five-Year Strategic Plan, 2012–2017.

Our impetus for undertaking this huge task can be summed up in one word: change.

Our capabilities are expanding, thanks to technological advancements for gathering and distributing information, and our patrons' needs are evolving. Community members are increasingly looking to the library not merely for books, but for electronic content, educational and recreational resources, and physical spaces that support both community involvement and independent pursuits.

As we unveil this long-awaited plan, I'd like to thank Elizabeth Bermel, our Library Director, for the creativity and insight she brings to every challenge she faces; the library staff, for their commitment and dedication to our community, day in and day out; the Friends of the Scarsdale Library, for providing financial support for this project and continually advocating for the library with enthusiasm and determination; my fellow board members, for their unwavering passion for the library and refusal to ever settle for second-best; and the Scarsdale community, for sharing with us your dreams, ideas, and hopes.

I invite you to view the Scarsdale Library Strategic Plan not as a document, but as a blueprint, and to join with us as we build your library of the future.

With Best Wishes,

Barbara Josselsohn

President, Scarsdale Library Board of Trustees

Introduction

introduction

How do Scarsdale residents use their library now and how do they want to use it in the future? It has been twenty years since the last formal strategic plan, so the Library Board and staff knew it was time to reassess the role of the Scarsdale Public Library, and we started with that question. We looked at statistics and relevant data, enlisted the assistance of a consultant, held five focus groups and an open forum, and conducted print and electronic surveys for the public and staff. Four words stood out as answers: read, learn, connect and grow.

With a library that is consistently among the top libraries in Westchester County for circulation per capita, Scarsdale is clearly a community of readers. Scarsdale residents love reading in a variety of formats, for pleasure and for learning. Parents enjoy sharing books with their children, both in the library and at home, attending storytime and leaving with a pile of books. As Scarsdale children get older, they ask our librarians for recommendations and participate in the library's book groups. This love of reading continues through the adult years, and many of our patrons would like us to have more book groups and author visits. While the Scarsdale community treasures print books, they are embracing the convenience of electronic media as well. Keeping up with these demands is a challenge the library faces on a daily basis.

Scarsdale is a community that values education and learning. With a nationally recognized school system, and over half of the adult population possessing a graduate degree, that is no surprise.

Our patrons look to the library as a source of information and learning, starting in early learning programs, then using our print resources, our databases, our computers, our Wi-Fi and our librarians to research, write and expand their knowledge. With so much available on the Internet, our savvy users can find answers to many of their questions at their fingertips, but they look to the library to go deeper, to assist them with more difficult topics and to provide them with unique resources. The expertise provided by our staff is a resource we can make more available to our community. Scarsdale residents also love to learn from our film programs, lectures and other presentations, and they are asking us for more.

Technology has had a major impact on the library and its users. Many Scarsdale residents embrace technology and expect the library to stay current, as well as help them learn the latest technology. It seems that every day there is a new device or application, creating both conveniences and challenges for all of us. However, as life gets more hectic and technology-driven, our patrons told us they are feeling more isolated. While technology allows us to connect through websites, social media and email, we were told that people crave face-to-face social interaction. To many in our community, the library can provide an opportunity not only to connect digitally, but to connect with others. We heard a variety of suggestions, from more programs for all ages, to greater opportunities for special interest groups to meet, to providing welcoming spaces to read, work, snack and relax. Our community members love to run into

their neighbors here, and would like to linger. Others would like to meet to discuss current events and issues, play games like Scrabble and mah-jongg, listen to music or hold various group meetings. Our patrons are looking to the library to help build their community, and bring them together in new ways.

What is the result of reading, learning and connecting? We grow. As Scarsdale residents grow, the library needs to grow with them, to grow as the center of the community. To do this, we need to welcome you, make sure you have what you

need when you need it, remind you that we are here for every stage of your life, and have the flexibility to change. The pages that follow include an outline of the issues and trends we identified, the library's mission statement, the goals and objectives we plan to accomplish in the next five years, and a description of the planning process. We have created this strategic plan to respond to what we heard, meet challenges, learn from them, and grow with you.

Elizabeth Bermel
Library Director

mission statement

Mission Statement

To serve a central role in the cultural and intellectual life of our community and to encourage the joy of reading, the exploration of ideas, and the pursuit of lifelong learning for children and adults.

To ensure that we meet our users' educational, informational, and recreational goals, we will provide:

- A safe, attractive and comfortable environment
- Convenient and open access to resources
- Professional service and well-trained staff
- Access to the historical record of Scarsdale
- A wide range of programs
- Use of current technology

issues & trends

Strategic Issues and Emerging Trends

Technology

Changes in technology and how it is used have an impact on the library and its users. Technology enables us to better serve our community. Patrons need new skills to access and use the contents and services of the library, and look to the library to help them navigate electronic resources as well as more traditional, print sources. Our community expects the library to be up to date on the latest technology and help them use it, whether for personal use or group meetings. Staff members need to be able to respond to these changing needs. Advances in technology create both challenges and opportunities to analyze, understand and respond to trends in library usage.

New Media

Information and delivery methods are changing rapidly, requiring the library to offer materials in a variety of formats, and placing an increased demand on space and resources. With an increase in electronic books, full text databases and various downloadable materials replacing certain print materials, patrons can take advantage of 24/7 access over the Internet. Though some of the traditional services of the library may be decreasing, the use of these new formats and services is increasing.

Economy and Funding

A struggling economy and increased competition for funding will continue to have an impact on resource allocation. With increased demand for library services and programs, appropriate funding will need to be in place to support current operating expenses and future initiatives. Potential

changes in legislation and the economy will influence the library's budgeting strategies.

Physical and Virtual Spaces

Our users would like to consider the library to be the center of the community, as a place to relax, read, attend a program or browse displays. They would like inviting, welcoming spaces for quiet research, lively interaction, group projects, computer use, and technology-supported meetings. They would like to have the option to interact with staff, or find things on their own. There is a need for different spaces for a variety of activities, additional programs, a café and meeting rooms for community use. The outdoor setting is conducive to various activities most months of the year, and could be better utilized. They would like to have access to our services online, on an attractive, usable website.

Staff Development

In addition to providing the traditional services, library employees must adapt to changes in technology and expectations, and learn additional skills on an ongoing basis. The library needs to provide a highly trained, efficient and creative staff in sufficient numbers to support the level and variety of services expected by the community.

Patron Expectations

In our fast-paced world, patrons want convenient, friendly and timely service. The library must work to make it as easy as possible for the community to use the library. People are often not as willing to wait for materials and services, and want them immediately. The library must work on cost-effective efficiencies that make the best use of resources to meet these demands.

goals & objectives

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Strengthen the central role that the library plays in the community

The Scarsdale Public Library will endeavor to make the library a favorite destination and gathering place for members of the community.

Objectives

- 1.1 Expand programming for children, teens and adults
- 1.2 Reach out to new residents
- 1.3 Further engage diverse segments of the community, such as people with disabilities, seniors, teens and international residents
- 1.4 Improve the library's ability to provide meeting spaces for community groups
- 1.5 Maintain local history and act as a center for learning about the Scarsdale community
- 1.6 Involve the Friends of the Scarsdale Library in the achievement of goals

Goal 2: Improve the library experience

The Scarsdale Public Library will provide the community with a library that is convenient, patron-friendly and easy to use.

Objectives

- 2.1 Provide comfortable, accessible, welcoming library environments conducive to the different ways that patrons use the library
- 2.2 Conduct a space/facility analysis

- 2.3 Pilot and introduce innovative approaches for library services
- 2.4 Explore more flexible ways to better serve niche groups at relevant times
- 2.5 Evaluate additional ways to serve patrons who work locally or in home offices
- 2.6 Explore the addition of a café and increase outdoor seating
- 2.7 Explore alternative ways to provide library services

Goal 3: Expand community awareness

The Scarsdale Public Library will provide ways for all segments of the community to become more aware of the library's value and its resources.

Objectives

- 3.1 Develop a marketing and promotional plan to increase relevance and frequency of communication
- 3.2 Establish a strategy to promote new content, services and programs when they are introduced
- 3.3 Encourage staff involvement in community groups
- 3.4 Design and implement feedback mechanisms
- 3.5 Utilize Internet and other channels to share relevant information and enhance awareness

Goal 4: Embrace technology while evaluating traditional services and collections

The Scarsdale Public Library will explore innovative ways to provide services and materials as needs and technologies change, balancing the digital world with the print realm.

Objectives

- 4.1 Implement new technologies to improve overall patron experience
- 4.2 Redesign website to enhance 24/7 access to a “digital branch library”
- 4.3 Provide programs and workshops for the public on new technology
- 4.4 Create a strategy to improve collections and services

Goal 5: Maximize staff potential

The Scarsdale Public Library will provide the community with a patron-focused, approachable and professional staff dedicated to providing an enjoyable library experience.

Objectives

- 5.1 Improve productivity by incorporating new tools and technologies that will allow staff the opportunity to focus more directly on patrons
- 5.2 Provide means for patrons to identify staff and obtain assistance easily
- 5.3 Develop a systematic staff training program

Goal 6: Ensure stable and dependable funding

The Scarsdale Public Library will identify and secure sources of public and private funding to meet the community’s demands for library services.

Objectives

- 6.1 Partner with the Village and other public officials to investigate alternative avenues for support
- 6.2 Explore revenue-generating enhanced services
- 6.3 Support the Friends of the Scarsdale Library’s fundraising efforts
- 6.4 Increase private, business and foundation contributions

planning process

Planning Process

Phase I

Liz Gordon, a past Library Board President and former director of the non-profit organization Libraries for the Future, was instrumental in guiding the Board through the steps of the planning process.

Between August and December 2010, consultant Alan Gray assisted the Library Board and Director with gathering data, brainstorming, identifying trends and conducting focus groups.

Data Analysis

Westchester Library System circulation statistics, usage statistics, demographics and census information were consulted to gain insight into the community and library use.

Focus Groups and Open Forum

In October and November of 2010, sixty community residents met in five focus groups, including one for Teen Advisory Board members and one for Friends of the Scarsdale Library Board members. In addition, the library held one open forum, with approximately twenty-five people participating. The discussions focused on the changing needs of the Scarsdale community, what aspects of the library work well, what areas need improvement and what the library could do to “amaze” its patrons.

Surveys

One hundred twelve library users responded to a survey in print, and sixty-four responded online. The patron survey consisted of four questions:

1. What do you like most about the library?
2. What could the library do better?

3. What fundamental change in the library would make a difference to your family and/or our community?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

In addition, twenty-five library employees responded to a separate staff survey. The survey asked employees to express their vision for the library over the next five to ten years, and to describe ways they believe the library will change in terms of programming, collections, resources, and technology.

The responses to both surveys were incorporated into the development of the plan.

Meetings of the Strategic Plan Drafting Committee and the Library Board

Several meetings were held with the consultant during Phase I of the planning process to discuss the current state of the library and ideas for the future. Once the focus groups and surveys were completed, the plan underwent several drafts.

Peer Review

The plan was reviewed by Maxine Bleiweis, Director of the Westport (CT) Library.

Progress and Evaluation

Each year, the Library Director, the library staff and the Library Board will outline the action steps necessary to accomplish specific objectives and goals during the following year. At the end of each year, the plan will be reviewed and progress toward each goal reported in the December Board meeting.

board of trustees

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