

FANWOOD MEMORIAL LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2013–2018 SUMMARY



Since its inception, the Fanwood Library has evolved to meet the needs of residents. It began in 1899 when book club members wanted more choices in reading material. They donated \$26 and 156 volumes to the borough to start a free lending library. By 1928, the borough had hired a librarian and allowed the collection to fill the post office building on North Avenue. By 1951 demand for books had grown the collection to 7,000 books, and voters had approved construction of a new building. Thirty years later the borough constructed an addition.

Soon after the addition was completed, the technology age came into full swing. Now, in 2013, many activities under our library's roof would be unrecognizable to a resident from the 1920s, 1950s, or even the 1980s. While we still lend plenty of books (over 40,000 last year), residents visit our library to surf the web, check their email, use our Wi-Fi, fax a résumé, check out DVDs, and learn how to format a Word document. Families and children make heavy use of our busy Children's Department and services. Library users also listen to storytellers, read quietly, attend programs, hold tutoring sessions, and gather in emergencies. In short, our library has become a community destination and a source of civic pride.

While preserving and expanding the best of our services, we (the staff, board, and residents) have already transformed our library. No longer just a book-oriented resource, our library has made the transition from the print to the digital age, from a repository to an active community destination.

But are we fulfilling our mission? How can we continue to be responsive and adaptable, to prepare for and to meet future unanticipated needs?

This summary provides our views and proposed approach to answering these questions. It describes the critical issues and potential solutions we believe the library must address immediately to ensure that Fanwoodians have the modern library they expect and support. Further documentation appears as addendums.

VISION

The Fanwood Memorial Library fosters the joy of reading, the spirit of exploration, and the opportunity for personal transformation for all ages and cultures in its role as a community hub, a gateway to electronic information, and a refuge in emergencies.

MISSION

The mission of the Fanwood Memorial Library is to provide the space, materials, and services that residents of all ages and abilities require to grow and connect to each other and the world.

Where Our Library Is Now

Like other libraries across the country, the Fanwood Memorial Library has become a hub for residents looking to improve their lives personally and professionally. But our current building, equipment, and support services are proving inadequate to meet these needs. These inadequacies have been reported in public surveys and experienced daily by library staff and patrons. **Broadly, the library is failing to serve residents' needs in four areas: space and safe access, materials, technology, and service training.**

Where Our Library Needs to Go

The staff and board are committed to meeting our stated mission by setting the following specific goals that will be regularly reviewed, evaluated, and revised.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

To help achieve the mission, the board and staff will focus on these goals:

1 *Develop and initiate a strategic plan*—strategies to enhance current space, materials, access, and services in order to produce a community hub where residents meet, learn, and discover. Progress will be measured by the board and reviewed semiannually with the town council.

- **Space & Safe Access**—space for books, materials display, and storage; for tutoring, studying, programs, and meetings; safe and ADA-compliant access for all patrons; public space for staff and the community
 - Space goal—create sufficient and flexible space
 - Safe access goal—achieve ADA compliance
- **Materials**—content in many formats that reflect the community’s nature and needs
 - Print
 - Electronic
 - Emerging
- **Technology**—faster computers, improved connectivity, more computer workstations
 - Public access—increased and enhanced computing and printing capabilities, updated fax services; state-of-the-art technologies (e.g., tablets and other handheld devices)
 - Infrastructure—computers, printers, and software, as well as our relationship with the Scotch Plains library in terms of data services
- **Service Training**—continuing education and development for staff
 - Technology—for all staff to become technology literate, with redundant skills to ensure continuity and prepare for staff succession
 - Other—such as sensitivity training for patrons with developmental disabilities and for other important patron groups (defined by town census as hearing impaired, blind, etc.)

2 *Raise community awareness and promote our mission and goals*—ways in which the library will better serve the community. Progress will be measured by the board and reviewed semiannually with the town council.

- **Outreach**—working with community and government organizations to expand the library’s reach
 - We will identify and visit all key community groups at least once a year, including schools, fraternal organizations, and business groups.
- **Internet presence**
 - We will review and redo our website; we will develop a new logo.
- **Advertising/Media**
 - We will regularly supply media outlets with material about the library’s benefits, programs, and services. We will continue formal use of new media, such as websites and social media, and expand our use of cable TV, print media, and town-wide events.

3 Explore funding outside the usual municipal support

- We will build a greater understanding of the funding environment and opportunities and create a target list by July 2013 from local, state, and federal sources. We will contact local businesses as well as the FRIENDS of the Library and other private sources.
- We will actively investigate local opportunities and present concrete proposals for the town council by July 2013 for income-generating sources, such as the sale of library merchandise, fee-based services, and partnering with a coffee shop or other downtown merchant.

Addendum A—Planning

Space & Safe Access

Our library needs safe, stationary, and flexible spaces:

- **Safety and compliance.** The library building should be in legal compliance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act regulations regarding accessibility.**¹ Parents with young children (and the children themselves), seniors, the disabled, and staff need an elevator for safe access to the basement level Children’s Department, staff areas, and the Fanwood Room. Currently, some of our residents and staff are denied access to this vital portion of our building.
- **Infrastructure.** Renovations are needed now or will be needed soon. Issues to be addressed include lighting, limited parking, lack of universally accessible bathrooms on the main floor, limited electrical outlets, lack of a kitchen for handling refreshments, weather proofing, difficulty in controlling HVAC, and other chronic problems plaguing the 31- to 60-year-old building.
- **Staff workspace and storage.** These areas are tight and difficult to manage. Adapting to new services is virtually impossible.
- **Large display areas.** Books, magazines, DVDs, and other materials need large, open areas.
- **Small meeting spaces.** Different kinds of spaces are needed so the library can respond to the increasing diversity of populations and their needs. Individuals and small groups need quiet places to read, study, and gather without disrupting other patrons. Local organizations (Girl Scouts, Scrabble Club, etc.) need small spaces to meet.
- **Large meeting spaces.** Organizations and program participants need larger meeting areas to prevent overcrowding and violations to the fire code. In addition, performance space is so limited that the library is often restricted from presenting programs.

Materials

While hard copies of books, magazines, and newspapers will not disappear, the library’s materials, **in an increasing variety of formats**, must keep pace with the community’s requirements. This includes replacing worn-out materials and acquiring new ones, such as:

- Adult, young adult, and children’s titles
- eBooks and audiobooks
- DVDs and videos
- More bestsellers

Technology

Our library should provide accessibility to information and services that patrons can’t easily acquire from home. This means we require the ability **to keep pace with new developments**, in both hardware and software, that patrons need to do their work, to study, to support the devices (smartphones and tablets) they currently use or products they request to use (eBooks and audiobooks), including:

- Faster processing and energy efficient computers, printers and public workstations
- Improved connectivity, increased wireless capacity
- Additional public workstations (CPUs, monitors, keyboards, and mice)
- Richer software content that can serve a large user base

Service Training

Patrons' requests for technical guidance on computers, the increasing complexity of the library's own automation and management software, and the need for basic troubleshooting skills continue to outstrip the library staff's ability. Periodic **refresher courses** are required so the staff can better assist residents.

1. **Subtitle A of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Pub. L. 101-336** – prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities. Subtitle A protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability in the services, programs, or activities of all State and local governments. This rule, therefore, adopts the general prohibitions of discrimination established under section 504, as well as the requirements for making programs accessible to individuals with disabilities and for providing equally effective communications

www.ada.gov/regs2010/ADAREgs2010.htm

www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm

Addendum B—Promoting Our Library

Celebrating our library's assets and promoting its goals will be the responsibility of the board, staff, FRIENDS, and interested patrons. Unlike the old concept of an information repository, today's libraries bring communities together to change and transform lives.

The following themes will form the foundation of our plan to promote our library:

Our Library As a Gateway

Our library serves as a gateway to a **global network** of books and digital collections that patrons can't always access from home. As a **community center**, our library provides a place for meeting, dialogue, and information exchange.

Our Library As a Community Magnet

Our library attracts audiences for leisure activities like **movies, lectures, concerts, and theatrical programs**. Attendees actually want more of some of these activities.

We also need to **enhance our functioning** as a community crossroads where patrons and residents of all ages and abilities are welcome and able to make use of the facility and services, exchange ideas, see their neighbors, and feel a true part of their community.

Our Library As a Refuge

Our library provides refuge for **quiet reading, researching, and recharging**. During natural disasters, like Hurricane Sandy in the fall of 2012, over 5,000 people came to recharge phones and laptops, stay warm, get online, have access to vital information, and exchange survival stories. While such disasters are rare, what was most interesting was how many people came to use the library as a vital link for things beyond just the need for electricity.

Promotion Strategies

To highlight these assets, we can:

- **Partner locally**—with retailers, clubs, and schools in developing programs that benefit all parties, for example, by providing books and merchandise for newborns, conducting a bike safety seminar, or offering class credit for attending a summer poetry reading
- **Participate in town events**, for example, Fanny Wood Day and Memorial Day Parade, by manning a table with giveaways and bookmarks
- **Advertise** events and services on cable TV
- **Maximize in-house promotion** of our resources and services
- **Design a new website** for better display of resources and services
- Develop a **new logo brand to our services**
- Take advantage of current (and future) **social media** outlets and opportunities
- Make maximum use of **online and traditional media** to promote our resources and services

Addendum C—Funding

To achieve the library’s mission and to reach our goals of adequate space and relevant materials and services befitting our community, we will need to explore every possible source of funding.

Funding formulas are a mix of mandated and voluntary monies. Currently, our library is funded by the Borough under a state mandate based on equalized property valuation. The town usually provides the minimum required funds (with some “additional expenditures”) to maintain the status quo. Recent economic conditions have shed much light on how tenuous this formula really is. An effort should be made to evaluate the level of municipal funding required to enable the library to effectively manage and successfully meet their mission and goals.

In order to adequately fund our library moving forward—in addition to the usual monies supplied by the town—we should investigate other public funding sources as well as private and corporate ones.

Public

Since 2005, the directors of the **Fanwood and Scotch Plains libraries have joined forces** on a number of fronts, namely, shared automation services, catalog development and maintenance, coordinated policy and collection development, staff training, Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected, and Museum Pass. While continued collaboration and shared services will be maintained and developed as much as possible, they are by no means certain. As such, Fanwood needs to devise contingency strategies to provide services and materials independently.

In the current economy, opportunities for county, state, and federal **grants** are rare but will be pursued whenever possible, as well as from technology foundations like Microsoft, Google, Oracle, etc.

Private

The FRIENDS of the library, a library foundation, and other private sources of funding will be explored.

Corporate

A busy library is a consumer magnet. On their way to and from the library, visitors can pick up a pizza, visit a nail salon, or shop for a gift. The Fanwood Memorial Library hosts more than 60,000 visits a year.

With the downtown redevelopment and an increase in foot traffic, local businesses would benefit by **sponsoring specific areas** of a renovated library, for example:

- The bank might be enticed to sponsor new workstations.
- The ice cream shop and bagel shop might support updating the library’s teen center.