



Norwich Public Library Strategic Plan

FY2016–FY2019

Adopted September 28, 2015



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Executive Summary

The Norwich Public Library began work on the 2016-2018 plan in January 2014. A committee was formed, made up of NPL Board members, staff and community members. The original goal was to meet monthly until June of 2014 and have the plan adopted by October. However, in April of 2014, Lisa Milchman, Assistant Director, attended a presentation by Pamela Sandlian-Smith at Vermont Technical College, and the information she received that day changed our process completely.

The committee concluded that we needed a different type of information from the community in order to launch our planning process. So, rather than rely solely on survey questions that asked about current services, we presented the community with ideas about new visions of libraries to spark response and to react against. We did this by featuring YouTube videos from libraries across the globe. These videos offered images of library cafes, mobile shelving, wide open spaces, children dancing and adults taking computer classes - activities that were all very different from what we currently offer. We provided links to these videos from our website, the Norwich listserv, and from a laptop at the library. Patrons were invited to watch and comment on the videos through conversations with library personnel or in writing. From these extensive responses, as well as from information provided by our town-wide survey, recent census demographics, and anecdotal evidence from NPL usage, we were able to plan.

The cornerstone values of the 2019 plan include the central idea that libraries are places that enrich our lives in myriad ways. While libraries always will be repositories for information, we want to highlight that people's experiences at the Norwich Public Library will be engaging, community driven, and fun!

Lucinda Walker, *Director of the Norwich Public Library*



Our Mission:

The Norwich Public Library serves as a community center for the town providing traditional and innovative resources for all patrons and offering library experiences that support education, imagination, and community engagement.

NPL – Get Connected

Strategic Planning Committee

Mary Otto, *Chair & Former Trustee*
Lars Blackmore, *Trustee*
J. Lisa Christie, *Trustee*
Karen Harris, *Trustee*
Tom Candon, *Community member*
Dan Fraser, *Community member*
Arline Rotman, *Community member*
Lisa Milchman, *Assistant Director*
Beth Reynolds, *Children's Librarian*
Lucinda Walker, *Director*

Library Staff

Lucinda H. Walker, *Director*
Lisa Milchman, *Assistant Director*
Beth Reynolds, *Children's Librarian*
Nancy Fontaine, *Technical Services Librarian*
Kate Minshall, *Children's Room Library Assistant*
Janis Murcic, *Circulation Manager & Volunteer Coordinator*

Board of Trustees as of April 2015

Lisa Low Cadow, *President*
Stephanie McCaull, *Vice President*
Evan Pierce, *Treasurer*
Lars Blackmore, *Secretary*
J. Lisa Christie, *Past President*
Terry Boone
Anne Day
Gina des Cognets
Karen Harris
Tricia Seigne
Erin Tunnicliffe
Anne Goodrich (*ex-officio and president of the NPL Friends*)



The Norwich Public Library

Change is in the Air

In 1999, the original 1901 Norwich Public Library was expanded to include a new wing and lower level Children's Room. Within a few short years, the additional shelves of the expanded and renovated space had been filled with books and other materials, thanks to a grant from the Freeman Foundation. The adage, "If you build it, they will come" proved correct, with circulation increasing from 23,005 in 1999 to 67,352 in 2006. The number of patrons also grew as more people (re)discovered the Library. Currently we have over 3,500 patrons, with over 95% of town residents having library cards. Circulation of physical items has leveled but usage of our digital collections (first introduced in 2007) continues to increase by double digits every year.



This increased growth within our building's static footprint presents a number of challenges. While the building is showing its age, the space as it is currently configured is inadequate to serve the many people who visit the library on a daily basis. This past year over 51,000 people came through our doors. We now need to consider how to house our collections and accommodate activities and programs essential to a 21st century library within our existing space. This will require creativity and flexibility.

The Norwich Public Library long ago became the town's de facto community center, a role that we as an institution relish. The Library's central location allows elders from the senior housing center to visit the library daily to remain connected to their family via the Internet, the community and the world at large. At the same time, elementary students experience a newfound sense of independence as they walk from the Marion Cross School to NPL after the school day ends. Our Community Room is filled most evenings with local groups and at times with statewide organizations whose members use us as a central meeting space. At any time of the day, most every day of the week, groups of people or individuals use the Library as a gathering space, a quiet study area and as a place to access information. These activities have come to define who we are today.



Consideration of who we are today requires us to think of the future of the Library in a new way. Today's libraries serve as hubs of their communities. They are places for collaboration, exploration, connection and engagement. The focus on literacy remains vital, but even the concept of "book" has changed. The dichotomy between physical and virtual spaces affects many aspects of our day-to-day reality. The tangible (very concrete) and the ethereal (those little touches that are hard to describe or define) are important to our patrons and we want to offer both. We are concerned with our physical space but equally so with the experience patrons have when they walk through the doors. The way they are welcomed, the books on display, the engagement through social media, the clarity of our signage-- each of these represents a point of connection. Awareness of the multifaceted and complex nature of the library experience has helped to shape and sharpen our focus. Our concentration is now on the transformative, both in terms of space and experience. The goal of this plan is to put strategies in place to address these points as we continue to strive to be an innovative and vital part of the Norwich community.





2016-2019 Strategic Initiatives

Considering input from the Norwich community along with relevant demographic information, the library staff and members of the Strategic Planning Committee will focus on improvements and innovations in the following areas:

1. Environment: Maximizing our Space

Strategic Initiative: NPL will create flexible spaces that are welcoming, easy to navigate and appropriate for a wide-range of activities and community interactions.

2. Experiences: Enriching Lives through Connections

Strategic Initiative: NPL will facilitate experiences that engage, educate, and inspire individuals of all ages and backgrounds and that enhance community interactions.

3. Collections: Curating the Past, Present and Future

Strategic Initiative: Through our virtual and physical collections, NPL will provide patrons with the materials needed for their engagement, education, and inspiration.



1. Environment: Maximizing our Space

When the Norwich Public Library underwent a major renovation and expansion in 1999, usage of library space increased almost immediately. The establishment of a Children's Room with expanded services marked an exciting milestone for directly serving the needs of the community's youth. In the ensuing years, the Library has experienced a marked increase in the number of children who use our services and who come to the Library every day during the after school hours. This number now far exceeds the capacity for a comfortable fit in the Children's Room and includes a large "tween" population who desire their own space. Due to the Library's central location, accessibility and outstanding services, use of the Library's refurbished Community Room experienced an exponential increase in usage. In 2014 the Community Room was used over 700 times a year for programs and meetings, but is limited in that it can host only one group at a time.

With few options for community meeting space available in Norwich, the Library recognizes that it provides a valuable service to those needing to do research, conduct business, and engage in collaborations. Smaller groups, or people working alone, must vie for the few available seats and tables. Two years ago, with a Norwich Women's Club Community Grant, the Library purchased new chairs with built-in laptop tables. These additions have helped to increase the amount of working space; however, the library juggles daily with managing the number of patrons and their diverse needs in the current environment, while continuing to provide access to more traditional functions of the library - that of providing materials and services to our diverse populations.

In order to meet the needs of all groups using the Library, we recognize that it is essential to create both more open and more flexible areas to enable the Library to quickly adapt to the population that is using the space throughout the day for various activities.

Goal #1: NPL will better serve the requirements of multiple populations with diverse needs by creating flexible interior spaces that are welcoming, easy to navigate and appropriate to a variety of activities and community interactions.

Tasks

- Purchase mobile shelving that allows for easily transformed spaces
- Design clear signage and pathfinders
- With the help of a professional library interior planner, create additional small working spaces
- Renovate existing spaces, including the Community Room to better accommodate diverse populations and different sized groups
- Create office space for the Children's Librarian
- Acquire furniture that is designed for diverse usage

Reconfiguration of the library environment should extend to our exterior space as well. The Library is fortunate to have beautiful outdoor spaces available for use; however, these areas have not been utilized effectively. A re-envisioned outdoors would allow programming to be held there, offer various places for people to sit and enjoy the surroundings and provide opportunities for new activities (community lending herb garden, literary garden, story walks, etc.).

Goal #2: NPL will utilize and integrate its outdoor space into the library environment in order to provide and enhance educational, social and artistic experiences.

Tasks

- Create multiple access points to the Library from Main Street and Hazen Street
- Design spaces that encourage reading, quiet reflection, and enjoyment of the outdoors
- Create areas for performances and Library programming

2. Experiences: Enriching Lives through Connections

Historically, libraries operated on a transactional model; people visited the library to check out items or attend a program. Transactions were counted and the resulting statistics directed library planning. These numbers were believed to be an accurate reflection of the use of the library, but they could not account for other experiences patrons might have during their visit.

In the 21st century, libraries now focus on the user experience, the aspects of a patron's interaction with the whole of the library environment, including the interface with the library's online presence. A welcoming environment created by a knowledgeable staff, access to online resources and new technologies, and opportunities for diverse and enriching experiences all make for a holistic, high-quality library experience. For example, when an older adult visits the library he/she still comes to the place where books can be checked out but now is also the place where information and guidance about using e-mail and e-readers is available. Equally, this patron's library visit may include participation in a book discussion or a community potluck, a story-time with a grandchild or a knitting lesson with staff or a volunteer.

According to the 2010 census, Norwich's population is "graying" rather than growing. At the same time, the number of people who move to town (for jobs at the College or DHMC) for a short period of time appears to be growing. Our children's programming has always been robust but in an effort to acknowledge changing demographics in recent years the Library has been experimenting with different types of programs for a variety of audiences, in particular older adults and young adults without school-age children who may be new to what libraries have to offer them.

Goal #1: NPL will facilitate experiences that engage, educate, inspire and enhance community connections.

Tasks

- Actively gauge community interest in various program types by conducting community surveys
- Provide a robust schedule of programming for all ages with an increased emphasis on intergenerational and underserved populations including seniors, longtime community residents and newcomers
- Identify local, regional and online opportunities for collaborations with individuals and organizations
- Cultivate awareness of local resources which utilize the skills and talents of local community members
- Create and maintain a function for scheduling and publicizing activities and programming at the Library that is accessible to staff, patrons and the broader community

We recognize that inherent to a patron's positive library experience is the interaction with well-trained, public-service oriented staff who bring varied interests and talents to their work at the Library. While capitalizing on these diverse strengths, we seek to further develop and enhance the staff's collective contribution to the library environment in efficient and effective ways to serve the range of NPL's patrons.

Goal #2: NPL will cultivate an environment conducive to staff development and growth, and will reassess and revise staff roles to provide effective, community-based service and staff satisfaction.

Tasks

- Reassign staff responsibilities and roles based upon needs of library users and the skills and interests of our excellent staff
- Conduct staff retreats to examine the organizational restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities utilizing outside guidance when required
- Continue to explore factors which facilitate the attraction and retention of dedicated, public-service oriented staff
- Develop more formalized training and orientation for new staff
- Ensure staff access to continuing education and professional development opportunities

3. Collections: Curating the Past, Present, and Future

While curating collections of books with its inherent focus on literacy remains a vital mission of this Library, it is far from the only function. The Library's diverse collections include books, DVDs, audiobooks, eBooks and e-audios, music, puzzles, museum passes and a wide variety of digital resources like Consumer Reports Online, World Book Online and Heritage Quest.

With the explosion of new formats and new information platforms in the years since the renovation, the Library is faced with the added decisions of format purchase when adding a title to the collection. Balancing collection budget constraints with patron preferences for format (or multiple formats) create ever-more challenging decision making processes. Additionally, the emergence of digital content including databases, encyclopedias, newspapers and streaming content (movies, TV shows) has shifted the Library's focus from "filling the shelves" to ensuring that patrons have access to these newer modes of information and entertainment and the knowledge to use these new services efficiently and effectively.



Curating collections in the 21st century library is a dynamic, complex and exciting process. We strive to maintain collections that reflect the needs of the Norwich community. This process requires maintaining a balance between providing the Library's patronage with desired items while utilizing staff expertise to help patrons explore new genres, formats, ideas, and unique circulating collections such as garden tools and specialty cookware.

Goal #1: NPL will provide patrons with opportunities to engage with new ideas and experiences through its diverse collections and materials.

Tasks

- Explore re-organization and re-categorization of material holdings to create an easily navigated collection for library users
- Provide collections available in a variety of formats (physical and digital)
- Evaluate physical and digital collections regularly to ensure continued relevance and value
- Ensure website and social media outlets are up-to-date, readily accessible and easily navigated
- Create activities that relate specifically to specialized collections

The community survey made clear that many patrons are unaware of the Library's resources. We acknowledge the need to improve our ability to publicize both the tried-and-true and the new and interesting endeavors undertaken by the Library and equally, to ensure that patrons know how to access and use these resources.

Goal #2: NPL will provide instruction, guidance and support to library patrons in using and navigating the library's resources.

Tasks

- Maintain a culture of open-mindedness to new ideas, hone skills for evaluation of new technologies, and utilize supportive structures for their implementation
- Explore and develop more formalized technical support structure for staff and volunteers
- Provide patrons access to classes and tutorials on the Library's digital resources
- Promote library collections and resources through publicity and marketing

What Comes Next?

This is an ambitious strategic plan. Its success depends on excellent project management and the support of staff, Trustees, volunteers, Friends of the Norwich Public Library, and the Norwich community. It will also require adequate and stable funding. This project will involve four stages: assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation. Each new project will include a plan for securing adequate resources. The timeline for this plan is FY 2016-FY 2018 (July 1, 2015 through June, 30, 2018.)

Current library activities and practices will be assessed by library staff beginning in July 2015. Planning will take place under the guidance of experts, particularly those projects that require changes to interior and exterior spaces. Ensuring that the Library has the financial means to support this plan is imperative and this planning stage will include both targeted grant writing and a fundraising campaign. Implementation of the plan will take place as project specifics and financing solidify.

The plan will be evaluated twice, at the midpoint of eighteen months and at the “expiration” of the plan in the fall of 2018. The evaluation process will be guided by the tasks we have proposed in the plan. Evaluations will be conducted using patron satisfaction surveys, statistical analysis of transaction data and by conducting community forums. In order to measure “transformative experiences,” Library staff will collect personal reflections from library users that speak directly to how their experiences at NPL have affected them.

The cornerstone of this plan is the fundamental belief that libraries can play a transformative role in their communities. Transformation arises from and is inherent in the patron’s library experience - their interactions with the library environment, staff, community and collections.



Norwich Public Library History

The Norwich Public Library Association was organized by a handful of dedicated Norwich citizens on December 14, 1880. The initial collection of 256 volumes was housed in the Congregational Church Vestry. By 1888 the collection had grown to 1000 volumes and was moved to the Norwich Academy building. Fire destroyed the Academy building in 1897 and 20% of the collection was lost. The remaining books were moved to the home of James Hutchinson on Main Street while plans were developed for a permanent home for the collection. Thomas & Lizzie Hazen donated the lot.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new library was held on September 11, 1901 and the building dedicated in 1902. Fees and donations sustained the Library until the Town of Norwich offered its support of \$350 in 1922 with an annual grant. In 1971, the Library received a gift of \$1,000 from the Town, which allowed library hours to be expanded to two days per week and to increase the volumes to over 6,000. In 1975, the Bicentennial Wing of the Library was dedicated and built, paid for with Federal assistance, local gifts and pledges totaling over \$65,000.

The most recent renovation completed in July 1999, more than doubled the square footage. The Library was automated in 2000. Presently we are open six days a week for a total of 44.5 hours. The Library maintains a collection of over 35,000 volumes, including books, magazines, DVDs, audiobooks and an expanding collection of digital resources. With over 3,500 registered borrowers, we offer a Community Room meeting space for local groups, exhibit space for artists, Internet access, and free wireless access.

Join us as we build upon a tradition of excellent service and a first-rate collection while meeting the challenges and promises of the future.

We look forward to seeing you at the Library!

With appreciation to Jean Lawe



Norwich Demographics

Population	1990		2000		2010	
<i>Under 5 years</i>	225	7%	166	4.7%	142	4.2%
<i>5 to 19 years</i>	701	23%	932	26.2%	739	22%
<i>20 to 44 years</i>	1210	39%	948	26.7%	802	24%
<i>45 to 64 years</i>	637	21%	1109	31.3%	1238	36%
<i>Over 65 years</i>	320	10%	389	11%	493	14%
<i>Total Population</i>	3093		3544		3414	

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder

Gender & Age Breakdown	2000		2010	
<i>Males</i>	1722	48.9 %	1622	48%
<i>Females</i>	1801	51.1%	1792	52%
<i>basic resident age</i>	40.9		46.2	

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder

Nativity & Place of Birth	2012
<i>US Born</i>	3145
<i>Native Vermonter</i>	453
<i>Different state</i>	2637
<i>Europe</i>	164
<i>Asia</i>	57
<i>Africa</i>	10
<i>North America</i>	47
<i>Latin America</i>	0

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder



Households	1980	1990	2000	2010
<i>Total number</i>	827	1195	1367	1386

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder

Household Types	1990	2000	2010
Families	789	945	945
Married – couples	665	794	823
Female, no husband	95	119	81
Non family	406	422	441
Living alone	302	331	353
Over 65	103	118	363

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder



Household Income	1989	1999	2010
Under \$10,000	128	66	88
\$10,000 to \$14,000	74	44	104
\$15,000-24,999	190	115	99
\$25,000-34,999	125	97	25
\$35,000-49,999	176	204	137
\$50,000-74,999	183	280	174
\$75,000-99,999	334 (75,000+)	180	162
\$100,000-149,999		217	324
\$150,000-199,999		69	201
\$200,000 or more		94	154

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder

Median family income	1980	1990	2000	2010
Norwich	\$25,432	\$ 42,499	\$78,178	\$131,917
Windsor County				\$53,124
Vermont				\$54,168

U.S.Census Bureau: American FactFinder

% of families living below poverty line	1979	1989	1999	2012
	10%	8%	3.6%	n/a

2000 U.S.Census

Households receiving food stamps	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2012
	20	33	37	28	49	28

Grand List—Taxable Real Estate

1980	1990	2000	2001	2002	2013
\$65,746,603	\$317,794,764	\$321,825,071	\$332,006,393	\$339,092,664	\$728,481,100

Norwich Town Reports

School Enrollment	1980	1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013
<i>Elementary School Grade 1-6</i>	263	389	342	308	304	311	314

Source: Marion Cross School

Educational Attainment of persons over 18	1990	2000	2010
<i>Less than 9th grade</i>	68	7	24
<i>9-12th grade, no diploma</i>	91	90	44
<i>High school or GED</i>	292	179	176
<i>Some college, no degree</i>	79	281	340
<i>Basic' degree</i>	31	167	13
<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	42	815	758
<i>Graduate or professional degree</i>	26	966	1131

American FactFinder

Strategic Planning Survey

This survey was “live” from March 1, 2014-May 1, 2014. There were 83 respondents. This number is much lower than in previous years. It was after this low response rate that we began to consider the videos as a way to spark reactions.

Click here to read the entire Strategic Planning Survey:

<http://www.norwichlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/StragPlanning-Survey-all-responses-9-14.pdf>

Video Links

What to expect from libraries in the 21st century: Pam Sandlian Smith at TEDxMileHigh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa6ERdxYdo>

“A day in the Life of an AnyThink Library”

<https://youtu.be/VLUFz5aGFQc>

Ottawa (Ontario) Public Library, “Yes, We Can!” Ottawa Public Library, Yes We Can!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uklIP1wT3kU>

Hartford (CT) Public Library, “A Place like No Other”

<https://youtu.be/8RG31boYuPI>

To read the community’s responses to the videos:

<http://www.norwichlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Video-Reactions-for-the-Plan.docx>