



Harvard Public Library

# 2013-2018

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**A Plan for the Future of the  
Harvard Public Library.**  
4 Pond Road  
Harvard, MA 01451

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Planning  
Executive  
Summary



## Planning Process Overview

Harvard, Massachusetts, is a rural community in Worcester County. About 32 miles west of Boston and 22 miles northeast of Worcester, Harvard is home to 6,000 citizens and has a colonial history that extends back to 1732, the year of its incorporation. The Harvard Public Library is located in the town center on the same campus as the public schools. The original Harvard Public Library opened in 1886, with the Children's and Hapgood rooms added in 1905. The Hapgood Memorial was added to the outside of the Library at that time. In 2007, the Library moved to its current location, an award-winning renovation of the 1878 Old Bromfield School.

As set forth by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), "Libraries must have an approved Long-Range Plan on file with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in order to apply for... Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds." To meet this requirement and to take stock of the Library's present and future needs, the Library Trustees decided in November of 2011 to undergo a formal planning process. An external planning facilitator was hired to manage and guide the work. The purpose of the process was to have a representative group from the Harvard Library community explore the current and anticipated conditions impacting the Library and identify a small number of data-based goals that could guide the future work of the staff and Trustees. Specifically, the Trustees agreed that the completed plan should:

- Derive support from a broad cross-section of the community;
- Articulate two to four priority strategic goals that will serve as key areas of developmental focus over the next several years;
- Provide suggested indicators of success, strategies, and action plans for continuously improving performance and/or building capacity in those areas of focus.

Working with the facilitator, the Trustees identified a Strategic Planning Team of 17 individuals and charged them with the responsibility of carrying out the planning process. These volunteers and staff represented Library constituents, staff, and Trustees. As a result, members of the Harvard community and professional staff from the Library volunteered for this effort and contributed upwards of 50 hours of their own time to the process. The Harvard Public Library's Strategic Planning Team included Library Trustees Davida Bagatelle, Gail Coolidge, Christopher Frechette, Marty Green, Pete Jackson, Charles Redinger; staff members Lisa Gagnon, Abby Kingsbury, Judy Veno, Library Director Mary Wilson; community members Sharon Briggs, Robin De Augustinis, Ginger Kendall, Rick Maiore, Joe Newpol, Cynthia Rowatt, and Bromfield School student Anna Lee. The Board of Trustees of the Harvard Public Library would like to thank all who participated for their time, energy, and commitment to this important work.

The planning process was divided into three phases. Phase I was designed to create a solid planning foundation, ensuring that the Strategic Planning Team was properly organized and that everyone shared the purpose and expectations for the process. Phase II took the Library Planning Team from its present state to a position of planning clarity, sorting through the gathered data, identifying critical issues, and finally, addressing those issues with a small number of focused, strategic goals. The process ensured that the selected goals were supported by a range of Library constituencies, included associated indicators of success for each goal, and are accompanied by a roadmap for bringing Library staff and volunteers together to solve the strategic issues created by the goals themselves. Phase III is ongoing and is designed to complete the research needed to select and plan for appropriate action steps for the first six months to a year that will move the Library toward accomplishment of its strategic goals.

To carry out the process, the Strategic Planning Team was divided into three data collection groups and spent twelve weeks surveying the community, analyzing data, and gathering information from a variety of sources related to each of the following areas of current and future Library system performance:

**Team One: (Internal) Current Library Success Metrics Data**

- A. Traffic, service usage, circulation, and other currently available data presented in 3-5 year trends as available.
- B. Other data determined by existing capacity also on a 3-5 year trend as available.
- C. Public Survey interpretation results (30 questions)
- D. ADA Compliance Issues

**Team Two: (External) Impact of a Digital Age & Harvard Demographic Profile**

- A. Population and other demographic data for the town of Harvard – past, present, and predictions. What is the make-up of the community? Is it likely to remain the same or to change and what impact will that have on the services the Library provides?
- B. Impact of digital age on Library services and operations – how will the digital age impact the services that public libraries provide and how are they adjusting to accommodate and leverage this new reality?
- C. Other data as determined by the group

**Team Three: Service Feedback Survey (16 areas as outlined by the Public Library Association)**

- A. Be an Informed Citizen – Local, National, and World Affairs
  - Connect to the Online World – Public Internet Access
  - Make Informed Decisions – Health, Wealth and Other Life Choices
  - Get Facts Fast – Ready Reference
  - Know your Community – Community Resources and Services

- Welcome to the United States – Services for New Immigrants
- B. Satisfy Curiosity – Lifelong Learning
- Make Career Choices – Job and Career Development
  - Discover Your Roots – Genealogy and Local History
  - Celebrate Diversity – Cultural Awareness
  - Build Successful Enterprises – Business and Nonprofit support
- C. Stimulate Imagination – Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure
- Create Young Readers – Early Literacy
  - Express Creativity – Create and Share Content
  - Succeed in School Homework
  - Learn to Read and Write – Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy

At the end of the data collection period, the team met to review the data results. The internal group reported on strengths and weaknesses, the external group on trends and implications, and the survey data was reviewed by the facilitator and the participants to identify trends or key findings. A summary of those findings follows in the next section.

## Data Collection Results Summary

With all of these data collected, the Strategic Planning Team convened for a full-day retreat in the Library's Volunteers Hall on Saturday, June, 2, 2012. During this session, the data teams and the survey group presented and discussed their findings. The purpose of these reports generally is to help the group identify longterm internal performance issues, to determine the most significant external trends and implications, and then to see where there is convergence between them. Among dozens that were identified, a few stood out as prominent.

### Internal Data

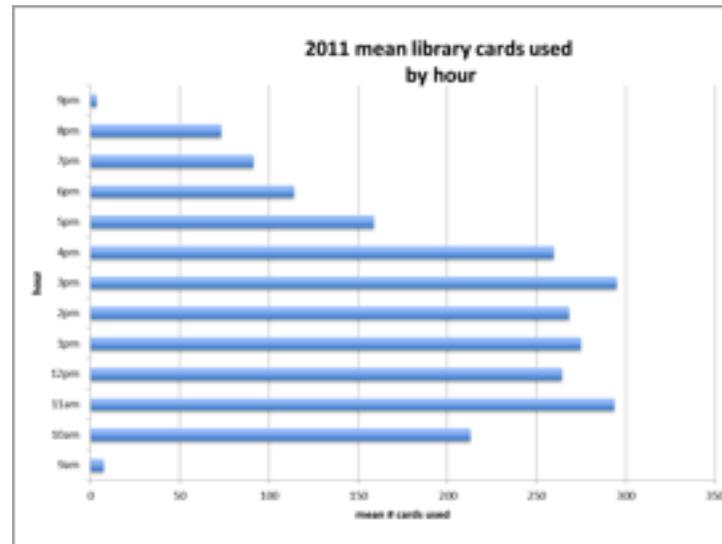
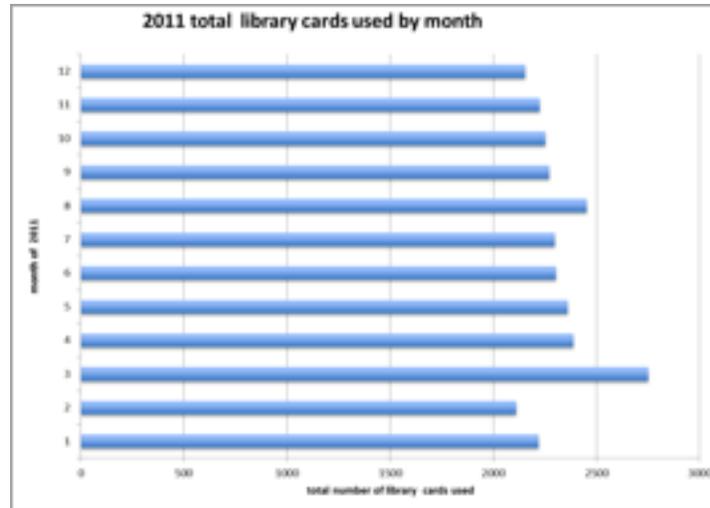
#### Strengths:

- Attendance remains high for both adult and children's programs, with an increase of 34% since 2007.
- Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., more than 200 library cards are used each day.
- Gate count has increased by 23% since 2007.
- Circulation has increased by 33% since 2007.
- E-book and downloadable audio circulation is increasing rapidly.
- Museum passes continue to be very popular, with a 23% growth in checkout since 2007.
- Inter-library loans have increased by 33% since 2007.
- Reference transactions directly with staff have numbered 9000+ for each of the past four years, with an 11% growth since 2007.

#### Weaknesses:

- The space for our young adult patrons is too small.
- Demographic changes in the afternoon hours (from adult to teen participation) appear to be connected.
- The number of computers is inadequate; many are slow and outdated.
- The supporting technology infrastructure is also inadequate.

## Data Snapshots:



## External Data

The external group reviewed data on the impact of technology and the effect of ready internet access to information on the traditional roles of libraries in the community. Through research and readings and in the Library's own demographic data, there is an obvious generational divide. Those raised on print focused on books, while those from the new digital generation focused on using electronic devices within the comfortable Harvard Library space. This gap will be explored more in the next section that reviews the survey data. Perhaps this entire shift is best summarized by this paragraph from the June 2011 Policy Brief #4 from the American Library Association. Written by Roger E. Levien, it sums up what all traditional, brick-and-mortar libraries are facing in this digital age.

**“American libraries will confront formidable challenges during the next few decades of the 21st century. Both the media and technologies they deploy will continue the digital transformation that has already eroded or swept away in years what had lasted for decades or centuries. Nor is the rate of change slowing. The new media and technologies are enabling a steady flow of genre- and usage-changing innovations, and institutions drawing on these disruptive changes are competing with the library in its most fundamental roles.”**

This shift in roles will surely pressure libraries to become more familiar with a wider range of electronic devices, and to offer the public access to these devices, as well as free access to a variety of both mobile and online services. Other hardware and/or access issues that may arise involve the integration of social media, cloud-based storage, electronic data bases, and other technology services. There will certainly be bandwidth and infrastructure capacity issues, and technology planning must be part of the central focus of future planning for the Library.

## Public Survey General Information and Overview

Initiated as part of an effort by the Trustees' Strategic Planning Team to frame major goals for Library improvement, the Strategic Planning Survey was open for response for nearly 10 weeks – with these results tallied based on responses given through Friday June 1, 2012. During this time period, 400 people responded to the survey. While this summary was based on the results through June 1, the survey is still available and all the raw data is viewable online by going to the following link:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=YT2nDIPbZxtnamoOaNls9nOVAFpIt5d2E6tTU2jy2DQ\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=YT2nDIPbZxtnamoOaNls9nOVAFpIt5d2E6tTU2jy2DQ_3d)

While all the numerical data is viewable, there is no access to the free-response, write-in answers. In the survey materials we promised participants that their responses would remain anonymous, and leaving them hidden from public view will keep them that way. Facilitator Jonathan Costa has summarized the main points made by residents in the open-response questions later in this report. In general, this survey sample size is large enough to provide broad contextual information as part of a well-rounded systemic data collection process but cannot be considered statistically reliable.

### **Significant community findings (reflecting trends among all respondents):**

- 60% of all respondents were 50 or older, and just about half had advanced graduate degrees.
- The three main content reasons that people come to Library are to find a specific resource, browse to find something of interest, or to attend a program or event in Volunteers Hall. (question 6)
- Books, public wifi, meeting rooms, and reference materials (including museum passes) are the most important resources for people in the Library. (question 10)
- Patrons really like and appreciate the Library staff; in overwhelming numbers they find them friendly, helpful, and effective. (questions 12-14)
- The vast majority of patrons (95%) find the Library to be a very or extremely pleasant place. (question 15)

- The perception of the convenience of hours tracks dramatically lower than other measures of Library effectiveness. While as an independent measure it is not bad, it pales in comparison to the other measures. (question 16)
- 75% of patrons are extremely satisfied with the Library. (question 17)
- In general, the major topics suggested by the Public Library Association standards (with the exception of creativity and life-long learning) do not align with community interest, with most respondents saying the Library is not their primary source of information on those topics. (questions 21-26)

### **Write-In Results Summary**

In reporting the open-ended write-in responses, there were two significant themes that emerge and are associated.

- Question 27 - There were numerous comments that laud the beautiful and peaceful atmosphere created by the Harvard Public Library. There were also significant positive comments about staff – especially the children’s program – the sense of community – and the notion of the Library as a “cultural gem.” But the predominant theme is the Library as an atmospheric oasis – a place of peace and beauty that just makes you feel good when you go there.
- Questions 28 & 29 – It should not surprise us that, given the tone of the “like most” question, the tone of the “like least” responses mainly focused on the disruption of the air of civility that everyone loves so much about the Library. The periodic influx of large number of students at specific times, the limited hours, and the intrusions of noise and cell phones were all frequently mentioned as threats to the long-term health of the Library.

- As suggestions, people mentioned a café, better supervision of students, more funding to restore hours, better technology to loan (Library's iPads for example). There were several folks that simply said, "Keep up the good work."

## Processing the Data

As the groups reported and shared their information, all of the members of the Strategic Planning Team were encouraged to listen, ask questions, and record their impressions. Three prompts were used to organize these observations: What did they find interesting? Surprising? Or concerning? Once all of the presentations were complete and the discussion finished, Planning Team members met in small groups to discuss what they found. These summaries were then shared with everyone in the group. From all this content, the team created a master list of trends or themes captured in the data:

1. Letting people know about what resources are available at the Library – visibility/web etc. – marketing and promoting – sophistication of sales
2. The hours issue
3. Thoughtfully managing the “after-school” issue
4. Balancing the demographics of our user base
5. Facilitating volunteer groups or group activities – leveraging community assets through the Library
6. How do we use technology effectively while maintaining our most important asset, the peaceful atmosphere? How do we transmit, support, teach technology and manage it with/to patrons?
7. Alignment of traditional library metrics with the success of our Library: How do we measure our own success? How will we know if what we are doing is working?

This master list was then vetted by the entire group. Clarifications and combinations were discussed and finally, based on the following criteria, Team Members advocated for the items they believed were most critical to the future of the Library:

- Long-term vs. short-term strategies and perspective – (favoring long-term interests over short)
- Systems and capacity requirements – (focus on systems thinking and change)
- Resources requirements and urgency of need – (focusing on those critical needs).

With those criteria, the Strategic Planning Team used a weighted voting procedure to prioritize the items and identify the most important areas for conversion into goals. The items in bold type below are the prioritized items; the voting totals follow each item.

1. **Letting people know about what resources are available at the Library – visibility/web etc. – marketing and promoting – sophistication of sales 18**
2. The hours issue 0
3. **Thoughtfully managing the “after-school” issue 21**
4. Balancing the demographics of our user base 0
5. Facilitating volunteer group or group activities – leveraging community assets as presented through the Library 6
6. **How do we use technology effectively while maintaining our most important asset, our peaceful atmosphere? How do we transmit, support, teach, technology and manage it with/for patrons? 22**
7. Alignment of Library traditional metrics with the success of our Library: How do we measure our own success? How will we know if what we are doing is working? 1

With this information set and priorities identified, the Strategic Planning Team set about revising the Library’s Mission and Beliefs and putting the priorities into a goal-planning format for implementation. In doing so, the Strategic Planning Team, on behalf of the Trustees, made a commitment to honoring the history and integrity of the institution while addressing the most pressing needs of a library within the Harvard community and its role in a digital information era.

# **Harvard Public Library Mission and Beliefs**

(Revised 6/2/2012)

**Through our programs, resources, volunteers, and staff, the Harvard Public Library enhances the quality of life in the community by encouraging personal and intellectual growth for people of all ages in a welcoming, comfortable environment.**

## **Library Values:**

- **Responsiveness to our patrons**
- **Free and open access to a wide range of resources**
- **Protection of intellectual freedom**
- **Cooperation with and support of the Harvard Public Schools**
- **Integration of new and traditional services**
- **Preservation of the history of our community**

## Harvard Public Library Strategic Goals

**Goal One: Create and implement a longterm, mission-driven, communications and information-sharing strategy that helps to promote and support the variety of assets and activities that make our Library unique.**

### **Indicators of Success:**

- a) Wider use of all Library resources
- b) Increased use of all Library resources
- c) Increased knowledge/awareness and participation in activities and events
- d) Increased number of patrons who want to hear/learn about Library services and resources
- e) Increased range of knowledge, visibility, and presence in the Harvard community and beyond
- f) Continued patron satisfaction

## Potential Goal One Strategies

Step #	Strategy	Action	Outcome	Who	When
1	Redesign and support HPL website and signage in a fashion that is reflective of the values of the library	Create team Develop requirements Hire designer	Better visibility and presence online	Trustees, Staff, and Director	2013-2014
2	Improve interior signage and maps	Create team Develop requirements Hire designer	Better visibility and presence in person	Trustees, Director and Staff	2013-2015
3	Continue to improve electronic communication with patrons	Create email/ electronic broadcast database , Expand use of social media	Easy to use, focused, electronic pathways to inform constituents	Director and Staff	2013-2015
4	Create ongoing community feedback systems	Create an in-house and online Suggestion Box	Better feedback about patron needs and interests	Trustees	2013-2018
5	Improve partnerships with community organizations and others	Involve town, government, and community organizations	Increase resource value of library to all segments of community.	Trustees and Staff	2013-2018

**Goal Two: Work with our community and staff to develop programming and space utilization options that allow for users of all ages to simultaneously enjoy the assets and activities that make our Library unique.**

**Indicators of Success:**

- a) Appropriate use of the facility and space
- b) Reduction in complaints from staff and patrons
- c) Increased afternoon adult patronage
- d) Safety, security, and liability concerns addressed
- e) Increased satisfaction among students and parents
- f) Minimized disruptions in normal service delivery

## Potential Goal Two Strategies

Step #	Strategy	Actions	Outcome	Who	When
1	Develop well-constructed process to solve the after-school problem through phased-in solutions over time, while ensuring that the vital nature of the Library is preserved	<p>Create a group including parents of students to work on the after-school environment</p> <p>Involve youth in the process for their perspective</p>	<p>Constituent buy-in for appropriate solutions that will help solve the problem.</p> <p>Appropriate use of the facility and space</p> <p>Community and Staff satisfaction with solutions</p>	Trustees, Staff, Parents and Teen Advisory Board	2013-2014
2	Report findings, build community support, and implement plans as designed	<p>Hire monitors</p> <p>Enforce student code of conduct</p> <p>Work with schools to create after-school space for athletes</p> <p>Work with town on teen center</p>	Improved safety and satisfaction of all patrons	<p>Director and Staff</p> <p>Parent volunteers and town boards</p>	2013-2016
3	Explore and provide professional development for staff related to serving youth in public libraries.	Purchase and implement YALSA program	Better after-school atmosphere	Trustees and Director	2013-2017

4	Explore staffing options and alignment	Consider creating YA librarian position	Improved service delivery for young adult patrons	Director	2013-2017
5	Improve space layout and use for all populations	Look to outside expertise and perspective on young adult space and management issues.	Improved satisfaction of patrons and staff	Trustees, Staff, and volunteers	2013-2016
6	Improve computer access for all patrons	Add more computers Vary locations Designate specific-use computers Enforce use rules	More effective deployment of computer resources	Trustees, Staff, and volunteers	2013-2016

**Goal Three: Create and implement strategies that recognize the role that digital information resources and devices play in our Library and the lives of our patrons while at the same time maintaining the most important qualities that draw people to our facility.**

**Indicators of Success:**

- a) Offerings are used at high rates and capacity
- b) Breadth of offerings increases over a defined period
- c) Support for a variety of technology uses among patrons
- d) High rates of satisfaction among patrons
- e) Alignment of strategies with mission and assets

## Potential Goal Three Strategies

Step #	Strategy	Action	Outcome	Who	When
1	Develop Library Technology Plan to guide next 5 years	Inventory current technology, implement update plan, evaluate emerging technologies to incorporate as appropriate	Better strategy, planning, and implementation of technology in the Library	Trustees, Staff, and Director	2013
2	Develop Technology Advisory Team	Recruit team members	Better strategy, planning, and implementation of technology in the Library	Trustees, Staff, and Director	2013
3	Encourage staff to explore and experience new and emerging technologies	Continue to support professional development opportunities for staff	Improved knowledge of information devices and resources; Improved services for patrons	Trustees, and Director	2013–2017
4	Create opportunities for patrons to have first-hand exposure to current and emerging technologies	Provide training sessions for patrons of all ages	Library serving as trusted guide to help patrons achieve technological literacy	Staff	2013–2017
5	Develop mobile applications	Explore available technical options	Improved convenience for patrons	Staff and advisory teams	2013–2017

