

Woods Memorial Library

Barre, MA



Long Range Plan

FY 18 to FY 23

The Trustees voted unanimously to approve and submit the Long Range Plan at their meeting on September 14, 2016.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The library's mission is to provide a welcoming community center to the Town of Barre, while serving as a resource for knowledge, information, education, and technology.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Town of Barre is primarily a residential community, with strong rural character. It is located 61 miles from Boston, and is geographically close to the center of the state. Barre is located in Worcester County. The total area of the town is 44.8 square miles.

According to the 2010 US Census, Barre's total population is 5,496 people. Currently Barre's population distribution is similar to that of Worcester County. However, Barre's population consists of 25.6% children under 18, which is slightly higher than Worcester County (23%) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole (21%). Children five and under make up 5.4% of the community, and persons 65 years plus make up 12.5% of the population distribution.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census data the median household income is \$68,361, which is slightly higher than the Worcester County's average and slightly lower than the State's average. There are 1,943 households in Barre. Among people ages 25 and older, 93.5% hold a high school diploma or higher, and 22.1% hold a Bachelor's or higher. The number of residents who have earned a Bachelor's degree or graduate degree is lower than Worcester County's 34.1%.

Barre is part of the Quabbin Regional School District, along with neighboring towns of Hardwick, New Braintree, Oakham and Hubbardston. Each town supports its own K-6 elementary school and shares the Middle/High School, which is housed in Barre. Students wishing to attend a vocational school travel outside the community. According to the Department of Education, Ruggles Lane Elementary school's enrollment is currently 398 students, Quabbin Middle School is 429 students and Quabbin High School is 706 students. Enrollment is much lower than the last five to ten years. In 2014 the school district expended \$13,452 per year to educate each student, which is below the state average of \$14,518 per student.

According to the elementary school's report card from the Department of Education, the student body is comprised of 35.9% low-income students, and 18.7% students with disabilities. The school's performance falls into the 33rd percentile of the entire State at meeting students' needs, which is below the desired minimum of the 50% the proficiency gap. Over 55% of students at the elementary school receive reduced lunch.

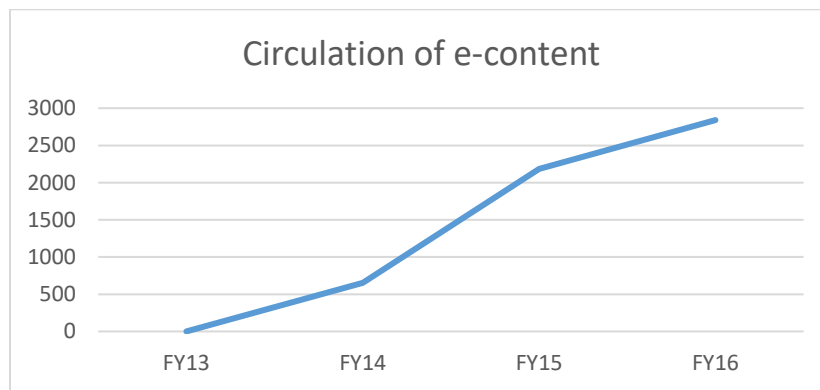
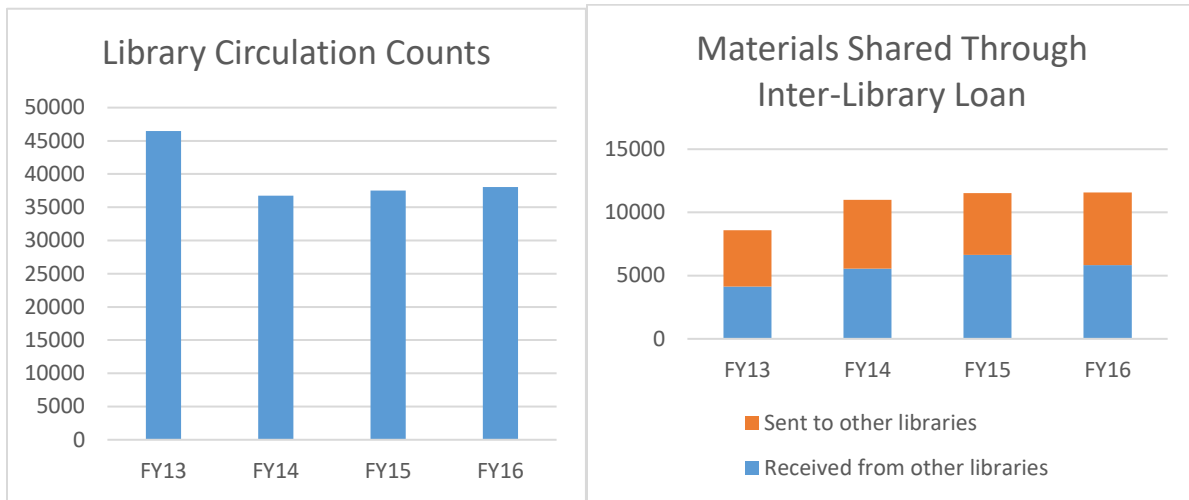
LIBRARY HISTORY

In 1857, Samuel Gates donated his collection of books to the Town of Barre, thus creating the community's first public library. In 1885, the Barre Library Association was incorporated to raise funds to build a suitable structure to house the growing collection, as temporary quarters shared with the post office were inadequate. Barre native Henry Woods came forward in 1886 to donate both the land and building for a town library. Designed by Mr. Wood's son Henry D. Woods, work began on the Woods Memorial Library in June 1886. The building was named to honor the donor's family. With construction complete, the library opened for business on Tuesday, August 30, 1887. The library also houses a small museum of historical significance, which is managed and maintained by the Barre Museum Association.

The building was renovated extensively in 1958, 1967, 1987, and in 2000; the latter project doubling the library's size. Since 2015, the Town of Barre and Library Association have worked to improve drainage that relieved major flooding issues; with more specific perimeter issues still needing to be addressed. The lower level of the library has been renovated to include new bookshelves, updated flooring in community spaces, and a handicapped accessible entranceway. In 2016 the building will be wired with fiber and the internet access speed will increase exponentially.

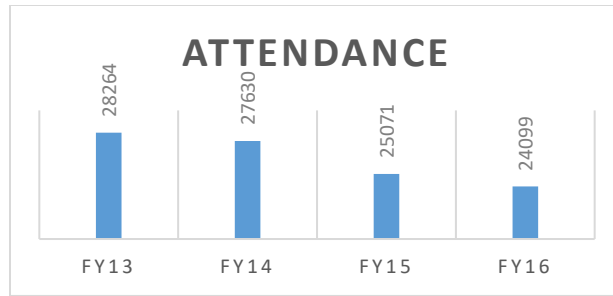
The library is governed by a six-member elected Board of Library Trustees and managed by a Director. The Trustees represent the town's interests in the library, which include management of the library's municipal budget appropriation, as well as establishing governing policies. The Barre Library Association (BLA) owns and maintains the building and grounds, and pays for some repairs, building inspections and insurance. The BLA is a private 501(c)(3) corporation comprised of donors and volunteers. The BLA's funds are raised by the organizations, through fundraising, private contributions and grants. Within the last four years the Town of Barre has contributed significantly to the general maintenance of the building and grounds, in partnership with the BLA.

LIBRARY TRENDS

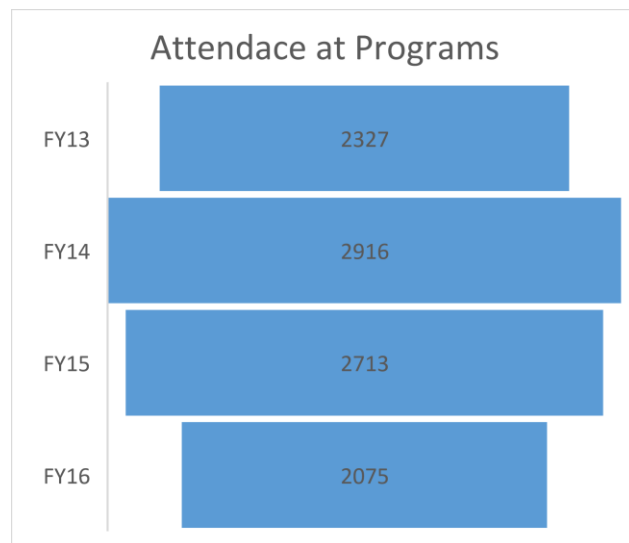
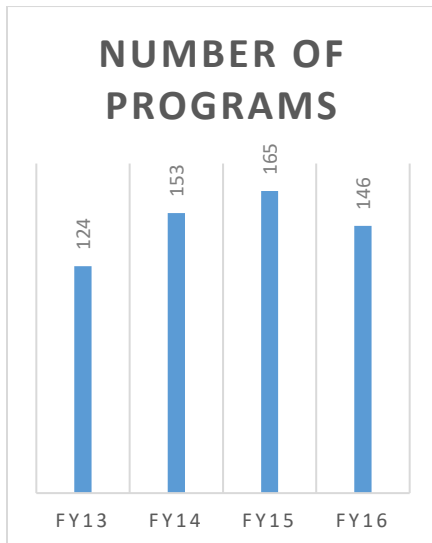


In 2013 there was a spike in attendance and circulation at the library, which dropped significantly in FY14. The children's room was closed for repair in FY14, which accounts for the significant drop. Beginning in FY14 circulation services have steadily been on the rise; including the use of inter-library loan and accessing e-content.

Since 2013 the library has been a Mininet member to C/W MARS. There has been a steady increase in inter-library loan use over the past four years. Patrons have shown satisfaction with the ability to borrow e-content, and access accounts online.



Library attendance has decreased over the last four fiscal years. Although fewer people physically visited the library, circulation of library materials is increasing. The convenience of using the library virtually has streamlined in-house visits for item pick up. The decrease in patron attendance, and increase in library circulation affirms that patrons are utilizing more virtual services. Other services like inter-library loan, ongoing programs, and free WiFi still attract visits from the community. WiFi usage is currently not tracked; when the library is closed it is still available, and many patrons can be found outside the building using services.



Program funding is not supported within the Town budget, and all programs are run in-house, donated, or grant funded. Staff and open hours were also cut drastically in FY09 and have remained at those levels, which greatly reduces the amount of staff time available to spend on programming. Current working hours for staff limit the amount of time members have to create, prepare, and implement programs.

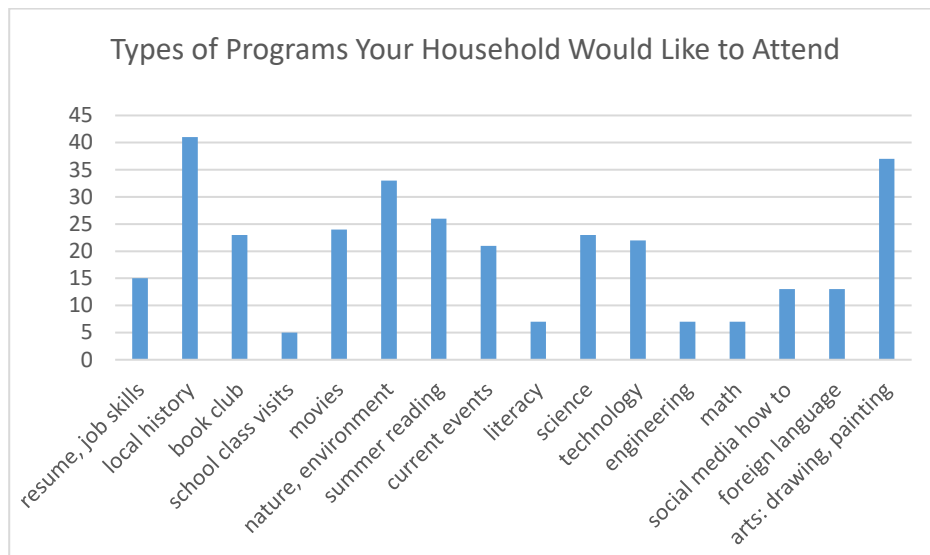
PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The director, working in conjunction with three members of the Board of Trustees, undertook the task of identifying community needs, and creating a Long Range Plan. A written survey was distributed to residents at Barre's annual Town Meeting in June 2016, and was collected the same night. Surveys were also available to patrons at the main desk of the library. A total of 135 completed surveys were collected from residents.

As part of the Library's 2016 LSTA grant, two customer service surveys were distributed to the Barre, Hubbardston, Oakham, and Petersham communities in December of 2015 and August of 2016. These surveys were reviewed by the planning group; the results and comments were taken into consideration as part of the planning process. The director also discussed long term projects and goals with staff members for inclusion.

The planning group used the data to determine the desired library service responses. The book *Strategic Planning for Results* by Sandra Nelson was referenced for planning and service response ideas. The Pew Research Center's September 9, 2016 article, *Libraries 2016: Trends in visiting public libraries have steadied, and many Americans have high expectations for what their local libraries should offer*, was also referenced to determine current issues within library culture to meet trending demands. The director then used all data to create the Long Range Plan to be approved by the Board of Library Trustees.

ASSESSMENT OF USER NEEDS



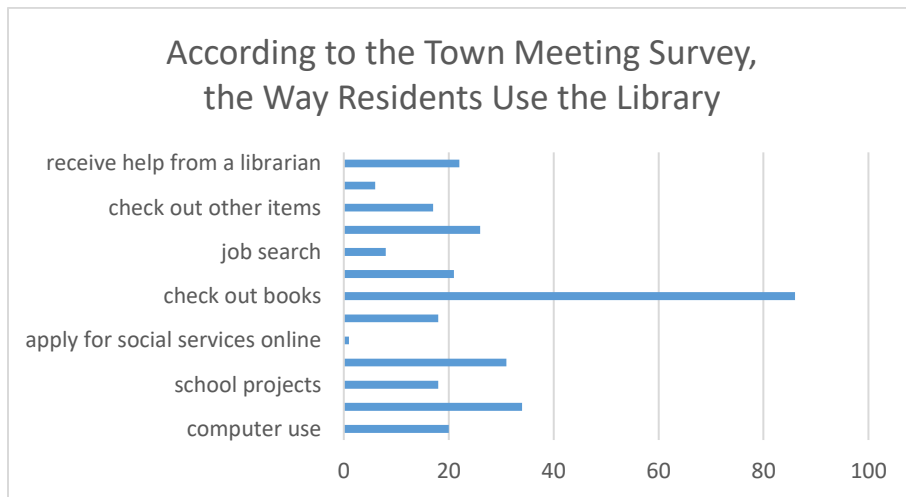
The majority of the community surveys assessed the library programs as being excellent or average. The library offers more children’s programming than teen and adult programming. Ongoing adult programming has low attendance when compared to the larger specialized programs. Overall the top five topics for desired programming at the library in order are: local history; the arts like drawing and painting; nature and environmental; summer reading; and movie screenings. Community partnerships with the library will be necessary to increase adult programming possibilities and add stimulating programs for this adult population. When asked which age groups the programs should target, the results were fairly even; a third wanted programming for adults and seniors, a third for teens and tweens, and a third for children under twelve.

The community was also surveyed about desired open hours. Overwhelmingly, the community asked for additional open hours. The top choices were weekday evening hours and additional Saturday hours. Some comments include, “2-5[pm] are useless [hours] to parents who aren't teachers;” and “I wish the library were open longer on Saturdays as well as Sunday during school year. In a town like Barre, having the library open gives parents and kids a place to be during winter when it is hard to travel. It gives kids a place to study and engage during weekends.” Others listed suggested hours like, “I would like to see more hours [on] Sat 10-3 or 9-3.” Patron attendance could increase if hours are increased.

Residents were asked if they were satisfied with the level of technology at the library. Over 67% said “yes” while 29% said “no,” and 6% had “no opinion.” In regards to “technology,” participants could have assumed the word was defined as access to computer hardware, WiFi, C/W MARS interface, and the downloading of e-content. Originally, the question was thought to ask more about in-house use of hardware, software and Internet connectivity. Even when overall circulation figures dropped from FY13 to FY14, the borrowing of e-content continued to be on the rise. One can conclude that patrons expect the library to offer emerging technology

that supports access to materials and relevant information. According to the Pew Research Center;

“Public libraries, many Americans say, should offer programs to teach people digital skills (80% think libraries should definitely do this) and help patrons learn how to use new creative technologies like 3-D printers (50%). At the same time, 57% of Americans say libraries should definitely offer more comfortable places for reading, working and relaxing.”



Residents use the library for a variety of services, beyond just checking out books. The use of the library space virtually and physically has potential to better serve other needs like programming, technology support, connectivity, a community meeting space, and more. A survey respondent stated, “I appreciate the bulletin board/local brochure rack area. Local libraries are a vital space for this kind of community building!”

As supported by attendance and circulation figures, the condition of the facility is important to the community. This was demonstrated when the children’s room was closed for a year for repairs in FY14. Programming attendance remains steady when compared to the number of programs offered and the interest level in said programming. Within the Customer Service Surveys, respondents said they first use the library to check out materials, second for children’s programming, and third for adult programming. Many of these respondents also shared that they frequent many of the libraries in the area to take advantage of diverse programming choices.

Within all surveys conducted, respondents added additional comments appreciating the staff members and their customer service work. A survey comment stated, “I love Barre Woods Memorial! You are a top notch library! A gem of Central Mass! A refuge for people who love to learn, who are curious.” Some services like customer service must continue to be a focus while changing or enhancing others to meet the needs of this community. Encouraging staff to participate in continuing education, and creating targeted classes for residents through library programming will strengthen our future client service experience.

SERVICE PRIORITIES

Goal: Serve as a Community Resource Center

Objectives	Actions	Timeframe for Activity	By Whom (optional)
To expand upon the library's potential to serve as a community resource center where residents can access all types of media, technology, and information both in-house or virtually.	Update library technological capabilities by adding new computers and other technologies for users to experiment within the library.	FY17-FY22	
	Update Library's Internet Use Policy, including WiFi usage.	FY17-FY18	Director and the Board of Trustees
	Increase WiFi capabilities to reach beyond the walls of the Library to the Barre Common.	FY17-FY18	
	Update the Library's website to include how-to videos to enhance use of the online catalog for all types of learners.	FY18-FY20	
	Use universally accessible principles to promote inclusivity and to maximize the potential of access to information. For example, make peripheral computer devices available.	FY18-FY22	
	Assess the library space and users' needs within the space to develop future plans for comfortable seating areas, meeting room needs, and Internet access points.	FY19	Director
Continue to expand community partnerships with cultural, civic, social groups, businesses, associations, and organizations.	Co-sponsor programs and informational meetings in the library and within the community. Provide information to the public about opportunities offered by these partners.	FY 18-FY22	Director and Youth Services Librarian

	Update Meeting Room Policy and advertise available meeting spaces to groups in town.	FY18	Director and the Board of Trustees
	Continue to work with other area libraries, non-profits, and museums to provide shared training and networking opportunities	FY18 -FY22	Director

Goal: Create Young Readers

Objectives	Actions	Timeframe for Activity	By Whom (optional)
To motivate and inspire children ages 0 to 12 to read, learn, and feel connected with their library.	Work to expand and strengthen partnerships with local educational institutions.	FY18 -FY22	Director and Youth Services Librarian
	Work with schools to provide relevant materials for student projects and research through collection development and inter-library loan.	FY18 -FY22	Director and Youth Services Librarian
	Encourage new youth patrons by facilitating elementary school field trips to the library for activities and instruction.	FY18 -FY22	Director and Youth Services Librarian
	Provide programming that meets the interests of children and families, including play opportunities.	FY18 -FY22	Director, Youth Services Librarian, and community partners.
To provide parents, caregivers, and service providers of young children with the tools necessary to encourage and foster young readers.	Host speakers at the library to discuss topics like early literacy and provide dual programs for children simultaneously so parents may attend alone.	FY18 -FY22	Director, Youth Services Librarian, and community partners.
	Provide readers' advisory lists for various age groups by subject by using the Novelist feature within the online catalog. Continue to teach families how to use this feature.	FY17-FY22	
	To use the children's space as a place to display informational posters and materials that support parents' roles in fostering their child's early reading skills, cognitive development skills and social emotional growth.	FY17-FY22	Director, Youth Services Librarian, and community partners.

Goal: Inspire Lifelong Learning

Objectives	Actions	Timeframe for Activity	By Whom (optional)
To motivate all age groups to continue to expand their horizons, while maintaining a strong connection with their library community.	Increase programming and support for patrons, including readers' advisory services, academic support, and, as needed, training using online resources.	FY16-FY17	
	Encourage staff to take continuing education courses or participate in relevant professional development opportunities.	FY18 -FY22	Director and the Board of Trustees
	Provide basic, intermediate, and advanced classes on using the Internet, experimenting with emerging technology, and searching proprietary databases.	FY18 -FY22	Director and other staff.
	Support cognitive development and social-emotional well-being for ages birth to 5 years old with library materials and programs for children and caregivers.	FY18 -FY22	
	Provide as needed one-on-one instruction to patrons when using library hardware and software to assist with information finding and/or empower patrons' continued usage.	FY18 -FY22	
To maximize opportunities to share a wide variety of art, nature, history, and culture with patrons.	Co-sponsor programs with other local institutions covering topics such as energy conservation, cooking/baking, local history, crafting/workmanship, the arts, etc.	FY18 -FY22	
	Collaborate with local artists to share their pieces (including sculpture) in the designated art area.	FY18 -FY22	
	Create collections of material specific to local historic people and places, and highlight the collections with relevant programs and community partnerships.	FY18 -FY22	

Goal: Stimulate Imagination

Objectives	Actions	Timeframe for Activity	By Whom (optional)
To provide materials and programs that excite patrons' imaginations and provide pleasurable reading, viewing and listening experiences.	To evaluate the collections and provide materials that meet popular demand; and create space for said collections with continued maintenance and weeding practices.	FY 17-22	Director
	Create monthly displays that entice library users to experience materials they may not otherwise choose.	FY17-18	Staff
	Continue to provide access to e-content for online users through C/W MARS	FY17-18	Director and the Board of Trustees