



BEVERLY PUBLIC LIBRARY

LONG RANGE PLAN

Mission Statement

The Beverly Public Library provides services, programs and materials that enrich people's lives, foster a love of reading and provide access to information. These services may be provided from our own resources, by networking with other libraries or by providing gateway access to the world of information resources beyond our walls. The Library advocates for access to the world of ideas and information unrestricted by fees, censorship, language or barriers to the disabled.

Library History

The Beverly Public Library was established in 1855, three years after the Massachusetts Legislature became the first in the nation to authorize cities and towns to expend tax funds to support free public libraries. The Library was the successor to the Social Library, a private subscription Library which traced its founding to a collection of books seized by Beverly privateers from a British merchantman during the Revolutionary War. Elizabeth P. Sohier, a trustee of the Beverly Public Library, led the fight to establish the first state library agency in the country, and served as the State Library Commission's first secretary.

The Library first operated from rooms in City Hall. In 1913, the Library moved to its current building on Essex Street. The building was designed by architect Cass Gilbert in the Beaux Arts style. Gilbert was also the architect of the Minnesota State Capitol, the Woolworth Building in New York City and the United States Supreme Court. The Library was renovated and enlarged in 1993.

The Beverly Farms Branch was established in 1886 and moved into its current building in 1916. In 2004 it was renovated and enlarged with funding from the City, private donations and fundraising.

Bookmobile service was established in the 1950's. The current Bookmobile was purchased in 1987. It is on the road four days a week, making deliveries to six assisted living centers, all but one of Beverly's elementary schools, and many of the City's outlying neighborhoods.

In 1981, the Beverly Public Library joined four other communities in establishing the first shared library computer system in Massachusetts.

Today the Library loans over 337,000 items annually, to almost 27,000 regular borrowers. The Main Library collection consists of over 166,000 books, magazines, audiobooks, music CD's, movies and admission passes to Boston area museums.

The Library's catalogue and most of its databases are available through the Internet to homes, businesses and schools throughout the City. Patrons may request items from other libraries either directly, through the NOBLENET combined catalog, or by making a request to the Reference Desk. Patrons also have access to an increasing collection of downloadable materials, such as e-audiobooks, directly from home. The Library further enriches the life of the Beverly community with its art gallery, lectures, concerts, story hours, book discussion groups, and exhibits.

Methodology

This Five Year Plan was prepared by the staff of the Beverly Public Library and the Long Range Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Committee prepared a community survey as part of the planning process. The survey of the community was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, several community leaders, such as City Council members and school officials were interviewed concerning the role of the library, any changes they would like to see and how they viewed its role in the future. Based in part on those interviews and in part on reviewing other library surveys, including past Beverly Library surveys, the committee created a survey. This survey was then mailed to a random sample of 1 out of 20 households in the City of Beverly. Copies of the questionnaire were also made available in the Main Library, the Beverly Farms Branch Library, on the Bookmobile and on our website.

All quantifiable survey results were analyzed using a statistical program. Comments were entered into a word file and looked at separately. The Long Range Planning Committee reviewed the results and a draft plan was prepared by the Library Director based on those discussions.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL: To continue to establish and maintain a collection of books and materials, in a variety of formats, to meet the informational and recreational needs of the community.

Although the printed book continues to be the primary media for recreational reading, society is rapidly adapting to digital mediums, such as the Internet, for information needs. While the open Internet is a wonderful resource, the Library needs to be in the forefront in providing the public with reliable, authenticated sources of information. The Library also needs to be aware of, and adapt their collection development policy to include new technologies and methods of delivering recreational and informational content.

Objective: Continue to foster staff development through attendance at NOBLE tech expos, collection development meetings and other educational meetings.

Objective: Encourage staff to attend local Library Association meetings.

Objective: Seek funding for staff development and training.

Objective: Continue to work with NOBLE's planned weeding schedule and Collection Assessment reports in addition to local weeding and collection development initiatives.

Objective: Explore cooperative contracts with vendors for new products, such as downloadable video, audio and language programs.

Objective: Continue to evaluate reference and informational needs and to explore how this content is best provided to and used by patrons.

Objective: Maintain a program of book repair and re-institute a program of rebinding materials that are vital to the collection and cannot be replaced.

GOAL: To keep abreast of changing technology in the provision of materials, information and patron access.

Rapid changes in technology continue to drive patron expectations. The Library needs to be aware of how such changes impact library services in the provision of materials in different formats, in providing access to information and library materials, and in communicating with the residents of the community.

Objective: Continue to support and expand electronic remote accessing of library resources.

Objective: Explore new ways of providing patrons with information about library services, such as pod casts.

Objective: Continue to explore new ways of providing patrons with library services, such as IM reference.

Objective: Work with Noble, the City's Information Systems Department, and Beverly's School department to disburse the Library's information resources to schools, homes and businesses and the rest of City Government.

GOAL: To make Library service accessible to all members of the community

The Library bears the responsibility of realizing that not all residents are served equally by providing access to materials in a set location. Physical disabilities, transportation

needs, language or literacy abilities can impose barriers on either getting to the library or on accessing materials at the facility. The Beverly Public Library has long been cognizant of some of these barriers, and bookmobile service has been in existence since 1959.

The bookmobile serves six assisted living centers, the City's senior center, several day-cares, all but one of the elementary schools, and neighborhoods that have been identified as needing service, either because of geography or special needs. Thus, the bookmobile provides access to materials to citizens whose access might otherwise be impaired by geography, age, or physical constraints. Unfortunately, the library's bookmobile is 20 years old and is becoming increasingly hard to keep in good repair.

The Library also deals with access issues regarding materials and services at the library buildings. Internet stations are not currently equipped with more than basic adaptations for those with sight or hearing impairments. In addition, one of the main components of library service, our heavy schedule of library programming, is not exportable beyond our doors to those who find it difficult to get to the library.

Objective: To research, buy and install software, signage and/or other technology to aid access to computers, telephones, and other library equipment and materials for those with visual or auditory impairments.

Objective: To raise funds for, and purchase, a new Bookmobile for the Library.

Objective: Explore ways of exporting library programming through direct broadcast, web casts or other mediums.

GOAL: To be aware of, and responsive to community needs.

A library functions in a community, not just as a resource, but as the focal point for responding to a community's literacy and informational needs. As such, it is our duty to actively seek information on changing needs or social trends within our community.

Objective: To maintain awareness of literacy needs, and provide space and support for literacy programs.

Objective: To track changes in demographics, especially of populations whose native language is not English, in order to provide access to materials that meet the needs of all members of the community.

Objective: Continue to maintain a close relationship with the Beverly community schools, both public and private.

Objective: Seek interaction with other community groups, such as business and social groups, to make sure their needs are being met.

Objective: To seek input from residents, both library users and non-users, on a regular basis.

GOAL: To maintain an environment that is safe and welcoming for Library patrons and staff.

Libraries today are more than just a warehouse for books, and facility needs have changed as a result. The concept of “Library as Commons” is increasingly appropriate for the Beverly Public Library. Our six meeting rooms (four at the Main facility, two at the Farms), are in great demand by community groups, as well as providing venues for library programs. Internet stations are a constant hub of activity. After school hours finds us a center for youth social activity. Wireless access provides community members, including businesspeople and students, a place to work or study. Our reading rooms provide comfortable environs in which to read.

Providing such facilities brings with it the responsibility to maintain it for both safety and comfort, and to adapt it as different needs arise.

Objective: To continue to work toward establishing a repair budget with sufficient funds to maintain building and facilities, including service contracts for preventative maintenance.

Objective: To explore ways of rearranging areas of the Library to better meet the competing needs for their use.

Objective: To emphasize customer service throughout the Library, both at traditional service desks and by expanding library staffing into currently understaffed areas.

Objective: To increase signage and other finding aids for patrons.

Objective: To maintain communication with the Mayor and the City Government regarding the Library’s long and short term capital needs.

Objective: Work with both the Custodial Staff and the Department of Public Services to prepare a maintenance schedule for buildings and equipment

Objective: Work with both the Custodial Staff and the Department of Public Services to develop an adequate grounds maintenance program.

Objective: Seek annual funding for furniture and equipment.

GOAL: To provide programs that enrich the cultural and educational life of the community.

The Beverly Public Library was envisioned as a community cultural center during the planning process for the renovated library building. The Library has since sponsored an aggressive schedule of programs and made the building available to other community agencies to sponsor their own programs. Activities sponsored by the Library include author lectures, genealogy workshops, poetry readings, Monday Morning lecture series, music concerts, art contests and poetry contests for teenagers, gallery exhibits, movies, story tellers and a venue for First Night Beverly performances. These programs have been received very well by the community and the Library should continue to look for ways to expand on these activities. Unfortunately, programming on a limited to non-existent budget is difficult and time-consuming and places an enormous burden on staff members already busy with other library duties.

The Library provides most if not all of the free space in the community for arts activities. Many individuals and groups without a large budget depend on the Library space to present their work to the community. The proximity of the Library to Montserrat College of Art (across the street), the Common with its concerts, and the galleries on Cabot Street make the Library a prime location for arts programs.

Objective: To seek City funding for library programming needs.

Objective: To continue to work with the Friends of the Library to provide additional funds for programming needs.

Objective: To seek alternative methods for obtaining programming funds, such as grants and community involvement.

Objective: To continue to provide an enriching mix of library programs.

Objective: To work towards establishing a staff position responsible for booking, publicizing and managing library events.

GOAL: To provide community awareness of Library services

Library materials and services are worthless if people are unaware they exist. Responses to the survey which was conducted in conjunction with this Long Range Planning process indicate that many patrons are unaware of even some of the basic library services we provide, such as a Summer Reading program for children or being able to renew books online. In addition, there are many residents who are not users of the Library who might become patrons if they were made aware of the many materials, programs and services the Library provides. To this end, the Library needs to move beyond traditional methods of publicizing their services and programs and enter into a complete marketing program.

Objective: Establish and use a Library brand.

Objective: Revise and maintain the Library's website to both provide easy access to library materials and services and to function as a marketing tool for the Library.

Objective: Explore ways, both traditional and cutting edge, to “get the word out” about current and future library materials, services and programs.

Objective: Continue to build and maintain relationships with local news reporters to get coverage of library events and needs.

Objective: Improve community awareness of both the Bookmobile and the Library’s home delivery service so that residents who might benefit by these services can avail themselves of them.

Objective: Promote specific segments of the collection, such as large print books, downloadable audiobooks or access to foreign language materials, so that borrowers with specific needs are aware of the Library’s offerings.

GOAL: To work toward establishing greater financial stability for the Library.

It has become evident, both through the Beverly Public Library’s experience, and through that of surrounding communities, that relying on public funds for the Library budget can be problematic. In the current economic climate, many cities strapped by rising healthcare and education costs are being forced to cut back on services that are considered nonessential, such as libraries. Even short-term fluctuations can have an enormous impact on library services, resulting in needed maintenance or equipment expenditures being postponed or eliminated until crises demand them, or cutbacks in materials budgets result in collection gaps that never get filled even when budgets increase. Current community studies do not anticipate this trend in the gap between revenues and current municipal services to be alleviated in the near future. As a result, it behooves libraries to explore additional revenue streams in order to assure their being able to maintain services to the public.

Objective: To educate ourselves on, and explore the possibility of establishing a Foundation.

Objective: Promote long-term gift giving to the Library, such as through wills and trusts.

Objective: Work with the City on managing the Library’s current trust funds.

Objective: Educate the community and City leaders as to the need for additional funding.

Objective: Work with the Friends of the Library to increase fund raising.