

Strategic Plan

2023 - 2025



C.H.

BOOTH

LIBRARY



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www.chboothlibrary.org

Introduction



In 2020, to ensure that the Cyrenius H. Booth Library continues to be responsive to the needs and requests of the community, the Board of Trustees and library staff embarked on a strategic planning process. A Long-Range Planning Committee reviewed the earlier strategic plan, assessed library accomplishments, prepared a community survey, engaged focus groups, and set new goals and objectives for the future.

The Cyrenius H. Booth Library was the result of a posthumous gift of Newtown's benefactor, Mary Elizabeth Hawley. The library opened on December 17, 1932, with a capacity for 25,000 volumes. It was one of the most modern libraries of its time, containing features that are lacking from libraries even today. Miss Hawley, in addition to donating money for the construction of the building, left a quarter of a million-dollar trust to generate operating revenues from the interest it earned. This trust provided the funding for the library until the early 1980s, when taxpayer support began. In the summer of 1996, the library began construction of an addition to the rear of the original building that doubled the available floor space. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new addition took place January 11, 1998.

Today, the library staff continues to welcome Newtown's citizens through the entrance doors and online with a wide range of services and resources. The library serves its users by offering a diverse set of programs and resources. These include eBook downloads, assistance in the use of an extensive genealogy collection, space for entrepreneurs to network with one another and grow their businesses, and early literacy learning through song and movement. Visitors to the library can learn how to use a 3D printer, study quietly using WiFi, catch up with a friend over a cup of coffee, and find an extensive collection of the latest best sellers and favorite classics. The library's goal has been and always will be to provide the services our community needs and to be a place where all are welcome.

Planning Process



The development of this Strategic Plan involved over 600 members of the Newtown community who participated through completing a comprehensive survey, provided their views through focus groups, and used the many opportunities the library provides to enable analysis of usage data that informed our planning. Below is a brief description of the process.

- A Long-Range Planning Committee, met over the past three years to review the initial Strategic Plan with emphasis on goals, objectives, and outcomes to design an approach for updating the plan.
- A community survey designed by the LRP committee, available via the internet and printed copies (keyed in by library staff), yielded 495 completed responses.
- An outside consultant, Robert Serow, conducted the focus groups based on questions and topics linked to survey results.
- Robert Serow compiled the information gathered from the focus groups, staff, Board of Trustees, Friends of the Newtown Library, and community and business members.
- The Long-Range Planning Committee reviewed all information and produced a revised set of goals and objectives.
- The Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 was reviewed and edited by the Long-Range Planning Committee and submitted to the Board of Trustees for review, comment, discussion, and edits.
- The definitive version sent to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- The Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 approved by the Board of Trustees on April 11, 2023.

Our Community



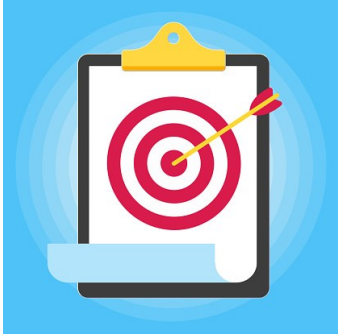
Open-ended comments from the survey and conversations with focus groups suggested that Newtown is unique. Newtown is a place that serves the needs of those who live here. Our schools are among Connecticut's best, the government is responsive to the community, efforts to make Newtown livable for its increasing number of senior residents are ongoing, and many see the Cyrenius H. Booth Library as a benefit to all.

"I would ideally like to live in a community that would enable me to learn and exchange ideas on a variety of topics with a variety of people, from all walks of life who are culturally, financially, and ethnically diverse." (55 year old)

"You want to live in a community that is great for you now, but even better for your children and grandchildren." (33 year old)

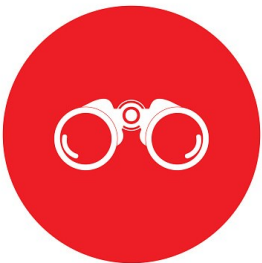
"I have children and want them to be a part of a place with a strong sense of community where they feel comfortable to grow and learn and play, and thoughtful innovation will help our town meet our evolving and growing needs in new and exciting ways and encourage entrepreneurship. (34 year old)

Our Mission



The Cyrenius H. Booth Library's mission is to promote the joy of lifelong learning, stimulate curiosity, support the exchange of ideas and provide a welcoming gathering place for our community.

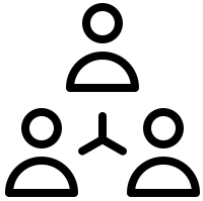
Our Vision



We want a community where we collaborate freely and engage one another to enrich, attract, and grow human capital and business interests, but we face a widening socio-economic divide, a resistance to change, and increasing separation from one another. If we want to reach our aspirations, we need to create a community hub with greater interaction that offers opportunities for respectful and constructive engagement.

Aspirations for the Library

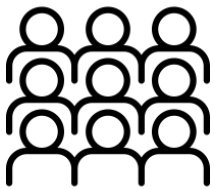
In focus groups and interviews, residents were asked to imagine the most important achievement of the Cyrenius H. Booth Library at the end of five years. Based on their responses, five main themes emerged.



Library as connector: The future library is envisioned as a place to connect groups and ideas that are currently seen as disconnected – young and old, past (genealogy and Newtown’s rich history) with future, people, and resources, and as one focus group participant so eloquently put it, a place to connect “kindred spirits.”



Library as a place to learn in community: There is excitement about the idea of the library as a place for lifelong learning, not only as a physical setting, but as a place to learn in community with one another, bringing people together. Desires include more Makerspace functions (audio, video, music, woodworking), training on new technology, and compelling programming.



Library as convener: Throughout the process, the growing influence of social media and the internet on “uncivil” discourse and the growing divides between groups in town were mentioned frequently. The library as an institution has historically played a role in bringing people together in a neutral setting and act as a convener of different groups and organizations for conversation and collaboration.



Library as partner: The library is seen as an ideal partner for the school system, the Senior Center, and Continuing Education.



Library as community hub: The lack of a natural center of Newtown gave participants an opportunity to imagine the library as a central gathering place. One focus group participant said that she hoped the library would become the place where people say, “I need something, let me try the library.” The library can serve as the go-to place, both physically and virtually, to connect the community to one another.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. The library will strengthen its role as a vital community service and partner.

- Increase marketing and communications of its services and offerings.
 - ◆ Maintain record of all outreach efforts with examples
 - ◆ Data on library use linked to promotional efforts

- Develop/use innovative marketing strategies to increase visits, new users, and use of library services and offerings.
 - ◆ Maintain numbers of library visits, users, and new members
 - ◆ Report results of occasional surveys to determine public knowledge of services and offerings

- Continue a focus on being inclusive of all members of our community.
 - ◆ Track use of outreach services provided to the community. Maintain numbers of library visits, users, new members (e.g., patio delivery, pop-up book wagons, shut-in delivery)

- Increase access to and use of library resources by local businesses and non-profit organizations.
 - ◆ Survey local businesses and non-profit organizations

- Increase access to and use of library resources
 - ◆ Track use of alternate ways to access library materials and resources
 - ◆ Provide data on materials purchased in response to user requests
- Regularly review the need for modifications to physical space to enhance the library's value to users
 - ◆ Yearly report on space changes

Goal 2. Increase available resources and capacities to best meet the library's mission and the goals of this plan.

- Make our unique collections, experts, and services available when, where, and how users need them. Make changes based on usage.
 - ◆ Track and analyze the use of library resources
 - ◆ Track and analyze the use of special collections when possible (e.g. genealogy, business)

Goal 3. Strengthen and create new learning support and opportunities for students K-12 and their families, during, and after school hours.

- Provide hands-on educational opportunities.
 - ◆ Track and analyze number of programs, program attendance, and program goals
 - ◆ Expand partnerships with preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools.
 - ◆ Identify successful collaborations
- Increase collections and offerings for early literacy (ages birth-grade 2).
 - ◆ Monthly reports on acquisitions, programs, and attendance

- ◆ Review data yearly to assess program effectiveness
- Increase collections and offerings for children (grades 3-5) and teens (grades 6-12).
- ◆ Monthly reports on acquisitions, programs and attendance
- ◆ Review data yearly to assess program effectiveness
- Expand offerings for children with special needs.
- ◆ Monthly reports on acquisitions, programs, and attendance

Goal 4. Identify, support, strengthen, and create learning opportunities for continuous professional development for staff.

- Provide library staff with a challenging work environment and opportunities to achieve the full extent of their potential
- ◆ Develop and implement a brief staff survey
- Improve channels for staff communication.
- ◆ Yearly staff survey for feedback on achievement
- Recognition of staff accomplishments
- ◆ Public acknowledgement via library website, newspapers, etc.

Goal 5. Embed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into the culture and climate of the organization.

- Provide professional development that keeps staff current on topics related to DEI.
- ◆ Survey staff to assess DEI professional development

- ◆ Survey staff and patrons to assess the organization's current DEI climate
- Invest in and offer programs pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the organization and community, including staff, collections, programs, and services.
- ◆ Provide yearly data on collections, programs and services that reflect DEI
- ◆ Provide data on engagement and attendance after each program
- Develop a plan for collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and applying data to monitor and achieve organizational DEI goals and objectives
- ◆ Provide yearly data to show progress toward achievement of DEI objectives

Goal 6. Increase donations and fund-raising amounts.

- Break down the overall fundraising goal into specific categories.
- ◆ Record funds raised by category: Annual Appeal, specific events e.g. Turkey Trot
- ◆ Record funds raised by source
- Identify giving levels and assign labels.
- ◆ Record funds by giving levels and determine year-over-year amounts
- Communicate fundraising goals to supporters.
- ◆ Compare amounts raised for specific goals to previous amounts

- Demonstrate/publicize Board of Trustees and staff commitment to donating.
- ◆ Maintain comprehensive records of past fundraising.
- ◆ Sort records by amounts, sources, category to inform future efforts

- Maintain records on Trustees and staff support of fundraising in Annual Appeal and Annual Report.
- ◆ Percentages of Trustees and staff support of fundraising

Goal 7. Initiate the process to have the C.H. Booth Library become an accredited museum.

- Follow the process outlined in the STEPS manual.
- ◆ Report on the completion of each process

- Conduct fundraising to support the STEPS process.
- ◆ Report on the grants submitted
- ◆ Report on funding received

- Engage the community in the goals of the museum.
- ◆ Maintain a record of events in support of the museum
- ◆ Maintain a record of attendance at events
- ◆ Report results of feedback from attendees

Planning Committee Members

The library board is committed to its charge to provide oversight and direction for the library. The board's guiding principle is to ensure that the library continues to be an important academic, cultural, and social force in the Newtown community.

C.H. Booth Library Board of Trustees: Long Range Planning Committee:

Rose Marie Zaharek, President
A. Nicole Campbell, Treasurer
Elizabeth Litt, Secretary
Elaine Corbo, Trustee
Amy Dent, Trustee
Dana Flynn, Trustee
Ruchin Kansal, Trustee
Nicole Moeller, Trustee
Donna Rahtelli, Trustee
Cara Reilly, Trustee
Anne Rothstein, Trustee
David Schill, Trustee
Don Studley, Trustee
Katie Smith, Trustee

Trustees and Staff
Greg Branecky, ex-officio
Michelle Brown, ex-officio
Amy Dent
Christine Freedman
Tom Long, ex-officio
Anne Rothstein
Rose Marie Zaharek, President
Douglas Lord, Library Director
Jennifer Nash, Assistant Director

Thank you to those community members who attended focus groups and contributed to our discussions and deliberations.

Special gratitude to Robert Serow, who helped guide us through the process.