

2016-2021

Reading Public Library Strategic Plan



Adopted by the Reading Public Library
Board of Trustees
December 14, 2015

Introduction

In the waning days of 2015, the Reading Public Library is preparing to return to its home at 64 Middlesex Avenue. The renovation of the 1894 Highland School building is due for completion next summer after twenty months of construction. This latest step in the long history of Reading's Highland School will mark its transformation from a rambling 19th century school into a modern, fully equipped library that will serve Reading for many years to come.

The “NEW” Reading Public Library is brimming with potential for lifelong education, exploration, enlightenment, creativity, and enjoyment for everyone in Reading. It can become the center for cultural life and civic engagement, providing opportunities for building community and connection locally and virtually as new technologies enable us to network, converse across boundaries, and join communities of interest that are both local and global. This is the moment for a new Plan of Service that helps us fulfill the potential and respond to community expectations with customized services that reflect emerging national trends and local priorities.

As the Highland School building has been reinvented and transformed, the Reading Public Library is also reinventing itself. We, like libraries across the country, are re-envisioning our future to meet the challenges presented by a new world of knowledge and creativity that changes constantly and “requires individuals to acquire a range of skills and continuously adapt those skills to changing circumstances.”¹ While we explore and develop new educational avenues for Reading residents utilizing new technologies, introducing new digital learning products and online services, and creating spaces and providing tools for group learning and collaboration, we will continue to strive to be the place in Reading for individuals to access a broad variety of resources to discover – and create – new knowledge. We are partners with the Reading Public Schools in striving to leverage and maximize resources in supporting children's education. Reading residents who responded to the comprehensive library survey conducted in September 2015 align with national trends in emphasizing their interest in a strong education role for their public library. According to a 2015 national poll: “*Large majorities of Americans see libraries as part of the educational ecosystem and as resources for promoting digital and information literacy Libraries should address the educational needs of their communities at many levels:*

- *85% of Americans say that libraries should “definitely” coordinate with schools in providing resources for children.*
- *85% also say that libraries should “definitely” offer free literacy programs to help kids prepare for school.*
- *78% believe that libraries are effective at promoting literacy and love of reading.*
- *65% maintain that libraries contribute to helping people decide what information they can trust.*²

Collaborations and partnerships with Town departments, local organizations, individuals, and groups strengthen our ability to provide local customized services and reach as many people in Reading as possible, particularly people who might be isolated or underserved. We exist and thrive

¹ Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, Washington DC: The Aspen Institute, October 2014

² John Horrigan, *Libraries at the Crossroads*, Pew Research Center Report, September 15, 2015

in a networked environment that libraries across Massachusetts have built from the ground up, freely sharing 14.3 million books across the Commonwealth in 2014.³ Local resources and broader network connections provide Reading residents free access to eBooks and valuable current databases. Reading Public Library's membership in the Digital Commonwealth allows us to contribute to the Digital Public Library of America, a vast archive that ensures public access to our digital heritage. *“Access to digital networks and digital literacy skills are essential for full participation in modern society. Economic, educational, civic and social opportunities are tied to a whole new set of knowledge and skills that barely existed a generation ago, and people without these skills or access to this information abundance are quickly left behind.”*⁴

Any success in meeting 21st century challenges that the Reading Public Library enjoys is built upon a foundation of trust and commitment from the people of Reading, through your strong support for library services and your gift to the future that is the new library building. The staff of the library and I gratefully acknowledge the dedication and perseverance of the Library Board of Trustees who committed themselves to seeing the building project succeed, and whose continuous support and encouragement strengthen us and inspire our service. Finally, the 1200 people who responded to the recently conducted library survey “express almost universal affection for the Library staff, whom they regard as the Library’s most important asset.”⁵ I can only add my deepest respect for their professionalism and commitment to excellence, and my warmest affection, admiration, and appreciation for this wonderful group of colleagues and friends!

Ruth Urell, Director

December 2015

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Board of Library Commissioners, FY2014 Legislative Agenda

⁴ Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, Washington DC: The Aspen Institute, October 2014

⁵ Alan Kirk Gray & Stephanie Anderson, Planning Consultants, *Reading Public Library: Windows of Opportunity for Growth and Commitment Plan for Service 2016-2021*.

Planning Process

April 2015	Town Meeting approved funding for a new long range planning process.
May 2015	The library issued an RFP for Planning services and received six proposals
June 2015	Trustees and library administration reviewed proposals independently and unanimously selected two semi-finalists. After reference checks and follow-up interviews, the library retained Consultants Alan Kirk Gray, Director of Darien Library, CT, and Stephanie Anderson, Assistant Director for Public Services, to conduct its planning process and produce a report
July 2015	Consultants Gray & Anderson developed a work plan on site in consultation with library administration and Trustees. They met with groups of library staff members, Town Manager, Trustees, a Selectman, Assistant Town Manager for Community Services, Superintendent of Schools, and several individual members of the community representing various constituencies during two days of meetings and interviews.
August 2015	Consultants developed a community wide survey and held a focused planning session with four Trustees to hone and test survey ideas
September 2015	Library began promoting and distributing survey electronically. Paper copies were available at the library, at the library table at the Fall Street Faire and links to the online version were promoted for three weeks. 1200 usable surveys were received. Public were invited to participate in four focus group sessions to take place at various times in October.
October 2015	Consultants Gray & Anderson conducted four focus group sessions throughout the month. One session was held at the High School Media Center and limited to teens only. All of the sessions were conducted without library staff or Trustee presence to encourage free flow of ideas and feedback. A total of sixty-one people participated in focus groups.
November 2015	Consultants Gray & Anderson presented their preliminary findings and survey results at a meeting at the Pleasant Street Center.
November 2015	Gray & Anderson issued <i>Windows of Opportunity for Growth & Commitment: A Plan for Service 2016-2021</i> .
December 2015	Senior library staff and administration begin to develop work plans and annual action steps, objectives, and measurements to implement the new Plan.

Vision

The Reading Public Library

- is a trusted community resource and an essential platform for learning, creativity, and innovation in a hyper-connected environment and dramatically changing world.
- is a center for civic engagement, building knowledge and fostering connections among citizens through its services, outreach activities, and partnerships.
- provides community information, free access to professionally curated resources, and a high-achieving, knowledgeable staff who are experts in their fields of specialization.
- is a crucial component in the education ecosystem and promotes literacy and the love of reading.

Gray/Anderson Report
November 2015

Executive Summary

This Plan for Service for 2016-2021 is based on an analysis of survey responses by more than 1200 adult citizens of the community, together with input from two public forums and focus groups attended by teens, parents, and those aged 55+. Additionally, discussions were held with employees of and elected officials of the Town, employees of the Reading Public Schools, and Library staff and administration as well as the Library Board.

There is widespread agreement that the expansion and renewal of the Reading Library provides an opportunity to strengthen the already strong role the Library plays at the center of the fabric of the community.

Respondents called for a range of expanded services and new initiatives to address their beliefs about the present and future needs of the community.

We propose six initiatives – *Windows*, as we call them:

1. Provide year-round access to educational programs and materials, with an emphasis on early literacy.
2. Support lifelong education for adults with programs and classes that entertain, educate, and supplement the Library's book collections.
3. Embed community outreach in staffing for ongoing feedback and partnerships with Town organizations and institutions.
4. Showcase twenty-first century technology and enable citizens of Reading to keep up with changes in accessing information.
5. Provide neutral community spaces for all sizes and types of gatherings and meetings, whether planned or impromptu.
6. Invest in continuous staff development to support a well-trained and high-achieving staff.

The implementation of these initiatives will place additional demand on the Library's staff resources, and we outline three additions to the staff:

1. A full-time digital services librarian to be implemented as soon as possible, to meet current services and staff development needs that cannot be addressed by current staff.
2. An increase in adult programming staff time, based on growth in the adult programming schedule over the next five years.
3. An increase in children's staffing, as much as one FTE, as programming increases to meet demand over the next five years.

Introduction

In this Plan for Service for the years 2016 to 2021, we set forth a proposed set of actions by Reading Library that are intended to be a clear response to the directly expressed desires and needs of the community.

The more than 1200 survey respondents and the many participants in focus groups that crossed generations, interests, and intensity of use of the Library all agreed that the Reading Library was a welcoming, high-performing, and essential resource for themselves and the community.

Furthermore, they looked forward with anticipation to the enhanced role the Library will play – for each one of them and for the community – when it moves back into its newly expanded building. They had suggestions for what they did not want to miss in the new building, they spoke to what they wanted more of, and they had ideas for new services and uses of the building.

Our responsibility has been to match the needs and wishes of the community of Library users with the resources of the Library and the Town, and determine an optimal set of actions that will best serve the Town and its citizens' future, both in terms of growth and development as well as in terms of financial responsibility.

As the Reading Library plans for its move back into its long-term home, now renovated and expanded, it starts from an enviable position. The community rightfully regards it as a fundamentally important part of the Town's fabric and looks for it to continue that role. Beyond that, nearly all users express almost universal affection for the Library staff, whom they regard as the Library's most important asset, and the primary reason they value it more highly than the libraries of neighboring towns.

The combination of the taxpayer-supported newly enhanced building and powerful staff presence provides a singular opportunity for Reading Library to commit to play an essential role in the growth of the community of Reading: as the center of democracy, learning, and service.

The Plan for Service provides guideposts for the development of the specific actions that will make the community's clearly expressed interests a reality.

Stephanie Anderson

Alan Kirk Gray

Plan for Service

A good public library holds up a mirror to its community; a truly great public library both holds up a mirror to the community and opens a window out to the larger world. Through its services, collections, and relationships with the community, a library can help a community see itself more clearly as well as everything around it. As the Reading Public Library looks towards its service for 2016-2021, there are six Windows in particular through which we recommend the Library look forward to the future. Each describes a goal for which the Library should strive over the next five years, as well as recommended steps to achieving that goal and expected outcomes.

These are not the only things on which the Library should focus in the next five years, of course—the needs of the community go far beyond the six initiatives listed here. Rather, these are the six areas in which we recommend additional investments of financial resources and staff time, all related directly to the feedback of the Reading community.

1. Provide year-round access to educational children’s programs and materials, with an emphasis on early literacy.

One of Reading’s most prominent demographic features is its high population of children, which is reflected in the Town’s investment in excellent public education. As such, services to this group must continue to be a crucial part of the Library’s work over the next five years.

The Library should strive to educate the Town’s children in partnership with the Reading Public Schools. This is especially necessary in aiding parents in educating those children who are still learning to read and are not yet in school regularly, and the Library should also look for opportunities to aid school-age students in afterschool and summer hours. This is an ongoing goal of the Library’s -- Goal IV of Part 2 of the Library’s Plan of Service for 2009-2014. In the past five years, this goal has only become more important to the success of the Library and the community.

Because of the previous focus on this goal, service to children and teens is one of the Library’s current strengths. Dozens of survey answers indicated that children’s services were highly valued and have been for many years. In addition, 491 people responding to the survey answered that they used the Library to attend children’s or teen programs, including well over half of respondents in the 31-40 and 41-55 age groups.

Even more decisively, when asked to rank desire for new services and programs, additional programming for children was above and beyond the most popular choice (ranked first 470 times, with the second place candidate coming in at 328 votes).

Many survey takers commented on their love of children’s programming and desire for more, with this comment representing many others: *“More children’s programming please! Different days and times is helpful. Also with the ability to just show up would be great.”*

Many focus group attendees commented on the high quality and memorability of the Library's current slate of programming for children, some even going so far as to recall specific librarians. The only complaint we heard about programming for children and teens was that there wasn't enough of it and that scheduling Library programs around other activities could be difficult, especially with older children.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of children's services, many attendees of focus groups expressed a concern that for fiscal reasons, there ought to be little to no overlap between the offerings of local schools and the Library. The Library already has excellent relationships with local schools, particularly the high school, and should use these relationships to continue to avoid duplication and to reach a larger body of students. The schools should be assumed to have responsibility to the Town for educating students of school age and older; the Library should make sure it has a key role in educating those not yet in school, as well as school-age children when they are not in school.

The Library also has an opportunity to be a safe and exciting place for all ages of children; as one focus group attendee said, the Library is often the first place where children learn to interact with the world in a more freeform way than in school.

Children's programming not only increases the number of these opportunities, but also creates an atmosphere that will allow Reading's children and teens to mature and learn at the pace that is best for them.

2. Support lifelong education for adults with programs and classes that entertain, educate, and supplement the Library's book collections.

Though almost all those who answered surveys and attended focus groups urged the Library to continue offering a robust book collection, especially in partnership with local libraries in the NOBLE network, adult programming was the target of particular comment most frequently. In addition, many surveys mentioned specific program series like Livewires and Word of Mouth, commenting that librarian book recommendations are one of the best services the Library offers.

Though books are clearly a core service of the Library, adult programming is a service that inspires delight and excitement. As one survey taker commented, *"I love your lectures and programs - very diverse topics and formats."* When asked to rank possible new services and programs, survey takers ranked Lectures and Author Visits second and Informational and Arts Programs third, and first of the adult options. In addition, adult programming is most popular with older citizens of Reading; the only service that patrons 56-70 and over 70 reported they use more frequently than attending programs is browsing and borrowing items.

This is particularly true for specific classes on technology skills and educational lectures. Many survey comments specifically asked for more tech classes for adults, especially for those who are new to technology.

One of the biggest current barriers to programming in the Library is inability to attend, either because the prospective attendee finds out about the program too late to attend, or because its day or time is inconvenient. Many comments we heard indicated that many patrons are aware of the Library's programming schedule but do not or cannot attend programs as scheduled and publicized.

3. Embed community outreach in staffing for ongoing feedback and partnerships with Town organizations and institutions.

One of the major benefits to living in a small town is the expectation that citizens know each other and work together. The Library can capitalize on this strength by continuing to build strong bonds with other Town institutions.

For example, the Library currently has a staff member who devotes substantial time to senior outreach, as well as a strong connection between the Library's teen librarian and the high school's librarians. In speaking with the teen librarian, we were able to see that this connection has been positive not just for teens in the community, but also for staff and the overall fiscal health of the Town.

On one survey, a resident of Sanborn Place wrote that, *"You send a librarian here once a month and provide services we really appreciate."*

One of the only criticisms we heard of the Library in our research—and it was a faint one—was that the Library was somehow too separate from the Town. This is despite the Library's clear commitment to working with other Town agencies and the schools, many existing partnerships.

As personal access to information transforms, and patrons find that they are able to access Library resources from many places that are not the Library, it is important that the Library remain a vibrant part of the Reading community to succeed.

A sustained plan of long-term outreach and coordination will ensure that the Library is able to serve a wider group of patrons, reach new patrons, and remain influential in the Town.

4. Showcase twenty-first century technology and enable citizens of Reading to keep up with changes in accessing information.

In planning for the renovated Library, Reading made a conscious decision to make space in the building for an Innovation Center, reflecting the reality that the pace of technological change has become ever more rapid and many people are unable to keep up with it on their own. In addition,

much new technology is unaffordable for the average citizen, especially when it is in early development and before its value is clearly established.

Libraries have always been bedrocks of a community's information needs, but in the past decade, the locations of and skill level needed to access common information has expanded dramatically. Accordingly, the Library should plan to continue to be at the center of managing these changes for the Town and its citizens, and providing access to information in popular formats.

In some cases, this will be as simple as offering ongoing classes in basic tech skills, to ensure that all Town residents have the opportunity to learn about and use new technology as it develops. In other cases, this will mean listening to the community's needs and presenting new technology for experimentation or review. Exploring New Technology was ranked fourth overall by respondents asked to rank possible new initiatives for the Library, with 250 ranking it first.

On the other hand, the survey received several comments along the lines of this one: *"Would be great to have some basic tech help available. Computer in particular."* Many surveyed also remarked on how frequently they used the Library's Wi-Fi connection and printing services, especially for small business and schoolwork. Several said they did not have this technology at home, and as one remarked, *"anything serious, we print at the library."*

The Library, then, must balance the clear need for basic technology provision and assistance with patrons' desire to discover and experiment with new and technologies.

As one patron points out, *"I'm a huge fan of public libraries and hope they stay around for a long, long time. Keeping up with patron's needs and technology is key."*

Though many community members have a strong interest in new technology, just as many have a concern that the needs of this space and area of growth will overtake more traditional areas of expertise in the Library. Therefore, care should be taken to balance and assess the many forms of information accessible to Library users.

In particular, in order to staff this set of services appropriately, the Library requires a manager to direct and supervise the long-term technology plan so that it does not overwhelm the time of many employees.

5. Provide neutral community spaces for all sizes and types of gatherings and meetings, whether planned or impromptu.

One of the highlights of the renovated Library building will surely be its addition, creating a brand-new multi-purpose auditorium that is full of promise for increased purposeful use. And, indeed, many citizens have already thought of many purposes for it!

However, this is not the only new space in the building, and in fact, several spaces that can be used for community gathering will be included in the new Library.

One possible area of contention that the Library should address up front is where conversation is appropriate, and at what level. There is still a strong desire across demographics for some part of the Library to be completely or nearly silent, for the purposes of sustained work, study, contemplation, or reading.

However, many of these very same people love the serendipity of meeting people at the Library. As one patron wrote, it's a *"great meeting place to bump into members of the community...I consider the Library a gathering spot for 'like-minded people' and gather that the new digs will offer an even greater opportunity for that in more lively & updated surroundings."*

An idea that popped up in survey comments and focus groups concerned the ways in which Library space could serve the needs of freelancers, entrepreneurs, and others who work from home. For example, one survey respondent wrote, *"Having some private rooms with meeting tables that can be reserved or quiet work stations would be great. I have just started working some from home and can see myself seeking out a spot in the new library to work."* Many commented that national changes in employment trends were sure to lead to more people working from home, and the Library should be prepared to meet this need.

Another use of space that received much comment was the use of the Library by tutors; both tutors and tutees commented on how important it was that there continue to be adequate space for tutoring beyond private study rooms.

Many in focus groups also mentioned specific groups, generally between 5-15 people, who were constantly in search of a room to use for regular meetings.

Overall, many commented on how important it was that the Library remain comfortable - both in terms of atmosphere and furniture. Over half of survey respondents indicated that they used the Library as a place to go and read quietly, as a place to meet people, or as a place to use meeting rooms.

One respondent summed up all the various uses nicely, commenting: *"I'd like a quiet place to sit and read. A research place where a professional researcher can give guidance. A place where adults can share knowledge in a given area, a place to connect with like-minded learners."*

Though the uses of the space are all different and require different responses from the Library, what they have in common is an understanding of the Library as a place at the heart of the community. The Library should encourage this view through policy and building layout.

6. Invest in continuous staff development to support a well-trained and high-achieving staff.

Looking through all of these Windows – especially as the Library needs do so simultaneously -- will only be possible with a motivated and enthusiastic staff. Thankfully for the Town of Reading, the Library already has such a staff.

Every piece of feedback we received was full of effusive comments about the staff of the Library, particularly about their endless good cheer and ability to always go above and beyond. Dozens of survey comments read like this one: *“The librarians are fantastic - helping me with reading ideas, ordering books, helping my daughter and greeting me with such friendliness! It really sets a tone and makes the library so inviting.”*

In every focus group, when we began by asking what patrons hoped would stay the same in the renovated Library, each group praised the service and kindness of the librarians and said they hoped it would not change at all.

Much of what is set forth in this Plan for Service requires additional work for staff, as well as development of new skills and accommodation of rapid change. As such, the Plan must also allow for the resources and time to keep staff abreast of technological changes and professional development, to bring new ideas to Reading Library and to avoid burnout.

A strong staff development program will also allow the Library to continue to attract the type of high-performing librarian who is so crucial to the Library’s continued success, as it brings on new employees over the next five years as required

Stephanie Anderson
Alan Kirk Gray

Recommendations Of Anderson/Gray To Reading Public Library

Goal 1. Provide year-round access to educational children's programs and materials, with an emphasis on early literacy.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Maintaining existing staffing levels currently, with an eye towards adding one FTE in this department during the next five years, as patron usage dictates.
 - Children's programming is staff-intensive to plan and to execute, and Library usage data should be monitored to grow the programming calendar as number of young children coming to the Library increases.
- Offering at least one drop-in storytime session for all stages of early literacy development.
 - Storytimes for pre-reading children should be explicitly marketed as such.
- Increasing the number of smaller, registered storytimes as staffing allows.
 - Smaller class sizes enhance outcomes, especially for children who are pre-literate; increased staffing is necessary and has immediate positive effects
- Appointing a Library liaison to the schools who devotes at least a quarter time to coordinating the timing and content of Library programs with schools.
 - This staff member should be identified as such on business cards and the Library website.
 - Where possible, this staff member should partner with PTOs as well.
- Looking into training Town employees who work with children in the ALA's Every Child Ready to Read initiative.
 - As an increasing number of departments, such as Parks & Recreation, have been growing their services to young children, the Library has a professional role to play in making sure all Town employees are well-informed about the developmental stages of pre-literacy.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- Increased numbers of children's programs, and commensurately, increased overall attendance.
- Increased parental and caregiver knowledge of early literacy interactions with their children
- Reading children will develop an educational advantage.

Goal 2. Support lifelong education for adults with programs and classes that entertain, educate, and supplement the Library's book collections.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Continuing existing programming series such as Livewires, Word of Mouth and author programs.
 - There is a clear desire for such programming, and many focus group attendees mentioned these series by name.
- Experimenting with new times for programming. All programs should be assessed for targeted audience and times should be changed accordingly.
 - Employees planning a program should indicate whom they expect to attend the program, and compare it to that demographic's general visiting time in the Library.
 - Popular programs, such as Livewires, should be scheduled at additional different dates and times to determine if different patrons attend.
- Finding ways to share content from programs with patrons who cannot attend, either with written lists (as in the case of Sizzlers) or video.
 - Where possible, the Library's adult programming schedule should be reflected in its online presence both before and after a program.
 - Partnerships with Town and other local institutions might suggest additional uses; for example, the Senior Center could benefit from videos of popular and perennial lecture topics.
- Converting existing programs and new programs into more of a seasonal model, as other institutions do. This will allow the Library to announce a full season of programming to obtain additional media coverage and reach more attendees.
 - Announcing a fall season, for example, can give more lead time to patrons who want to attend as well as create additional opportunities for media attention.
- Increasing hours of staff who work on programs over the five-year span of the Plan, based on growth in adult programming schedule.
 - As appropriate, it may be worthwhile to convert a reference librarian position to a full-time programming librarian position, to promote more effectiveness and efficiency.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- Increased adult attendance at programs, especially 41-55 and 56-70 age groups.
- Increased interaction with programming content after programs, especially in online views of recorded programs.

Goal 3. Embed community outreach in staffing for ongoing feedback and partnerships with Town organizations and institutions.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Creating an Outreach Team in advance of moving back to the permanent Library space. Many of these outreach relationships already exist, either through long periods of work together or newer commitments to continuing programs during the Library's time in the temporary space. The Library should officially appoint a team of library staff who are liaising with local organizations and showcase them in the building and online. At the least, this team should contain members who work with:
 - Seniors in Reading
 - Local businesses
 - Local schools
 - Parks & Recreation
 - Local history & genealogy societies
- Creating physical and online marketing collateral that showcases the Library's outreach to the community and invites further partnerships.
 - The Library should have available a ready supply of handouts about its outreach as well as about services that it can use for outreach (for example, cards about digital borrowing that can be used for commuter outreach, or cards about homebound delivery services that can be given to local doctors and clergy who help those who can't visit the Library.)
- Creating an outreach calendar.
 - Plan in advance for such library holidays as National Library Card Sign-Up Month and Banned Books Week.
- Tracking staff time and interactions from outreach in order to assess the value to Town of Library expanding outside its four walls.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- Increased number of new card registrations.
- Increased number of outreach interactions.
- Increased coordination with the Town, Schools and other organizations.

Goal 4. Showcase twenty-first century technology and enable citizens of Reading to keep up with changes in accessing information.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Investing in a full-time Digital Services Librarian.
 - This position should take responsibility for the Library's overall technology plan, as well as be heavily involved in training staff and leading the Library's curriculum for tech classes, and enable the Library to meet current demand for technology and digital services.
- Developing a list of core competencies for digital literacy to be used in hiring future employees.
 - This list of core competencies should also be used for training current employees, led by the Digital Services Librarian.
- Working with other Town departments to determine overlap in digital training needs to either assist with or partner in training.
 - For example, as the schools acquire new technology (such as a 3-D printer), the Library should be sure that its staff is trained on the basics of that technology. When the Library is the first to have new technology, it should offer training to other Town departments that might be interested.
 - Assuring that, when there is significant interest in a technology employed in another Town department – for example, robotics in the schools – the Library be prepared to meet demand that spills over beyond the school day and year.
- Developing a plan to introduce new technology to the community as it is acquired.
 - For example, the Library should host open houses, speakers, and hands-on workshops that emphasize what the new technology is used for and explains how it fits into the larger Library mission.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- Increased use of tech resources at the Library.
- Increased circulation of digital materials.
- Increased coordination with the Town and Schools.

Goal 5. Provide neutral community spaces for all sizes and types of gatherings and meetings, whether planned or impromptu.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Establishing clear use policies for public meeting spaces, particularly with regard to space for tutoring and for official Town meetings.
 - Policies for use of reservable spaces should balance the needs of several different groups of users, all of whom are likely to need those spaces at similar times.
 - Policies should also address differences between use of Library space for private business, Town business, and non-profit work.
 - Where possible, these policies should be approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Visually delineating parts of the Library that are reserved for quiet work.
 - With subtle signage or decals, the Library can clarify where patrons should go for quiet, where they can hold meetings at a conversational tone, and where (if anywhere) they may answer a phone call.
- Purchasing different types of furniture that encourage various uses, such as large tables for spaces allotted for group work and smaller, comfortable, individual chairs for quiet areas.
 - Furniture should be selected by staff who will be working in the area of the Library where it will be used, who have the most knowledge about how people have used that space in the past.
 - This should also be used as a good opportunity to ensure that areas that are designated for quiet work and group work have power outlets that will work with the furniture purchased—many more than necessary!
- Establish talking points for staff so that they are prepared to answer questions about how space is used, especially when speaking with patrons who disagree with the Library's policies.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- At least 90% average use rate of reservable rooms.
- Developing the Library's reputation as the center of democracy within the Town of Reading.

Goal 6. Invest in continuous staff development to support a well-trained and high- achieving staff.

To achieve this Window, we recommend:

- Maintaining regular internal staff training opportunities, both staff-led and with external speakers and facilitators.
 - Creating an annual schedule with themed staff programs in specific areas (for example, readers' advisory or use of Library databases) will ensure that learning and skills development remains a priority for each member of the staff, and that there are regular opportunities to address new and updated areas of service.
- Keeping a strong line of funding for staff to regularly attend state and national conferences about libraries or related professional areas.
 - Many ideas about new services for libraries, efficiencies around existing services, and larger changes in the profession are debuted and discussed at these conferences. By sending a few staff members to them regularly and having them bring their knowledge back to share within the Library, a steady flow of improvements is ensured.
- Establishing a regular schedule of staff meetings.
 - Especially while transitioning into the renovated Library, it is important for staff to know they're scheduled to receive regular support and educational opportunities through the change.

Expected outcomes of this Window:

- Continued positive feedback about staff.
- Continued growth of staff skills.
- Increased ability to attract the most highly qualified new candidates