

SUFFERN FREE LIBRARY



Long Range Plan 2004-2008

Approved by the Suffern Free Library Board of Trustees
on October 26, 2004

Overview

In 2000, over 5,000 people gathered at the Suffern Free Library to celebrate the grand opening of the new Library building and begin a new chapter in the history of the Suffern Library. The Library was established in 1926 by the Suffern Woman's Club and housed in their clubhouse. In 1941, the Library moved to its next home at the corner of Washington and Maple Avenue which was later expanded to meet the growing needs of the community. From this 7,000 square foot building, the Library moved to its present 37,000 square foot location at 210 Lafayette Avenue. Throughout the years, the residents of the Ramapo Central School District have demonstrated support for the Library and value the active role the Library plays in the community.

In 2004, after living in the "new" building for four years, the Board of Trustees, Director and staff embarked on a journey of self-discovery intended to analyze and understand the changing role of Library services and improve customer service. How can the Library remain at the cutting edge of information delivery and technological change? What additional services can the Library provide or improve upon? How can the Library remain innovative and inspire learning and literacy in this ever changing fast paced world?

These questions led Director Ruth Bolin, along with the Board of Trustees, to hire Library Consultant Charlene Ezell and Associates to help create a Long Range Plan. Charlene would guide the Library through a one-year process working with the Board, Director and staff, as well as the customers to determine our mission, values, goals and activities. This process involved surveying the public, creating focus groups, and requesting ideas from the staff and public which were called "goal nuggets." The Data Collection Team gathered 1,322 surveys, 43 residents of all ages participated in the focus groups, and hundreds of goal nuggets were gathered. The Long Range Planning Committee analyzed the data and created a Long Range Plan to define the Library's focus through 2008.

The Community Speaks

Community residents expressed their ideas for improved library service in focus group sessions facilitated by Charlene Ezell. Targeted audiences included middle school students and teenagers, seniors and adult library users, as well as members of the general user population. Among their suggestions were the following:

- Make more copies of current materials available on the shelves.
- Improve the drive up book drop.
- Give residents of the Ramapo Central School District priority for new books and services.
- Provide online registration for programs and events.

During the course of one week, 1,322 Library visitors completed a survey which provided valuable

statistical data for the Long Range Plan.

- Some areas of the Library sustain heavy use by large numbers of people. 57% of library users visited the Audio Visual area and 55% visited the New Book area.
- Visitors rated service by Suffern Library staff over 94% in all areas including checkout, in the adult information area, in the children's room and when calling or e-mailing the library.
- Regarding convenience of library services, 68% of respondents said that the hours of operation were always convenient. 57% felt that finding new books was always convenient and 35% said that finding new videos/DVDs was always convenient.
- By far, respondents indicated that they "want more of what the Library already has." 51% want more new release videos and 44% want more copies of best-sellers.

Planning Outcomes

The Long Range Planning Committee met for a Strategic Planning Team Retreat in 2004. During the course of the retreat, the Team focused on defining the Library's mission and core values, reviewing and analyzing the data collected and the goal nuggets, prioritizing goals and organizing activities.

Our Mission

The Suffern Free Library, a primary information hub for the community, provides diverse resources, innovative services and programs that enrich the lives of the residents of the Ramapo Central School District.

Our Vision

- The Board of Trustees, administrators and staff are committed to providing the best possible public library environment and services.
- When residents want information on any topic, the public library is the first solution they consider. We meet the needs of every visitor and user of the Library by providing print and nonprint information on every topic. No patron leaves dissatisfied in his or her search for information.
- We offer extended hours and convenient and easy to use services.
- We are a focal point for the community. People of all ages, regardless of income or education levels, place of origin or culture, are welcome in the Library. Our building, grounds and services are in use at all times of the day.
- The Library leads and inspires by providing ever-expanding opportunities to read and to enrich and inform users' lives.

Our Values

The Board of Trustees and staff identified six core values, or guiding principles, that govern and underscore their roles as professional information providers and public servants.

A. Access to information. The library is a democratic institution. We are challenged to collect and provide information for citizens to develop self-education and to meet their informational/recreational needs. As a service agency, we make the retrieval and use of information convenient to all residents. Technological advances mean we can provide access to information regardless of geographical distance or time of day.

B. Service excellence. The library is committed to serving each and every citizen as completely and fully as possible. The individualized service should be both friendly and efficient.

C. Accuracy of the information provided. The public trusts the library to provide reliable information. The library is committed to providing accurate and verifiable information upon request. The library will maintain a collection of materials that have been reviewed for their integrity.

D. A patron's right to confidentiality. All patrons can be certain that their identities will not be linked to any particular title or subject whenever they use the reference, commons or circulation services provided by the library.

E. Outreach into the community. Our library building and grounds are destinations for all ages, offering a place for enlightenment, entertainment, edification, and social and community contact. Our programs, displays, exhibits are sponsored to enlighten, inspire and entertain.

F. Our reputation for innovativeness. Our library staff excels in offering new services, improvements to existing services, and designing new features that make accessing and retrieving information easier, more convenient, faster, and more helpful to our users. We pledge to continue this tradition.

Goals and Objectives

The Long Range Planning Committee identified five goals to accomplish from 2004-2008.

Goal 1: The Suffern Free Library will continue to expand collections and access to services with up to date diverse materials to accommodate our community.

Objectives:

- Offer more copies of current materials and formats now in demand
- Explore options for adding materials to specialized collections
- Promote the use of and marketing of underused portions of the library collection

Goal 2: The Library will provide a well-trained staff to meet service needs and provide quality customer service.

Objectives:

- Provide more personal attention to patrons by staff throughout the building
- Reduce need for troubleshooting computer equipment by staff by 80%
- Improve staff communication within the building
- Provide customer service training for staff
- Maintain and update new and existing equipment, technologies and added features or services

Goal 3: The Library will use existing space to increase efficiency and maximize our services.

Objectives:

- Areas of the collection will be relocated to optimize use by 2008
- Procedures for circulation and interloan delivery will be modified to balance staff and space needs with patron usage and demands
- Maintain and improve building features

Goal 4: The Library will bring new and innovative programming for all ages to our community.

Objectives:

- Maintain maximum number of programs for children's, young adult and adult audiences each year
- Identify and use funding sources for Library programs

Goal 5: The Library will maintain the necessary Library-wide infrastructure to ensure effective administration and sound fiscal management.

Objectives:

- Review and update operating procedures and policies
- Launch a comprehensive giving program for individuals and groups
- Review staffing levels and compensation plans on a regular basis
- Prepare a marketing plan for the Library