

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:

In October 2005, the Trustees of the Salisbury Public Library appointed a Long Range Plan committee. The committee was to study the existing conditions of the library and to determine future needs. That plan, filed with the Board of Library Commissioners in October 2006, included the library's new mission statement:

“The Salisbury Public Library serves as a beacon to welcome all community members with information, education and recreation in a safe and pleasant environment”

and defined as its first goal:

“The Salisbury Public Library will become a modern facility with enough space for library services, collections, growth and events for all members of our community.”

History of the Building:

Established at town meeting in 1885, the library had a series of temporary locations until the 1950's, when the first portion of the library was built on the town green. In 1956, the year the library opened, Salisbury's population was 3,000 (approx.). The new 1600 square foot building was built to be the heart of the community, within walking distance to the new school, the post office, town hall and the town's two churches. An addition was added in 1972 adding 1400 square feet, to serve a population of 4200 (approx.). The addition added a designated children's room and (library) housed 20,000 volumes. By 1984, with the population near 6000 and library holdings at 25,000 volumes, plans were drawn up for another addition doubling existing space but funding could not be found. In 1994, the Salisbury Public Library became a full member of the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium. This caused a huge increase in circulation and interlibrary loans as borrowers from other communities could use the library during their vacations at Salisbury Beach.

Today, the library building is the same size (3,047 sq. ft.) and the population has increased to 7,800 and has holdings of 35,560. Circulation continues to increase each year, as does interlibrary loans. A revitalized Friends group holds more events. Children's programming, especially during the summer, has increased dramatically. Seasonal visitors use the library's public access computers and WiFi.

Planning:

In 2005, the trustees and director began to develop a Long Range Plan. After the town nearly closed the library in January 2002 because of a budget crisis, the trustees recognized the need for a Long Range Plan to determine the future of the library. A committee was assembled and strategies were mapped out with assistance from facilitators from the Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System. The first community survey (February 2006) had 793 responses. Survey comments included “we need a bigger building but keep the small-town feel” and “the library is the heart of the community.”

The survey sent out in January 2006 as part of this plan determined the following:

- Out of a population of 7,800, 793 surveys were returned, indicating a high level of community interest in the library.
- While respondents overall were pleased with library service, they wanted more programming, nonfiction, DVDs, instruction in genealogy, local history and computers.
- Many commented on the lack of space and parking.
- A large number reported not using the Salisbury Public Library at all, going instead to neighboring communities because they had larger collections, more convenient hours and better technology.

It became apparent that in order to deliver the services, programming and collections the community wanted, more space was necessary.

In June 2007, the library was awarded a planning and design grant through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. The October town meeting approved the necessary matching funds for a feasibility study. In January 2008, the trustees appointed a twelve member Library Vision Committee to undertake a building program. Using a twenty year population projection of 11,000, the committee began with a new community survey to determine programming and collection development, location preference and resident input. The survey was concluded in May 2008 and received 119 responses. Respondents of the 2006 survey said they came to the library for books; in 2008, users replied that they came to the library for community activities (book club, children's story hour, Friends' activities) as well as checking out books and materials. Despite all of its inadequacies, residents appreciate and support the Salisbury Public Library.

Existing Building Problems:

The current facility impedes the mission statement and the LRP's goals and objectives in the following ways:

- Because the library is not A.D.A. compliant or handicapped accessible, it cannot welcome "all community members".
- Quiet study and community activities are prohibited by the lack of public space and private space within the building.
- There is insufficient space for the existing materials on hand and there is no space for future materials required for basic library service or growth.
- Because of the lack of space, some materials, notably in the children's room, are shelved too high and too tightly, creating a less than "safe and pleasant environment."
- There is no designated young adult area and young adult materials are shelved in two different rooms.
- There is insufficient data connectivity and electrical outlets cause a tangle of wires around the front desk and staff desks. Because electrical wires and the computer hub (primary Ethernet router, internet and network connections) run along the wall with the electric heater at the front desk, the electric heat in this area cannot be turned on.

- There are only 2 computers for public use in a community where many do not have computers at home and there is no space for additional computers.
- Staff space is inadequate to allow for an efficient flow of work in a safe environment. The staff lacks adequate privacy, work and storage space. Staff members share desks, computers, telephones and storage space for personal items.
- There is not enough parking.

The New Salisbury Public Library:

The new Salisbury Public Library will re-establish itself as “the heart of the community” and fulfill its mission statement to provide education, information and recreation for the entire community in a safe and pleasant environment.

- The new building will be approximately 15,000 square feet on one floor.
- The new building is planned for 20 year growth:
 - population projection of 11,000 (Metropolitan Area Planning Council)
 - collection projection of 43,000 books, 4,600 media and 8000 periodicals.
 - seating for 100 patrons throughout the library
 - program space including a meeting room and children’s activities room
 - unknown variables in new technologies
- The new building will use environmentally friendly and sustainable options wherever possible within budget.