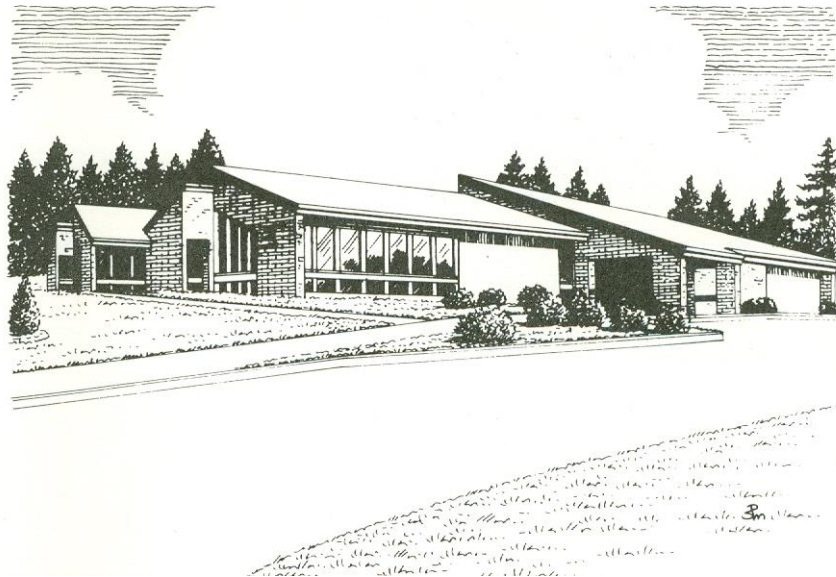


**A FIVE-YEAR PLAN OF ACTION
FOR THE
BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
TOWN OF BELLINGHAM, MA
FY2021-FY2025**



**October 1, 2019
Bellingham Public Library
100 Blackstone Street
Bellingham, Massachusetts
508-966-1660**

Bellingham Public Library Strategic Plan FY2021-FY2025
Bellingham, Massachusetts

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INTRODUCTION

The planning process has given us the opportunity to examine our past activities, programs, facility and staff, critique our present service and set goals to work toward the future.

Now is the time to plan for our next five years. The following pages contain information on what we have discovered about the Bellingham Public Library through community focus group meetings, patron surveys and observations, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) data and State and local facts.

From all of this information we have put forth goals and objectives to accomplish over the next five years.

We thank the Strategic Planning Committee members for all their effort in producing this document.

Amy Bartelloni, Library Board of Trustees, Author & Parent
Erin Bartelloni, Teen Patron
Carol Bird, Library Board of Trustees
Kim Cohen, Library Patron & Parent
Jeff Croteau, Bellingham Memorial School Principal
Sarah Doyle, Bellingham High School Librarian
Marjorie Turner Hollman, Library Patron & Author
Ginny Kent, Library Patron & Volunteer
Michael O'Herron, Friends of the Library
Megan Perkins, Teen Patron
Kathie Pierro, Library Patron
Jane Vichi, Friends of the Library
Daniel Spencer, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Christine Steman, Homeschooling Parent

Bernadette Rivard, Library Director
brivard@bellinghamma.org

Approved by the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees on September 12, 2019

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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Bellingham Public Library is to be an important resource for all members of the community in their search for knowledge, ideas, information, and creative use of their leisure time.

VISION STATEMENT

The Bellingham Public Library is the hub of the community... where people and ideas come together.

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STANDARDS OF LIBRARY SERVICE

The legal requirements for state aid to libraries in Massachusetts provide the minimum standards for library service. (Code of Massachusetts Regulations 4.00: Free Public Library Service – Regulations.) The Bellingham Public Library has consistently met these requirements.

- ***The library is open to everyone with no charge for normal services.***
- The Bellingham Public Library is currently open six days a week (closed on Saturdays during the summer months of late June, July and August). ***The library is open 54 hours per week, Monday through Thursday from 10 am to 8 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm.***
(605 CMR 4.01: Regulations 3; Recommended Minimum Hours Open Per Week for libraries in communities with a population of 15,000 to 24,999 – 50 hours per week, including some part of five days, including some evening hours, hours requirement based on hours from Labor Day to Memorial Day, summer hours do not effect compliance.)
- The library employs trained library personnel including a Director with a degree from an approved graduate school of library science and a certificate of professional librarianship issued by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. ***The Director, Bernadette Rivard has a Master of Science, Library and Information Science from Simmons College and a Certificate of Librarianship from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, #P5302.***
(605 CMR 4.01: Regulations 4; Libraries in communities with population 10,000 and up.)
- ***In each of the library's three last fiscal years the library has spent between 16% and 16.9% of its budget on books and materials, exceeding the 15% requirement.***
(605 CMR 4.01: Regulations 5; Libraries in communities with population 15,000 to 24,999 – shall spend a minimum percentage (15%) of the library's total annual budget for books and periodicals.)
- ***The library lends books to other libraries in the Commonwealth and extends privileges to the holders of cards issued by other certified public libraries in the Commonwealth on a reciprocal basis.***
- ***The library has met the standards set forth by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for small libraries since 1979, with a waiver given for the years 2009-2013, and has filed an annual report (ARIS) each year.***

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ELEMENTS OF QUALITY LIBRARY SERVICE

The Bellingham Public Library embraces the following fundamentals which constitute quality library service:

- A **building** that is inviting, user-friendly for all, comfortable and with numerous locations for staff use, private use, study use and group events. Over the past few years we have added a dedicated Teen Room and Study Room and have renovated our History and Conference Room.
- A **staff** that is dedicated to library patrons and customer service. Much of our staff are long-term employees, ranging from 2 years to 33 years of service. The average staff member has been here more than 12 years.
- A current and useful **collection of materials** to meet the popular needs and interests of the community. Each year we add nearly 500 items to our collection each month and our collection has remained between 50 and 52K items for the past few years.
- A simple set of **by-laws** for the trustees and a clearly-written policy for all library practices adopted by the Board of Library Trustees. *The Trustee bylaws were reviewed and updated in 2018.*
- A fully operational **computer/information system** for personal work and for linking Bellingham to thousands of users and millions of materials in Massachusetts and beyond. *We are members of the CW MARS library network and our Internet for both staff and the public are through the network.*
- Informed and supportive trustees who have the **courage** to advocate for adequate and above-average services at the local level.
- **Trustees** charged with the responsibility to secure adequate library funding for maintenance, materials, programming and staffing.
- An ongoing **planning process** to meet the needs of the community, including young adult/children's services and adult programs.
- Promotion of good services through effective **marketing and publicity** is essential to the continued growth of the library.
- We are a **community activities center** and we encourage the use of our facilities where availability and space allows.

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DESCRIPTION OF BELLINGHAM

Bellingham history dates back to the late 1600's when land once a part of Dedham was divided into 100-acre land lots for settlement. Many early settlers were Quakers and Baptists seeking religious freedom from the strict Puritans who had a stronghold on the northerly sections of Norfolk County. In 1719, Bellingham became the last most southerly town incorporated into the county on land that was once part of Mendon.

Bellingham is bordered on the east by Franklin and Wrentham, on the south by Woonsocket, Rhode Island, on the west by Blackstone, Mendon, and Hopedale, and on the northwest and north by Milford and Medway.

In the 1800's, the town had many mills and was known for years as a boot making and farming community. It wasn't until the end of World War II that any major housing developments were started on land once used for farming. The largest development, Wethersfield, a 500-home tract a mile north of the town center, ushered in a building boom that saw the population of the town more than double in 10 years. Between 1950 and 1979 population statistics show a jump from 4,100 to 14,692, a rather startling fact when one learns that in the next 20 years the population only grew by 75 people. Another housing boom started again in the late 1990's when land once unsuitable for building became connected to the town sewer. In the early 2000's two hundred new 4+ bedroom homes, 112 townhouses, and a 300-unit rental complex were completed.

Bellingham adopted a home rule charter at the Annual Town Meeting in May, 1993. A Town Administrator, appointed by a five-member elected Board of Selectmen, conducts the town's business. The new charter continued the practice of electing members to the Board of Library Trustees as well as an elected Moderator who presides over two yearly open town meetings, one in May and one in October.

One interesting fact in town history is that its long narrow shape was settled by three distinct ethnic groups. The Caryville section in the north was settled by Polish and Irish; the center sector was settled by the English; the southern end on the Rhode Island border attracted many French-speaking Canadians lured to America by the mill jobs along the Blackstone River. Each section of Bellingham boasted its own post office. Although towns closer to Boston and some of our surrounding communities have seen an influx of immigrants from the Far East, South America and Russia, Bellingham has not.

The heavy burden placed on the public school system during the population boom of the 60's and 70's forced the town to construct three elementary schools. One opened in 1966, another in 1971, and a third in 1989 with each teaching grades K to 6. The year 2001 saw the opening of the 35 million dollar Bellingham High School for grades 9 to 12; by 2003 the old high school built in 1964 had been renovated into a middle school to house grades 5 to 8. This project cost 15 million dollars.

These two schools, each within walking distance of the Bellingham Public Library, house 1,374 students out of a total school population of 2,417. The BHS class of 2013 saw 71.4% of its members go on to 2 or 4 year post high school courses. However, the school department has concerns with the MCAS testing scores which place Bellingham in the middle of ranking when compared to the 350+ towns within Massachusetts.

In the fall of 2015 the school configuration was changed and the Bellingham Middle School became Bellingham Memorial School, housing grades 4-7. The 8th grade was moved to Bellingham High School. This was a shift for not only the schools, but the library. Having 4th graders within walking distance of our facility greatly impacted our afterschool programming. In the 2015 school year we began an after school program for 4th to 7th graders called ASK (After School Kids) and this has presented us with many challenges. We hope our revisions to the program for this school year (parents of 4-6th graders must register them to attend the program) will alleviate some of the challenges we have faced over the past few years.

Bellingham also has an Alternative Junior/Senior High School housed in a former elementary school. Technical training for high school students from thirteen contiguous towns is provided in Upton at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School. The nearest college is Dean College in Franklin.

The 1990's saw the emergence of the town's first modern industry; a power plant manufacturing electricity and carbon dioxide. It has since been joined by another power plant. Both are major contributors to the tax structure of the town. Bellingham's proximity to Route 495 with available land at exit #18 provided the impetus to three shopping complexes to blossom. Major shopping attractions include Home Depot, WalMart, Barnes & Noble, and the Gap; dining venues include Outback Steakhouse, Chili's, and Pizzeria Uno. Regal has a 14-theater cinema that draws huge weekend crowds. There are now three major supermarkets, Stop & Shop, Market Basket and Whole Foods. The growth of commerce continues. One town center strip mall has all store fronts rented. Another about three miles south is finally being finished and occupied. A major company, Dunkin' Donuts, has a regional distribution center less than a mile from the town center, while another, the Ninety-Nine Restaurant chain, has a distribution center on one of the main access roads to Route 495. This building also houses some office space and is around the corner and abutting another distribution center, Blue Linx. All of these businesses will be a future factor in traffic flow. The Mechanic and Maple Street intersection is under construction to accommodate the truck traffic that comes off of Interstate 495 to the industrial warehouses in town.

Two strip malls opened on the corner of Route 140 and Maple Street, housing a Dunkin' Donuts, Subway and Rapid Refill gas station, a comic book store and pizza shop, jewelry store, three restaurants, other retail and service businesses and additional space available for lease. Charles River Bank opened a branch office in the Spring of 2009 on the opposite side of Maple Street from these malls. This building also has retail/office space for rent.

With development has come the problem of automobile traffic since no public transit is available in town. The major north/south route through town, State Road 126, now has eleven traffic lights where once there was one. Redesigning traffic flow at all major intersections is an ongoing project. The nearest commuter rail service is on Route 140 in Franklin with a 65-minute train ride to South Station, Boston. A fifteen-minute drive on Route 495 will allow a traveler to access either Interstate 95 to the south or Interstate 90 to the north.

Bellingham offers recreational facilities for all ages. Children have access to Pop Warner football, Little League baseball, soccer, field hockey and softball. Swimming lessons are offered at Arcand Park while Silver Lake provides swimming and picnicking areas along the beach of the town owned lake. In 2009 the Bellingham Playground Association opened Kaspar Park at Silver Lake. With two areas, (one for the 2-5 year old crowd, and one for the 5-12 year old crowd) ingenious play design, slides and swings, the playground is the newest spot in town for children. Senior citizens can enjoy a new, beautifully decorated senior center where a coordinator arranges for bus trips, outings, and other special events. There are two residential elderly and/or handicapped living complexes.

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Many of Bellingham's organizations provide activities for our children and hold various fund raisers to provide scholarships for Bellingham High School graduates. Parents serve as coaches and mentors for most of the sport activities previously mentioned. Churches have youth groups and the schools have Parent-Teacher Organizations working to provide funds for field trips and programs not covered in the school budget. The Friends of Music conduct fund raisers to support the high school band program. The Friends of the Library raise more than \$10,000 annually so the library can offer museum passes and other programs during the year. The Lions Club actively supports the Special Olympics while the Bellingham Women of Today raise funds for a high school scholarship. The WalMart Foundation donates funds to many of these town organizations to aid them with their programs and scholarships. The Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts have active representation in our schools. The V.F.W. Post #7272 organizes the annual Memorial Day Parade, while the Bellingham Sportsmen's Club has made donations to the D.A.R.E. anti-drug and smoking program the local police conduct in the schools. The Bellingham Cultural Council funds cultural programs. Finally, the Bellingham Business Association holds monthly dinner meetings to discuss their mission of providing a town-centered commercial venue for residents and fund scholarships for high school students.

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COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Total Population, Federal Census

1970	13,967	
1980	14,300	
1990	14,877	
2000	15,314	
2010	16,332	
2016	16,891	Mass Municipal Profiles

Registered Voters

2017	11,258	Mass Municipal Profiles
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Significant Racial Groups, 2010 Federal Census

White	93.45%
Asian	2.58%
Two or more races	1.52%
Other	1.24%
Black/African American	1.09%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.08%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Native	0.04%

Age Breakdown, 2010 Federal Census

Under 5	6.4%
5 – 19	19.5%
20 – 64	62.3%
65 +	11.7%
Median Age	40.3 years

Educational Attainment, 2010 Federal Census

High School Grad	94.12%
College Grad	36.79%
Graduate Degree	6.26%

Households, 2010 Federal Census

Total Number	6155
Persons per Household	2.6

Income

Per Capita Income	\$34,147	2018-2019 Massachusetts Municipal Profiles
Median Family Income	\$95,4533	census.gov
Percent Below Poverty Level	3.4%	2010 Census

Labor & Employment, 2008-2012 American Community Survey from the US Census Bureau

Management, business, science, and arts occupations	3,450	37.8%
Service occupations	1,305	14.3%
Sales and office occupations	2,783	30.5%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations	729	8.0%
Production, transportation and material moving occupations	858	9.4%
Total	9,125	100%

Taxation as of 2018, Massachusetts Municipal Profiles

EQV Per Capita \$2,306,770,088

Municipal Finance, 2017, Massachusetts Municipal Profiles

Municipal Budget Expenditures \$ 50,289,023

Mass DOE 2018

Average Teacher's Salary \$ 75,911

Library Budget

\$ 598,454 (FY20)

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DESCRIPTION OF THE BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

In 1894, Bellingham's first library was opened in a private residence on South Main Street with interested townspeople donating books and magazines. Eleven years later, the old four-room Center School used one of its rooms to house the town library, and in 1911, an interested resident in the south sector of town set up a branch in her home. When the fourth room was needed in the school in 1928, the library had to be moved into town hall, which was right next door.

The annual town meeting of March 1929 appropriated \$10,000 to build a new library on land adjacent to the town hall on Common Street, and the small brick building was dedicated on May 15, 1930. During the following three decades, residents in the northern part of Bellingham had a library branch available for their use in first, the North School and, when that closed, it occupied a corner of the school library in the new, modern Stallbrook Elementary School. In 1963, the south branch moved into the Keough School. Four years later, half the basement of the main library was paneled, carpeted, and open as The Children's Room, and in 1972 the remaining basement area was converted into a quiet reading room. These alterations produced a library with 2,000 square feet of usable space serving a population of over 14,000 townspeople.

The boom in population put heavy demands on library use, and the Board of Library Trustees decided to close the two branches and concentrate their efforts on upgrading services in its main building. To this end, the Trustees expanded hours of operation, hired its first professional library director in 1978, encouraged the formation of a Friends of the Library organization, and lobbied for additional staff and funding. They also wisely saw the need to start planning for library space expansion and, once the library met the requirements for a Library Incentive Grant and Municipal Equalization Grant Funds, these funds were set aside in a special fund until 1984, when a Space Needs Study Committee was formed and then a Library Renovation Committee. The conclusion drawn from these efforts were that expansion of the existing building was not feasible, and relocating into the 85-year old Center School was not desirable. 1985 saw the formation of a Library Building Committee who used the MEG and LIG funds to hire a design architect, and at a special town meeting in August 1987, voters approved the construction of a 2 million dollar library. By October of the same year, the library, a new elementary school, and a partial sewerage of the town were placed on a special election ballot. Voters were asked to exclude the debts incurred by the three projects from the constraints of Proposition 2-1/2. All met with voter approval, but the new library garnered the most 'yes' votes, due in part to the assurances from building committee members and Trustees that a large percentage of the total cost could be reduced with a grant from a 35-million dollar library construction bill which had reached committee in the Massachusetts State House.

The new library had also been one of the only two Massachusetts towns to be awarded LSCA Title II funds that year, so it was hoped that this \$252,000 in additional outside funding would lighten the tax burden that this new library would impose. Legislative delays on both the state and national level proved frustrating to committee members, and when the bidding process finally got underway, building costs far exceeded expectations. All of the LSCA Title II monies had to be applied to building furnishings rather than to debt reduction, and the final crushing blow came when the MBLC awarded Bellingham only \$200,000 for the library construction debt, a figure only 11% of the total cost rather than the hoped for 45%.

The actual construction of the 18,000 square foot brick and wood facility on town-owned land adjacent to the high school went smoothly, and in ten months the beautiful structure was ready for the historic move. Scores of volunteers packed books and assisted in the transfer of all useable items. A one-hundred seat community room with kitchen, staff lounge, technical service area, storage room, Director's office, more than adequate shelf space, and inviting spacious children's room were some of the new features in the library which opened to the public on September 5, 1989.

Although we had to apply for a waiver for State Aid for FY'04, from FY'05 through FY09 we met the state aid requirements. In FY10 the repercussions of the economic downturn affected the library budget and we had a 10.4% budget reduction. This reduction required the library to apply for a waiver in each of the fiscal years FY10 through FY 14. In FY15, a 7% budget increase enabled the library to meet the State Aid requirements and open 4 additional hours per week.

In 1994 the town budget showed that library service accounted for .7% of the entire municipal budget. In 2005, the library accounted for 1.3% of the annual budget of the town, in FY10, it was reduced to 0.98%, in FY15 was 1.06%, still significantly more than in 1994, but less than years before the economic downturn. In both FY18 and FY19 the library was 1.01% of the municipal budget. Without the support of our Board of Selectmen, Finance Committees, our community, and our two Massachusetts State House legislators, the Bellingham Public Library would not have attained the level of service it currently provides.

In 2003, additional computers were added to increase the number of public Internet access stations to a total of 10. Additional shelving was purchased to accommodate the library's growing collections and an outdoor message board was installed to provide the community with information about library programming. In 2005, the building was over 15 years old and was beginning to show wear and tear. Carpeting was replaced and walls were painted. The fire and security alarm systems were updated. Additional signage and furniture was purchased. Two "low-vision" centers were installed to aid people with vision problems in reading personal and library materials. A network file server and a media center computer were purchased to streamline staff computer operations. In 2006, the exterior of the building began to show its age and in addition to the regular annual exterior painting, the entire roof was replaced.

In 2007 and 2008, Roland Laprade, the town carpenter, built office furniture for our technical services area; resulting in a more organized workspace for our behind the scenes work area. In 2008, with generous funding from the Friends of the Library we were able to renovate the Community Room Kitchen, turning it from a tired worn space, to a bright, organized space. In 2009 with help from the Friends of the Library and Martine Descoteaux, a Girl Scout working on her Gold Award project, the Children's Program Room was renovated. The room was painted and storage shelving was added to help organize the space. In 2009 the library installed PC Reservation & LPT1 printing through C/WMARS. This enables patrons with active library cards self service on the library PCs and printing through a state of the art Ricoh color copier/printer.

In 2010 we renovated the community room with new carpet and freshly painted walls. In 2011 the library had turnover of key staff, both our Youth Services Librarian and Young Adult Librarian resigned. In 2011, with donations from local businesses, we renovated the area around the "Cartwheel" statue in the front of the building; it now sits in a beautiful brick patio, surrounded by a "wrought iron" fence enclosing the area. Twice in 2011 the library was able to provide emergency services due to weather events; we had power when many town residents did not. We were a place to stay warm (or cool); charge phones and laptops and access the Internet either through our WiFi or wired computers when most of the town had no power.

In 2012 with assistance in funding from the Friends of the Library and the Eldredge family, the library was able to complete a long overdue project, lighting the library flagpole. The new flagpole was unveiled at a Veterans Day Ceremony that has since become an annual event. In 2012 we also launched a newly designed library website, streamlining content and making it easier for staff to update. Our major special program in 2012 was the "Libraries for Job Seekers" Program. Funded by an LSTA grant, this program assisted over 150 people who were looking for jobs that year.

In 2013 the library began a special project to reorganize the library picture book collection into a hybrid Dewey Decimal System/bookstore model. We then used a similar model for our Young Adult Nonfiction collection. In 2013 we replaced all of the main pipes in the library's fire sprinkler system; updated a few areas with fresh coats of

paint and prepared a space for the library's newest program: an educational seismograph for our STEM programming.

In the fall of 2015 a long-overdue plan to expand the library parking lot was begun. Site work began in the fall and in the spring of 2016. The library parking lot expanded from 47 spaces to 59 spaces and the overflow access road to the adjacent sports field was also renovated to double the shared spaces in that lot with the library from 12 to 24.

In the spring of 2016 the library completed another long-wished for project: the completion of a dedicated Teen Room that is separated from the main area of the library. The renovated space had walls and doors added to the approximately 1000 square foot area to accommodate our growing after school program for 7th through 12th graders. The room is equipped with comfortable furnishings, TVs and video game consoles, computers, board games and the Teen Library collection. The project also included the creation of a small 4-person Study Room.

In October of 2016 the library was fortunate that an automobile accident that resulted in severe damage to the library Community Room and Community Room Kitchen did not injure anyone. As a result of the accident the Community Room was closed for nearly four months for renovation. The renovation included new carpet, a new exterior wall that was renovated to include windows to add natural light to the space. In addition, the Community Room Kitchen was renovated with new cabinets and countertops, a new refrigerator and the outdated electric range was replaced with a microwave oven and a dishwasher that is routinely used to wash toys used by children.

In the spring of 2017 the library updated the Children's Room with new carpeting. In addition, with the assistance of a federal LSTA grant the library was able to expand the preschool play space and update its educational toys. These two funding sources enabled the library to reallocate space in the Children's Room to better accommodate people, collections and equipment.

In the spring of 2019 the library updated the adult area of the library with new carpeting, countertops and furniture. In addition, a café space was added in the adult area. In this vinyl floored area library patrons can enjoy light snacks and beverages at café tables in a comfortable atmosphere. At the same time the library relocated the History Room to the former meeting room. With funding from the Friends of the Library the room décor was updated to a classic library look and feel and is a comfortable space for doing historical research or for quiet study or small meetings. The former History Room was transformed into a Conference Room that seats up to 7 at a conference table. The room can accommodate up to 12 people and has a smart TV that can easily be connected to a laptop for presentations.

LIBRARY STAFFING, GOVERNANCE and FUNDING

Staffing Information for FY'15

Full-time staff members	8
Part-time staff members	6
(FTEs) Full-time equivalents	10.5
Number holding MLS degrees	3
Library Director's annual salary	\$76,171.00

Library Governance

The library has been governed by a five-member Board of Library Trustees as provided by the new Home Rule Charter of 1992, each elected to serve a three-year term. The Board elects a chairman, vice chairman and recording secretary.

Library Funding

Library funding is through municipal appropriations at the Annual Town Meeting held in late May of each year. Supplemental funds are generated by a special revolving account which allows the Trustees to keep fines or assessments for damaged or lost library property, and to apply this money to buy new library materials or supplies. Additional funds are realized through Library Incentive Grant and Municipal Equalization Grant awards. The Friends of the Bellingham Public Library have provided funds for programming on a regular basis.

The cost of providing additional cultural programs and museum passes is realized through grants from various community organizations and the Friends of the Library.

The library also has access to funds in the following trust funds:

The Mable Drake Library Trust Fund*	The Henry A. Whitney Library Trust Fund*
The Library Gift Fund	The Library Expendable Trust Fund
The Norma Rogers Memorial Gift Fund**	The 100 th Anniversary Book Gift Fund

***Expenditure of interest in these funds is limited to the purchase of library books.**

****Expenditure of these funds is limited to maintenance of the Norma Rogers Memorial**

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LIBRARY COLLECTION HOLDINGS INFORMATION AS OF 6/30/19

FORMAT	Adult	YA	Children's	Total
PRINT FORMAT: Books (including paperback, picture books, large print)	26,637	3,487	15,714	45,838
PRINT FORMAT: Volumes of print periodicals, newspapers and other print serials	596	0	45	641
AUDIO FORMAT: Compact discs, cassettes and Playaways	2706	223	599	3,528
VIDEO FORMAT: DVD, videocassettes	3748	0	711	4,459
ELECTRONIC FORMAT: (CD-ROMS, Serials)	7	167	0	174
MISCELLANEOUS: (kits, art prints, film, Video Games)	490	30	145	665
TOTAL PRINT AND NON-PRINT HOLDINGS	34,184	3907	17,214	55,305

LIBRARY FACILITIES and EQUIPMENT

	FY14	FY15	FY20
Hours open to public per week (months of September – June)	50	54	54
Days open per week (months of September – June)	6	6	6
Hours open to public per week (months of July and August)	43	47	47
Days open per week (months of July and August)	5	5	5
Evenings open per week year-round	2 until 8 pm 2 until 6 pm	4 until 8 pm	4 until 8 pm
Number of square feet for public use	15,000+		
Number of square feet for staff work area	2,000+		
Total linear feet of shelving	approximately 5000 linear feet		
Patron seating for in-library use In Children’s Room, Teen Room, Study Room, Conference Room, History Room, Main library areas, study areas, and at all equipment	144		
Community Room seating capacity	120		
Parking capacity	59		

Facilities and Equipment

- Library is centrally located in Bellingham.
- The facilities are well-maintained and attractive. As of 2019 all public areas have been renovated in the past 5 years, except the rest rooms.
- The library is secured by a motion alarm and infrared monitoring system including security cameras.
- All areas are handicapped-accessible.
- Separate children’s room has appropriate shelving and furnishings as well as a program room, separate staff office and private restroom designed for children.
- An enclosed Teen Room is furnished comfortably and equipped with computer and video equipment.
- The staff work area is separate from the public areas.
- Signage is clear and effective and has been updated recently.
- Full kitchen facilities adjacent to the community room are available for patron use.
- A private lounge with kitchen facilities is available for staff use.
- Patron in-library reading areas are well-lit and comfortably arranged.
- The library café, a vinyl floored bright space, opened in the spring of 2019, provides access to hot beverages and is a place for people to enjoy light snacks, next to the magazines and daily newspapers. The area is equipped with electricity for plugging in electronic devices and a charging station.
- A conference room is available for privacy or small group meetings.
- A local history room houses books of local or state history and is also available for small groups to hold meetings.
- A study room is adjacent to the Teen Room and is available for private study or group meetings.

Additional library resources for public use:

- A Dedicated Public Access Catalog (PAC) is available for patron use in the Children's Room
- Four Krayon Kiosk iPads are located in the Children's Room
- Twelve Internet Access computers are available for patron use, 5 in the Teen Room and 7 in the adult area
- One Scanning computer is available for patron use.
- One Staff mediated fax machine available to the public
- One Laminator that can be borrowed to laminate materials in house
- Flip-chart/dry erasable easel, CD player, DVD/video player and motorized movie projection screen are available in the Community Room.
- A state-of-the-art photocopier/printer is available, which prints in both black and white and color and is networked to the public computing stations and our Wi-Fi network.
- Ten Chromebooks for public use, mostly used in our after-school program for 4th to 6th graders
- Facsimile transmission/reception for patron service.
- Two display cabinets are used for library and patron displays.

Library Equipment for staff use:

- Five Computers for Circulation Staff, 2 on the desk and 3 in staff office area.
- Three Computers for Professional Staff on C/WMARS Network
- Three Staff computers on town network
- Staff copier, color printer, fax machine

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LIBRARY WEBSITE

In January of 2005 the Bellingham Public Library arranged for its own domain name and web hosting separate from the Town of Bellingham which maintained and hosted the website for the 3 previous years.

www.bellinghamlibrary.org was launched in February 2005 with 15 initial pages. By 2009 the site had grown to approximately 70 pages. In January of 2012 a newly designed website was launched using the WordPress platform, displaying 455 pages. In May of 2018 the library moved from the WordPress platform to the town based website managed by Civics Plus. We personalized their generic template to meet the library's needs.

Website visits grew from 2900 per month in 2005 to 5700 in 2009 and in 2018 was over 5800.

The library website is our “online branch,” a place where patrons can access many library services, such as the online catalog, calendar, online resources, hours as well as the library newsletter.

LIBRARY BUDGET DATA

Annual municipal appropriations for library operating expenditures:

Fiscal Year	Annual Budget
FY05	\$407,825
FY10	\$429,789
FY15	\$522,932
FY20	\$598,454

FY10 was the first budget year since FY04 that we saw a decrease in the library budget. Over the past nine years our budget has increased. Although from FY11 through FY14 the increase did not enable the library to meet the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) from the MBLC, the library applied for and received a waiver. Since FY15 we have had budget increases that met the MAR.

Per capita total annual operating expenditures:

FY05	15,504 residents	\$26.30
FY10	15,867 residents	\$27.06
FY15	16,521 residents	\$31.65
FY20	16,891 residents	\$35.43

Annual materials expenditures (print and non-print):

FY05	\$69,450	17.02%
FY10	\$85,296	19.19%
FY15	\$86,366	16.54%

Our FY20 budgeted materials expense is \$90,000, 15% of our budget. We usually budget just over 15% and arrange to expend at least 16%.

Funding source income for the last four full fiscal years:

	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Municipal Appropriation	533,629	550,068	569,003	580,756
MA State Funding LIG	11,077	11,077	11,286	11,751
MA State Funding MEG	7,076	6,951	7,146	7,269
MA State Funding NRC	2,781	2,999	2,978	3,320
Total MA State Funding	20,934	21,027	21,410	22,340
Total Funding All Sources	554,563	571,095	590,413	603,096

LIG: Library Incentive Grant

MEG: Municipal Equalization Grant

NRC: Nonresident Circulation Offset Award

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LIBRARY ANNUAL CIRCULATION FY19

Our overall circulation is down nearly 17% from FY14.

Item	Adult	Young Adult	Children	Total
Books	26,553	3,058	33,015	62,626
Print Periodicals Newspapers and other print serials	756	0	38	794
Audio (Music & Books) CD or other Physical Format	3,213	172	595	3,980
Video (DVD)	9,204	69	3,438	12,711
Ebooks	7,148	0	218	7,366
Downloadable Audio	2,119	0	0	2,119
Downloadable Video	13	0	0	13
Other Electronic Format Materials (CD Roms & Video Games)	116	474	0	590
Miscellaneous	580	45	437	1,062
Total	49,702	3,818	37,741	91,261

Other Statistics

	FY14	FY19
Circulation Per Capita	6.5	5.4
Reference Transactions Per Month	81	53 + 45 tech help sessions (in FY17 we started gathering statistics on technology assistance as we find that this is replacing many traditional reference transactions)
Cardholders	8750	10,201 Bellingham Card Holders 8,615 Bellingham Residents
Annual Visitors	91,179	113,095
Adult Programs	90	98
Children's Programs	550	877
Teen Programs	124	182
Non-library meetings held in library space	711	755

FIVE-YEAR CIRCULATION STATISTICS

Year	Registered Borrowers	Adult Print	Adult Nonprint	YA Print	YA Nonprint	Children's Print	Children's Nonprint	Total	ILLS Provided
FY14	8780	28,281	19,292	4,049	1,472	42,105	7,979	103,056	19,839
FY15	8364	30,213	16,486	5,032	1,322	40,581	7,633	101,267	19,517
FY16	8124	30,593	15,442	4,369	920	41,357	6,231	98,912	20,281
FY17	8450	30,448	15,427	8,191	1,419	37,608	11,159	104,252	17,822
FY18	8372	30,196	14,796	3,747	628	35,905	4,824	90,096	17,152
FY19	8566	27,308	13,110	3,061	760	33,050	4,469	81,758	17,650

The library's circulation over the past five years has dropped nearly 20%. In FY19 the library was closed for 14 days we normally would have been open due to a renovation. If those days had proportional circulation to the average of the rest of the year there would have been nearly 4000 more items circulated, still a 17% drop from FY14 but a less than 5% drop from the previous fiscal year.

In the meantime eBook circulation since FY10 exploded in FY14 and has had some variation in the years, but has been increasing since FY17.

FY10 106
 FY14 4,942
 FY15 7,580
 FY16 5,744
 FY17 6,512
 FY18 7,562
 FY19 9,498

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LIBRARY COMPARISONS FY 2018 RANKINGS REPORT FROM MBLC

Libraries with populations between 14,891 and 18,891 and neighboring libraries

Category	Median for Selected Group	Bellingham	Difference from Median
Population	16,530	16,891	2.18%
Full-Time Equivalent Employees	9.44	9.31	-1.38%
Salaries Paid from Library Budget	\$430,409	\$398,542	-7.40%
Holdings	143,399	119,464	-16.69%
Materials Expenditures	\$94,322	\$86,082	-8.73%
Holdings Per Capita	8.68	7.07	-18.55%
Materials Expenditure Per Capita	\$5.71	\$5.10	-10.68%
Total Circulation	133,186	111,182	-16.52%
Circulation Per Capita	8.06	6.58	-18.36%
Hours Per Year	2,533	2,598	2.57%
Visitors	99,157	129,279	30.38%
Cardholders	9,273	9,847	6.19%
YA Programs	29	187	544.83%
Children's Programs	249	822	230.12%
Adult Programs	108	312	188.88%
Appropriated Municipal Income per capita	\$38.10	\$33.69	-11.57%
Total Appropriated Municipal Income--Operating	\$581,304	\$569,003	-2.12%
Total Operating Income	\$632,154	\$616,097	-2.54%
Total Operating Expenditures per capita	\$38.79	\$34.13	-12.01%

Bellingham Library, in comparison to neighboring libraries and other Massachusetts libraries in our population group:

- The library has nearly the same number of full time equivalent employees as the comparison libraries.
- The library budget for staff salaries is over 7% lower than the median of the comparison libraries.
- The library collection is nearly 17% smaller than the comparison libraries. The library takes pride in a well-weeded collection that only includes titles that are classics or of high interest to the community.
- The library materials expenditure is nearly 9% less than the comparison libraries. However, each year the library does meet the materials requirement for state aid expenditures.
- The library total circulation is over 16% less than comparison libraries.
- The library is open over 2.5% more hours than the comparable libraries. The library is open 4 more hours than the minimum requirement for state aid.
- The library had over 30% more visitors than the comparison libraries. This number is a reflection of our high number of visitors participating in library programs.
- The library had over 544% more YA Programs; over 230% more Children's Programs and nearly 189% more adult programs than the comparison libraries. As mentioned above these numbers are reflected in the high number of visitors the library attracts.
- The library's appropriated municipal income and operating expenditures are 11-12% less than the comparison libraries. The library is still recovering from the 2008 financial crisis when the library budget was cut 10%. The town has increased the library budget each year, but the town is still not fully funding our part time salary line. Fully funding that line is a priority in this 5-year plan.
- The library's total municipal appropriated income and total operating income are between 2 and 3% less than the comparison libraries.

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ASSESSMENT OF USER NEED
CONCLUSIONS

On Wednesdays June 5 and 12, 2019 the Library Strategic Planning Committee Members met at the library for a planning session facilitated by Deb Hoadley of Hoadley Consulting. In addition, Ms. Hoadley met with the full library staff on Thursday, June 13th

The first meeting on April 14th had 14 participants. The session included an overview of strategic planning, the status of the library and a SOAR exercise to help analyze current and future conditions that affect the library and its ability to provide services that are determined to be the most important.

That session outlined the following:

Strengths:

1) Environment/Location:

- Welcoming
- Teen room
- Geographic location – It is walkable and accessible.
- Community room
 - Features shows, exhibits, workshops, and a variety of activities and easy to reserve and has a kitchen available
- Parking lot improvements
- Café
- Clean
- Pleasant atmosphere

2) Staff:

- Resourceful
- Fiscally responsible
- Not afraid to try new technology
- Quick response to book inquiries
- Librarians are approachable
- “Content Experts”
 - Staff are excited and impressive and use Facebook, newsletters and social media to promote the library

3) Programs:

- Children’s programs
 - Steve Fowler offers innovative, relevant programs.
 - They are well managed and plentiful in number, including Summer Reading and preschool programs.
 - They draw in the community and people have a positive experience so they keep coming back.
 - They offer socialization opportunities for parents
- Great way to meet people, especially if you are new to town
- Book clubs
- Writing Club – Draws people from Rhode Island and has mentored new reporters for our local monthly newspaper, The Bellingham Bulletin.
- After School Programs for kids
- Adult programs – Includes various workshops and lectures and our weekly knitting group.
- Daisy the Reading Dog – Visits the library every other week for children to read to her.

4) Collections:

- Non-traditional items to lend, including telescope, WiFi Hotspots, Karaoke Machine & More!
- Museum passes
- CW MARS Network – Ability to get materials from libraries throughout Central and Western Massachusetts within days.

5) Miscellaneous:

- Volunteer opportunities – The community turns to the library for volunteer opportunities, including National Honor Students and Senior Tax Work-off Program (currently supporting 14 seniors).
- Active Friends group – Our Friends group has twice a year book sales and other fundraisers throughout the year.
- Grants – The library is always looking for opportunities to expand programming with grant funding.
- Town support – The library is supported by the town because the residents understand the library is a resource for the community

Opportunities:

- More book clubs
- More activities for over 12 year olds
- Technology Help – Offer computer classes, or online class group. Provide assistance to download eBooks, and other tech help. Use teen volunteers and/or online tutorials.
- Think about customers we haven't reached yet. Find different ways to engage them, possibly by sharing content to other groups.
- Non-library users – Reach non-users by providing non-reader opportunities and partnering with the Senior Center. Look at different demographics; find out who kids want to connect with (like the school's reading buddies programs); establish mentor/mentee opportunities.
- Field trips to library – Expand the program beyond Kindergarten and 4th grade
- Talk to other groups – To tell library story
- Use the newspaper for access point.
 - Write and submit spotlight features to *Bellingham Bulletin* and other print media.
- Find new ways for people to engage
- Book reviews by kids
- Makerspace – Provide the equipment to show how people to blog or create podcasts; have space to do this, and staff/volunteers to show people how to create them.
- Middle day programs for kids (homeschooler group)
- Writing club for kids – Using computers to write stories
- Parameters for afterschool program – Look for opportunities to do something new
- Conversation circles for language – Reach Spanish/Brazilian Portuguese residents. Offer ESL courses, introduce online resources and focus on early learners.
- More middle school and elementary volunteers.
- Community experts to do programming (aspiration).
- Library card celebration.
- Have badges for activities done at the library
- Relate various resources together; museum passes with books and displays based on usage from patrons

Aspirations:

- Books to kids who don't have access to books – Promote early reading in a variety of ways.
- Use food pantry in town to help get books to people
- Story hour online – use Facebook Live
- Build 50-70 year old engagement
 - Consider perception of senior centers and collaborate with other organizations

- Building
 - Expand children’s room footprint to include space for middle school program, redo room layout.
- “Green spaces” for sustainability. Acquire self-flushing toilets and air hand dryers; and install solar panels on library roof
- Outdoor programming
- Patio
- Continue afterschool program
- Enhance outside message board to make it more visible; use solar energy to run it
- Alignment with and enhance offerings to school curriculum
- Enrichment opportunities for students, perhaps an independent study project using Universal Class
- Think about art, culture, language
- Do something with social/emotional learning (behaviors)
- World language story hours, use people in the community that speak the language to offer program.
- Reach teen boys
- Support grandparents raising grandkids, especially around technology issues.
- Look at what the library does through a culturally sensitive lens. Support and build community; examine how we work with different ethnic groups and others in the community to be served (this could also be a community vision)

Results:

- Increased attendance
- Increased connections
- More penetration throughout the community
- Heart of the community
- Providing community base
- Relevance
- Creating a kinder, gentler community
- Ways to measure to show impact; think about a longer study
- Increased school readiness for high risk populations; close the gap through literacy and early reading readiness
- Retention of people using the library

The second meeting on June 12th focused on the community, and its needs and wants and vision for the future. This was a brainstorming exercise where community members discussed what they want in the next 5, 10, 20 years for the town of Bellingham.

The question asked was: “How does your community see itself and its future?”

Hopes and Aspirations:

- Variety of outdoor activities/gathering places including: Green spaces, town commons, Silver Lake, conservation and preserving open spaces, expand existing areas for outdoor activities, access to Crooks Corner Park, park and open space- access to fields, tennis courts, general population, covered/shaded playground areas.
- Community should pay special attention to promoting diversity, including: organized events for 25-40 year olds; “Instagram” spots to draw people to town; Make Old Home Days- 300th event a tradition. Create art and new opportunities for creating and displaying it. Establish an art and music center. Establish places to hold community meetings and adult gatherings. Establish welcoming committee/wagon/basket that includes programs for newcomers 101. Let them know how they can

participate and join and that Bellingham is a place for different cultures and that we encourage and promote mental health awareness/support and serve all members of the community.

- Infrastructure, including: Revitalize infrastructure- mixed-use buildings in the southern parts of town. Create environment that benefits seniors and encourages families to move in (housing). Balance growth with affordability/ (increase tax or tax base). Provide seniors access to technology help and devices. Expand options for housing; investigate/explore zoning options. Provide continuous sidewalks and walkable areas. Connect the two parking lots at the Town Common. Investigate what is needed for transportation accessibility and to make traffic flow better.
- Support the student population - Improve the rate of kids going to college; enhance adult readiness.
- Implement beautification projects with welcoming signage. Restaurants and shopping to match vision of people who are coming into town.
- Sustainability and energy efficiency options. Look to the future with electric cars, solar wind, building operations, water conservation, green roofs and other future technologies.

VISION STATEMENT

We reviewed the library's vision statement: "The Bellingham Library is the hub of the community...where people and ideas come together" and found it still relevant.

SURVEY RESULTS

During July and August of 2019 we surveyed community members about library services. The survey was on the library website, shared on Facebook on the library page and many community group pages, emailed to library contacts and printed copies were available at the library, senior center and town hall. Here are the questions and the relevant results. We had 414 respondents.

Question #1. Where to you live?

335	Bellingham
11	Blackstone
20	Franklin
4	Medway
4	Mendon
9	Milford
31	Other

Analysis: The survey listed nearby towns that use our library because a good number of library cardholders are from those towns. Not surprisingly, 80.9% of the respondents live in Bellingham. 11.7% live in a nearby CW MARS library. 5.8% live in a nearby Minuteman Library. 7.4% selected other meaning that they do not live in a nearby town. We know our story times attract family members of Bellingham residents, who live out of town, and use our library while they attend our programs with their children.

Question #2 In what age range do you fall?

4	Under 12
4	13-17
9	18-24
177	25-44
123	45-59
97	60+

Analysis: The library had hoped to reach a higher number of respondents in the 18-24 age range. However, the library is pleased that 23.4% of respondents were over age 60. This will greatly help us in planning adult programming for that age group.

Question #3 What language do you speak at home?

413	English
1	Other

Analysis: The library needs to find a better way to survey this population. There are two languages that the library is aware of that are spoken by our immigrant communities, Hindi (and/or other Indic languages) and Brazilian Portuguese. Many of the immigrants from India do speak English so there is a great possibility that they speak English at home and this survey did reach them.

Question #4 How often have you visited the library in the last year?

- 90 Weekly or more often
- 128 A few times a month
- 55 Monthly
- 78 Several times this year
- 42 Once or twice this year
- 21 Never

Analysis: 65.9% of respondents visited the library at least monthly. 29% visited less than monthly. 5.1% of the respondents did not use the library this year. Input from nonusers is important and the library will look at comments from those users with an eye to finding out what services might bring them to use the library.

Question #5 If you haven't visited the library in the past year, tell us why. Check all that apply

- 23 Too busy
- 26 Other (survey listed a variety of options that were only chosen by less than 5% of respondents)
- 7 My children are grown and I mainly went to the library for them
- 7 Programs are not of interest
- 6 Hours not convenient
- 5 I buy what I need
- 4 I use another library

Analysis: 31.1% of those who haven't visited said they are too busy; 8.1% said the hours are not convenient. The library is open 54 hours a week, 4 nights until 8 pm and 10-5 on Saturdays during the school year. Another question addresses hours of operation and additional analysis is there. The 9.5% who said they do not come because their children are grown and the programs are not of interest need to be enticed by adult programming that appeals to them.

Question #6 In the last 12 months, has your use of the Bellingham Library, increased, decreased or stayed the same as in recent years?

- 134 Increased
- 68 Decreased
- 197 Stayed the same
- 15 Not applicable

Analysis: 80% of respondents had either increased or had the same number of visits as in the past. Only 16.4% reported a decrease in their use of the library. These are encouraging numbers that we need to keep growing.

Question #7 Tell us the top 3 days and times you are most likely to use the library.

- 150 Weekday mornings
- 182 Weekday afternoons
- 153 Weekday evenings
- 87 Saturday morning (school year)
- 72 Saturday afternoon (school year)
- 47 Saturday morning (summer)
- 31 Saturday afternoon (summer)
- 30 Sunday afternoons (October to April)
- 8 I don't use the library.

Analysis: 84.6% of respondents selected times the library is currently open. 14.2% selected times the library is not currently open. The number who selected Saturday hours in the summer is about half as many people as those that selected Saturday during the school year, when we are open. The number that selected Sunday hours is the lowest of all options, excluding those who don't use the library. At this point, these statistics do not make a strong enough argument to expand library Saturday and/or Sunday hours.

Question #8 Select the 3 library services that are most important to you.

- 47 Access to and assistance with computers and Internet
- 219 Access to materials from our library, libraries throughout the state and beyond
- 87 Assistance from librarians and library staff
- 69 Adult Programs
- 60 Library Website
- 69 Online resources (language learning, online courses, streaming music, ebooks)
- 88 Preschool Programs
- 90 Programs for grades k-3
- 43 Programs for grades 4-6
- 28 Programs for grades 7-12
- 28 Wireless Internet Access
- 23 Other

Analysis: As expected, the most important service continues to be access to materials from our library, libraries throughout the state and beyond, selected by 25.8% of respondents. The library's most extensive children's programs are for preschoolers and grades 4-6, so the survey showing that programs for grades k-3 are as much in demand as programs for preschoolers will be investigated. The library is always encouraged that the community values assistance from librarians and library staff, the 4th most popular answer for this question.

Question #9 Select the 3 areas of library space that are most important to you.

- 109 Adult Study Area
- 43 Café
- 136 Children's Room Play Area
- 115 Children's Room Table Area
- 159 Community Room
- 23 Conference Room
- 21 History Room
- 34 Study Room

- 50 Teen Room
- 19 Other

Analysis: Initially that 22.4% selected the Community Room was unexpected. But, as the library holds many of the children’s programs in that space, the reason for the selection was apparent. The adult spaces, the study area and cafe (newly opened in April 2019) were selected by over 20% of people as their most important. As children’s programs dominate the library programming, it is not surprising that another 35.4% selected the children’s room play and table areas as their most important spaces.

Question #10 Please tell us which of the following library services you or your child(ren) have used this year (2019). Select all that apply.

- 226 Borrowed books, DVDs, audiobooks, magazines, etc.
- 119 Borrowed a museum or attraction pass
- 32 Borrowed an item from a library display
- 34 Borrowed items from our library of things (ukulele, microscope, VR glasses, etc)
- 27 Borrowed a WiFi Hotspot
- 74 Borrowed an eBook or eAudio from our Overdrive collection
- 65 Read a magazine or newspaper in the library
- 104 Shopped the Friends of the Library Book Sale (lobby, spring, or Old Home Days Sale)
- 100 Used the library as a space to work, study or read
- 73 Used the library for social connections, as an informal meeting space
- 128 Used the children’s room play space
- 28 Used the library café space
- 12 Visited the library’s local history room or used local history or genealogical resources
- 90 Used the library’s WiFi network
- 67 Used a library public computer
- 35 Used the library’s online resources (language learning, online courses, music service, etc)
- 62 Used the library’s print, copy, scan, fax or laminate services
- 45 Participated in an adult program (author talk, craft program, lecture, etc.)
- 80 Participated in a program for preschoolers
- 46 Participated in the summer reading program
- 66 Attended a program for children in grades k-3
- 34 Attended a program for children in grades 4-6
- 9 Attended a program for children in grades 7-12
- 3 Attended a program for homeschooling families
- 34 Attended a meeting not sponsored by the library, but hosted in the library meeting room
- 8 Asked for research or homework help
- 18 Asked for computer help
- 1 Used our “Book a Librarian” Service
- 12 Volunteered at the library
- 0 Used our Home Delivery Service
- 18 I have not used any library services this year

Analysis: The top ten services used were:

- 13.7% Borrowed books, DVDs, audiobooks, magazines, etc.
- 7.8% Used the children’s play space
- 7.2% Borrowed a museum or attraction pass
- 6.3% Shopped the Friends of the Library Book Sale
- 6.1% Used the library space to work, read or study
- 4.1% Used the library’s WiFi network
- 4.8% Participated in a program for preschoolers
- 4.5% Borrowed an eBook or eAudio from our Overdrive collection
- 4.4% Used the library for social connections, as an informal meeting space
- 4.1% Used a library public computer

As expected, borrowing library materials is the most used service, coupled with the Overdrive service, shows that libraries are still about lending books and other materials. Using the play space and attending programs for preschoolers, as the library has a large number of programs for that age group, is not unexpected. The value of the services provided by our Friends of the Library group: museum and attraction passes and shopping the used book sale, were unexpected and will be considered in future planning. The library is pleased to see the community view the library as a place for social connections and informal meeting space as our vision is “The hub of the community, where people and ideas come together.” Although the use of the library’s public computers has decreased over the past few years, it still comes up as a very valuable service to those who use it.

Question #11 Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1=extremely unsatisfied and 5=extremely satisfied. Skip any that do not apply.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Customer Service	3	0	4	41	246
Overall Facility	1	3	12	69	201
Collection of Adult books and other library materials	1	7	24	75	108
Collection of Teen books and other library materials	1	3	13	30	50
Collection of Children’s books and other library materials	0	3	10	49	110
Electronic Collection of books, audio, streaming video and music	1	3	28	45	57
Online resources (language learning, online courses, etc)	0	0	14	26	39
Reference Services	0	1	7	18	49
Preschool Children’s services	0	0	3	13	104
Grades K-3 Children’s Services	1	1	3	17	77
Grades 4-6 Children’s Services	1	0	2	14	50
Grades 7-12 Children;s Services	0	2	4	9	37
Internet services, Wi-Fi, and Public computer stations	0	4	6	38	73
Technology Assistance	0	2	6	16	37
Copy, print, scan, fax and laminate service	2	0	8	27	57
Service to homebound	0	0	4	10	25
Library Website	1	7	20	59	106
Total	13	38	171	560	1431

Analysis: 90.6% of respondents rated the library as 4 or 5 in the above categories. The only category that did not exceed 80% 4 and 5 responses was electronic collections at 76%. The library is grateful that the community recognizes the exceptional programs, services, staff and facility the Bellingham community enjoys.

Question #12 Our community visioning exercise identified 6 areas that the community members viewed as important to the Bellingham community. Please rank these ideas from 1 to 6 with 1 being the one that is most important to you and 6 the one that is least important. Please only use each number once.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
Improve and expand outdoor areas for activities and gatherings	37	62	52	39	34	50
Support education and students' needs	131	56	45	23	13	11
Balance growth with affordability (housing, retail, taxes and tax base)	43	46	42	44	51	43
Revitalization and beautification of various parts of town	27	22	43	63	46	62
Serve diverse populations and create a welcoming environment (ethnic, religious, mental health, accessibility)	28	37	54	39	50	53
Investigate sustainable options for energy efficiency	22	39	44	47	55	59
Total	289	264	283	259	254	284

Analysis: Grouping together the respondents that selected a given category as their first or second priority, the top 3 priorities are: 66.5% for support education and students' needs; 36.3% for improve and expand outdoor areas for activities and gatherings; and 32.3% for balance growth with affordability. Based on other survey questions the library could best assist in meeting these goals by:

Support education and student needs: expanding programming for school aged children, explore offering a homework club.

Improve and expand outdoor areas for activities and gatherings: explore opportunities for outdoor spaces on the library property and support community efforts to expand in other locations.

Balance growth with affordability: although there is no direct way for the library to meet this goal we can support the community in its request by being a venue for discussions or programs that address these issues.

Question #13 To improve your library experience, tell us what 3 services you would like the library to focus on.

- 147 More physical materials (books, DVDs, audiobooks, library of things, etc)
- 122 More electronic collections (eBooks, downloadable audiobooks, streaming music, streaming video, etc.)
- 78 Community forums (community-wide conversations around topics of interest)
- 67 Programs for preschoolers
- 74 Programs for children in grades k-3
- 41 Programs for children in grades 4-6
- 35 Programs for children in grades 7-12
- 95 Programs for adults
- 34 Increase spaces to meet and gather

- 34 Increase spaces for quiet study and reading
- 61 Expand café services to include snack options

Analysis: The top two requests were for more physical and electronic materials, selected by 34.2% of respondents. The next highest were adult programs and community forums, followed by k-3 and preschool programs. The library will review its collection development policy to ensure collection funds are spent in the best way to meet the needs of the community by reviewing our high demand materials and electronic collection policies. It is apparent from the survey results that the community is requesting more adult programs and the library will be exploring options on ways to offer low-cost, high-interest programming, using library staff and community experts. The preschool programs currently offered are extensive and do not require expansion, although the times for some of the programs might be tweaked to better meet community demand. Expansion of programs for K-3 will be explored.

Question #14 We see the library fulfilling the role to help meet that vision by potentially offering the following services/programs. Pick 3 of the listed programs that you would most like to see the library concentrate on during these plan years.

- 119 Conduct story hours at the park and bring the current programs out of the library and into the community
- 130 Improve the outdoor spaces at the library
- 88 Offer an orientation for middle school students
- 90 Assess and improve the after school program
- 94 Create a homework club
- 106 Create volunteer opportunities
- 107 Invest in technology

Analysis:

The top request of the community for the library is to improve our outdoor spaces. This will be highly considered in our facility goals.

The second request is for story times at the park and outside of the library into the community. The library currently offers a weekly story time at the Town Common from April to October, weather permitting. The library also collaborates with the Senior Center on numerous programs each year. This is another program that could be expanded, possibly into the two public elderly housing complexes in town.

The next request to “invest in technology” would need to be further explored to determine exactly what needs the community has that are not currently being met.

Three other categories, middle school orientation, after school program assessment and homework club, could be tackled by using the final service, create volunteer opportunities. Expansion of our volunteer program with National Honor Society Students and other interested community volunteers could greatly expand our student services. We could offer a mentor program and/or homework club to enhance our after school offering to middle school students.

Question #15 Libraries are changing significantly in the 21st century. We are currently offering some of these services, but there is a wide variety of areas we could investigate expanding services. Tell us which 5 of these services are most important to you.

96	Art Shows & Programs
76	Author Talks
81	Bestsellers, acquire additional copies of hot titles
55	Community space for group learning, activities or meetings
36	Computer Training
41	Digitize Bellingham historical materials and post them online
67	eBooks and eAudio
18	Film series
80	Homework center
33	Internet access
59	Job & Career Resource Center
71	Music Programs
94	Outdoor Seating Space/Patio
58	“Red Box” type service for books and DVDs when the library is closed
57	School/library partnerships
27	Seed library (borrow seeds to grow your garden)
56	Self Checkout Station
17	Small Business Resource Center
100	STEM Programs (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)
55	Streaming or downloadable video service (like a Netflix model)
91	Tool library (need a pressure washer, sander or other tool?)
41	Topical lectures

Analysis:

The top requested service, mentioned by 7.6% of respondents, is for STEM programming. The library has, over the years, offered a variety of STEM programs from our seismology program to our energy efficiency programs. The library will explore what our next STEM programs should be during these plan years.

The next most requested service, mentioned by 7.3% of respondents, is for art shows/programs. This year the library is sponsoring a photography show. If it is successful, the library can make in an annual event. The library will also explore offering at least a monthly craft/art program for adults.

The third most requested service is for outdoor seating and/or a patio, selected by 7.2% of respondents. This was in our last strategic plan and renovation of interior spaces took priority. It will be transferred over to the new plan.

The next most requested program/service is for a tool library, selected by 7% of respondents. The library has been expanding its “library of things” and it does include some tools, like a bike repair kit. The challenge with acquiring some of the larger items, like a pressure washer, is due to the lack of space to store them.

As always, 6.2% of patrons next wanted “more bestsellers.” As previously mentioned, the library will be reviewing its collection development policies to insure the materials budget is spent in the way that benefits most patrons.

Many respondents, 6.1%, wanted the library to offer a homework center. As mentioned above, we will explore getting a program like this off the ground using volunteers.

Question #16 How do you find out about events going on in Bellingham? Select all that apply.

95	Signs, flyers or poster around town
159	Print (Bellingham Bulletin, Milford Daily News, Woonsocket Call, Country Gazette, etc.)
187	Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
89	Friend or family member
128	Organizational mailing lists

Analysis: The only result of this question that will be helpful to the library is that organizational mailing lists were selected by nearly 20% of respondents. The library is using print and social media effectively, but could reach out to more organizations to ask them to share library events that the library thinks will have interest to their members.

Question #17 What would you like to do in Bellingham that you cannot currently do?

This open-ended question was answered in a variety of ways. Some replies seemed to look at it in the context of only what would you like to do at the library that you cannot do. Others answered to meet our intention to get input on what they would like to do, regardless of who will provide the service.

88 people entered a response to this question. Listed are those that were mentioned by more than one respondent. The library will share the responses with appropriate town departments for their consideration.

These are the answers that were addressed to the library and how the library sees their role in fulfilling the request.

- Genealogy Software – The library had just acquired Ancestry.com and other genealogy databases the month before the survey was deployed so patrons may not have been aware that it was available. A few asked for home access to Ancestry and that is not a service the vendor supplies to libraries.
- Programs later in the evening or on Saturdays –Numerous respondents expressed an interest in evening library programs starting later than the 6 or 6:30 pm hour that they normally begin. They cited difficulty getting to the library that soon due to work commutes. The library will consider this in future program planning.
- Self Checkout – Self Checkout was on the library’s last plan and is still on the radar, and will be part of this plan. The library is working with CW MARS to implement a self-checkout system that could be partnered with a credit card payment system for patrons to pay for overdue materials and lost items at the self-checkout station.
- Teach and take free classes – The library does offer some classes and can expand the program with the help of community volunteers who are experts or knowledgeable on a topic. This is an area that we can develop.
- Volunteer opportunities – The library currently has 15 volunteers, most through our town’s senior tax work off program. Developing more volunteer opportunities, especially in working with the town’s school age children, is a priority. We also plan to look to community volunteers to teach classes and offer workshops on topics of personal expertise.
- 3D Printer/Makerspace – For three years the library had a 3D Printing program. By the time the equipment failed, interest in the program had been dwindling so it was not replaced. There are other makerspace activities that could be considered for future programming.

These are the answers that were addressed as a general wish for the town and they will be shared with the appropriate town departments. If the library has a role in the answer, its role will be in the response.

- More cultural activities, concerts, public art, art shows, etc. – The library aims to hold concerts and this year is holding our first photography art show. If it is a success, it will become an annual event.
- More developed, walkable downtown
- Higher quality dining/café restaurants
- Dog Park
- Socializing events for single parents and newcomers to town – The library could play a role in providing these events. The library has discussed coordinating a Bellingham 101 class, everything newcomers (or even longtime residents) need to know; a trade show-like event where town departments and services explain their services to residents. The library has discussed with the Town Clerk offering voting information workshops for residents in early 2020.
- Open space, conservation areas, running and walking trails (with bike rentals)
- Farmer’s Market

As an aside, some of the more humorous replies included “surf” and “good pizza”.

Question #19 Is there anything else you would like us to know? This space is for your comments.

This was an open ended question and responses are grouped and only ones mentioned by numerous people are included. The library director will be preparing a document to share with the community about these comments to correct misconceptions, answer questions and enlighten all about library services.

- The most common response to this question was accolades to the whole library staff, and often specifically “Mr. Steve” Fowler our Youth Services Librarian for the fantastic services the library offers to the children of Bellingham. In addition, numerous people mentioned our after school programming and the vital role it plays in providing activities for 4-12 graders (who can walk to the library from their schools) in the after school hours.
- Others mentioned they love access to museum and attraction passes from the library, our library of things collection and meeting rooms.
- Many other mentioned they are pleased with the updated look of the library when we updated carpeting, furniture and fixtures this past spring.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FY2021-FY2025

Based on the results of the work of the committee and the survey, the director, staff and trustees have set the following goals for the next 5 years:

Facility

Year 1

- **Painting/Siding Building Exterior** - Develop, plan and secure funding to paint, ceramic paint or vinyl side the current wood exterior sections of the building.
- **Paint Building Interior** – Develop, plan and secure funding to paint the interior lofted spaces of the building.
- **Vending Machine** – Acquire vending machine so snacks are available to library patrons for consumption in the café and children’s programs and other places where food is permitted.

Year 2

- **HVAC System** – Investigate options, plan, prioritize and secure funding to upgrade the library’s 30-year-old HVAC system to a more energy efficient system. At that time consider solar panels for the library roof.
- **Increase Storage Space** – It is our hope that a new HVAC system will take up less space than the current system and some of the area could be reconfigured for better storage space.
- **Lighting Upgrade** – Investigate options, plan, prioritize and secure funding to upgrade the library’s 30-year- old lighting fixtures.

Years 3-5

- **Bathroom Remodeling** – Plan, prioritize and secure funding to update the public restrooms and janitor closet. This is the only public space of the building that has not been renovated since the building was built 30 years ago. Renovate to include energy efficient fixtures and modern amenities.
- **Patio and/or Other Outdoor Spaces**– Explore options for long term acquisition of patio space outside of the Teen Room or other outdoor spaces that could be used by the public.
- **Generator** – Acquire funding for a generator that would enable the library to stay open and serve as a community information center with Internet access and a charging center during storms and electrical outages.
- **Connect to Town Sewer** – Explore options for connecting the library to the town sewer to replace the 30-year-old septic system.
- **Doors for Children’s Room** – Explore options for installing doors on the Children’s Room to be able to close off the area from noise during busy times.

Technology

Year 1

- **Computer Hardware & Software** – Keep up-to-date with computer technology to meet the needs of library staff and the general public. Explore updating staff network capabilities.
- **Social Media & Website** – Develop systems to optimize the use of the library’s website and social media pages.

Year 2

- **Self-Check Out Station** – Plan and secure funding to acquire a self-check out station to free library staff for higher level activities and give patrons options to checkout and to pay their library fees online without staff assistance.

Programs & Services

Year 1

- **Staff Training** – Take advantage of opportunities to expand staff expertise and staff training through grants, programs offered by CW MARS (our library network), Massachusetts Library System, Massachusetts Library Association, New England Library Association, grant funding from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and other sources.
- **School Outreach** - Work with key school staff to expand opportunities for collaboration to improve student success in all grades.
- **STEM** – Continue to offer science, technology, engineering and math programs.
- **Community Outreach & Offsite Programming** - Work with key community members to expand opportunities to collaborate with the Senior Center, Local Access Cable TV, and commercial businesses to offer programs and services to the community.
- **Collections** – Maintain and grow library collections (both physical and electronic) of books, DVDs, CDs and other formats to meet the needs of the community. Explore expanding museum pass offerings.
- **Adult Programs** – Explore best options for adult programs including art, music, lectures and films,. Consider community input on programming times and topics.
- **Afterschool Programs** – Maintain a vibrant and well-attended afterschool program for children in grades 4-12.
- **Children’s Programs** – Maintain vibrant and well-attended programs for preschoolers and elementary school age children. Explore new options for children in grades K-3 and offer a library orientation for middle school students.

Year 2

- **Creative Space** – Explore ways to reconfigure library space to offer a creative space; a place where people can gather for creative pursuits. including crafts, technology or other use of their leisure time.
- **Multigenerational Programs** – Explore the best options for introducing multigenerational (grandparent-grandchild) programs to the community.
- **Library Resources** – Offer training for the public in effective use of library resources.
- **Homework Club** – Explore the feasibility of establishing an after school homework club using a volunteer program.

Years 3-5

- **Nontraditional Borrowing** – Explore community interest in nontraditional library borrowing programs, specifically a tool library as requested by survey respondents.
- **Hours** – Explore feasibility of funding Saturday morning summer hours.

ACTION PLAN FY21

Goal 1: Facilities

<p>Objective: Paint/Side Building Exterior</p> <p>Time Frame: Fall 2020-Spring 2021</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Investigate options for exterior building maintenance, (paint, ceramic paint, or siding). Secure funding at fall 2020 Town Meeting and complete project by spring of 2021.</p>
<p>Objective: Paint Building Interior</p> <p>Time Frame: Fall 2020</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Secure funding at fall 2020 Town Meeting to paint the lofted interior spaces of the building that have not been painted in over 10 years. Complete project by January 2021.</p>
<p>Objective: Vending Machine</p> <p>Time Frame: Summer 2020 (or sooner)</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Acquire vending machine for library patrons.</p>

Goal 2: Technology

<p>Objective: Computer Hardware & Software Maintenance</p> <p>Time Frame: Fall 2020-Spring 2021</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Review hardware and software needs and update as necessary to meet the needs of library staff and the general public.</p>
<p>Objective: Social Media & Website</p> <p>Time Frame: All Year</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Develop systems to optimize the use of the library's website and social media pages.</p>

Goal 3: Programs & Services

<p>Objective: Staff Training</p> <p>Time Frame: All Year</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Enable staff to take advantage of opportunities to expand expertise by attending workshops and trainings at C/W MARS (our library network), Massachusetts Library System, Massachusetts Library Association, New England Library Association and other sources. Reinstitute in-house peer staff training.</p>
<p>Objective: School Outreach</p> <p>Time Frame: All Year</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Work with key school staff to expand opportunities to collaborate with all of the Bellingham schools to improve student achievement in all grades.</p>
<p>Objective: STEM Programming</p> <p>Time Frame: Fall 2020</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Continue to offer STEM programs and explore options for topics in demand by the community.</p>
<p>Objective: Community Outreach & Offsite Programming</p> <p>Time Frame: Winter 2021</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Work with key community members to expand opportunities to collaborate with the Senior Center, Local Access Cable TV, and commercial businesses to offer programs and services to the community.</p>
<p>Objectives: Collection Management</p> <p>Time Frame: All Year</p>	<p>FY21 Action/Method: Maintain and grow library collection (both physical and electronic) of books, DVDs, CDs and other formats to meet the needs of the community. Based on survey results, explore expanding museum pass offerings.</p>

Objectives: Adult Program Planning Time Frame: All Year	FY21 Action/Method: Explore best options for adult programs, including art, music, lectures and films and consider community input on programming times and topics.
Objectives: Afterschool Program Planning Time Frame: All Year	FY21 Action/Method: Maintain a vibrant and well-attended afterschool program for children in grades 4-12. Assess the ASK program the 2019-2020 school year.
Objectives: Children's Program Planning Time Frame: All Year	FY21 Action/Method: Maintain vibrant and well-attended programs for preschoolers and elementary school age children. Explore new options for children in grades K-3 and offer an orientation for middle school students.

MONITORING THE PLAN AND STAYING ON TARGET

The library director will be expected to present regular reports at the monthly Library Trustees' meetings. These reports will not only inform the Board as to the implementation of the stated goals, but will also suggest revision and changes as needed.

Since a major aspect of this plan deals with maintaining or increasing the library budget over the Five-Year cycle, it is imperative that the Board of Trustees include these goals in the budget they approve for submission to the Town Administrator. The Trustees all take an active part in convincing the Finance Committee and the Annual Town Meeting voters that the request for level or increased funding is based on a carefully considered plan for maintenance and improvement of library services for the Town of Bellingham.

Finally, as the plan enters year 4 of the 5-year cycle, the Trustees will ask the Director to form a new planning committee made up of interested patrons, staff members, and Trustees to take action on the new Strategic Plan.