The
Ruth Enlow Library
of GARRETT COUNTY

re

Community + Opportunity

STRATEGIC PLAN • 2018-2023

Letter from the Board President

This is our first strategic plan under our new Library Director, Mr. Thomas Vose. We are excited by the changes that have already occurred since Mr. Vose's arrival last year, and we are looking forward to coming changes with the new strategic plan.

One of the goals of our Board has been expanding our outreach to the community. Towards that effort the community (i.e. citizens, the Board of Education, the County Commissioners and many other agencies and organizations) have been contacted for input. We have been pleased with the response.

Another goal has been the improvement of each library branch, including its physical plan and resources/technology. That includes the consideration of a new library building in Friendsville.

The Board of the Ruth Enlow Library unanimously and enthusiastically supports our new Strategic Plan and our new director. We hope that our patrons and the community in general will support these initiatives as well.

Thank You,

Karl Schwalm
Board President
August 2018

Letter from the Director

I am very pleased to be able to present this new Strategic Plan, created in close consultation with the community, which I believe represents a set of achievable, yet potentially transformative goals for the Ruth Enlow Library to pursue over the next several years. In order to ensure that our efforts are on task, we will be reviewing this plan annually.

As a newcomer to Garrett County, creating this plan proved for me a marvelously effective introduction to the area, its people, and the issues it faces.   The conversations I've had with people throughout the County have resulted in new relationships, new partners and new ideas for using the Library's resources to better benefit our patrons and the community as a whole.

Our new Mission Statement deliberately references the "Libraries Transform" initiative of the American Library Association (ALA). Libraries transform lives, and I firmly believe in being an active force in the community, not simply a passive warehouse of books. Our programs, our materials (paper and electronic) and our services are capable of doing great good – helping kids find new interests, helping job-seekers find a position, helping someone cope with grief, helping people connect over shared interests, and in an uncountable variety of other ways. We have an obligation to live up to that potential as best we can.
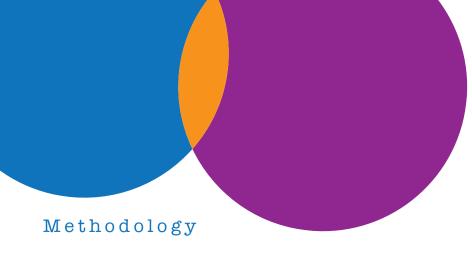
A key part of this process was the creation of our Values Statement, which describes the values the Library will strive to uphold and promote in the community whenever possible. These values, which represent the field of librarianship, the government of the County, and the voices of our patrons, will serve as the guiding star for our staff when making policy decisions as well as when determining what programs and services we will offer. We will, additionally, refer to these values when bringing new people and partners onto our team.

I wanted to be sure to thank the Maryland State Library, who supplied us with a grant through the Library Services and Technology Act that funded this process. I would additionally like to thank our Board of Trustees, whose support has been invaluable during this period of transition, and our wonderful staff, whose praises I have been hearing throughout the planning process – their customer service skills and relationship with our patrons are what make the Library such a welcoming, inviting place to be. Additional thanks go to the people who participated in our Community Conversations at each branch – it is heartwarming to see so many people that care about their library and their community and to hear so many wonderful ideas!

Finally, I would like to thank our patrons. We are your library, and we will remember that.

There is a lot to do, but I'm excited to get started. See you at the Library!

Thomas Vose
Director
July 2018

Methodology

In order to base the Library's planning on a solid foundation, several methods were used to obtain information about the Library and the community it serves.

- A total of sixteen Community Conversations were held at five Library branches between October and December, 2017. These employed the methodology recommended by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.
- An internal SWOT analysis was conducted during the month of December, 2017 to obtain staff input as to the "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" facing the Library.
- Demographic reports for each community serviced by an REL branch were obtained through the Western Maryland Regional Library.
- A data report from Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. was purchased to provide economic and comparative information on Garrett County with respect to the State of Maryland.
- An EDGE Initiative survey was conducted in April, 2018 to assess the Library's technology services as compared to a national set of benchmarks.
- A community survey was conducted through Constant Contact both online and off between February and March, 2018. The Library received responses from 430 participants.
- A Facilities Study, sponsored by the Western Maryland Regional Library, was conducted in September, 2017 to assess Library building needs.
- A Salary Study, also sponsored by the Western Maryland Regional Library, was completed in March, 2017 describing Library staff salaries relative to peers in the area.
- Tableau data on the Library's collection usage was available for review.
- Internal library use numbers were also consulted.
- The Library also actively participated in the Garrett County Public Schools' RISE planning initiative and the County Government's strategic planning process during this period to help align the Library with the goals of those organizations.
- The Library also consulted the Maryland State Library's LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) five-year plan, to ensure that the Ruth Enlow Library's goals tracked those of the greater public library community in the State.

The following reports were also consulted in the preparation of this Strategic Plan:

- Reid, Ian (2017) The 2017 Public Library Data Service Report: Characteristics and Trends. Public Libraries Online. Retrieved from http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2017/12/the-2017-public-library-data-service-report-characteristics-and-trends/
- Horrigan, John B., (2016) Libraries 2016. Pew Research Center: Internet & Technology. Retrieved from www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/09/libraries-2016/

Reports and data collected for this plan are available upon request at the Main Library.

Findings

THE COUNTY

• Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. report – comparing Garrett County to other MD counties.
>—Population growth rate #22 of 24 (and declining).
>—Employment growth rate #20 of 24.
>—Population dramatically aging – projected to be #4 in state with 65 and over and #19 in 0-17 by 2020 – fewer young families.
>—Least diverse county in State.
>—Manufacturing declining nationwide, with Garrett somewhat more slowly, lagging behind in the service sector (#19), #3 in farming.
>—#21 in income per capita (projected 2020), #22 for mean household income – projected to stay poor, and yet spend a lot (#8 in retail sales).
>—Labor force slowly declining, but unemployment numbers good. As one community member said "If you want to work, you have a job," but it won't pay much due to low salaries in the area, and you might have two or three to get by.
>—Education levels have been steadily improving each decade.

• Issues viewed as critical by the County (as reflected in their Strategic Plan): funding limits, declining population, workforce development and infrastructure.

• Issues viewed as critical by the public: Good paying jobs. Internet access. Opportunities for socializing. Need for more free community events. More civic engagement, more volunteerism. There is a big generational divide here:
>—Younger patrons want opportunities to work in the area for a reasonable wage, want affordable housing, more nightlife/evening events and available child care. They often need active assistance getting established in the community due to crushing debt, lack of housing options, and low wages.
>—Older patrons want more daytime events, computer assistance, and transportation options. They tend to be happier with the status quo, as their living situations are more established. Tax-averse.

• Concerns as expressed by the public: Drug abuse. Lack of job opportunities, especially for the young, and yet paradoxically difficulty filling open positions at local businesses – a "poor work ethic" frequently blamed. Population decline with young people leaving after graduation due to perceived lack of opportunities. Poor Internet access in many areas.   Lack of transportation options in the County, making commuting difficult. Many vacant storefronts and run-down areas, but businesses need customers with disposable income to support them, and incomes local businesses pay are low, creating a vicious circle. The tourist economy divides visitors (who typically have more disposable income) from locals (who typically don't, yet who are needed to staff amenities) and affects affordability accordingly. The County is cut off from rest of the state due to geography (in fact, it falls within the Pittsburgh media market) and many communities within it feel isolated and unsupported. There is concern about public perception of the area from outsiders and media.

• Solutions as described by the public: Partner with groups and create a support network for drug issues. Improve communications and marketing – communications options have grown exponentially, with each having their own audience (website, Facebook, radio, Instagram, the Republican, the Weekender, postings at community locations), making getting a message out more complicated. Work with service groups. Develop a volunteer/interest fair, and perhaps a job fair on the northern end of the County. Reach out to churches to help advertise events.
>—People want to have an active, engaged community. Fostering greater civic participation is essential.
>—The phrase "reimagining the small town" came up, and investigating the possibilities that might entail seems productive.

The Library {MD LIBRARY STATS, FY 2016, FINDINGS}

Programs and program attendance are up statewide, while circulation has been trending downwards (MD State Statistics 2016).

67% of the County's population **has a Library card** – above the state average of 56%.

Garrett County's per capita income is above the national average, and **#10 in MD.**

Circulation per capita is slightly under the state average – 9.26 for Garrett County vs. 9.85 statewide.

There is heavy **interlibrary loan use** by our patrons, with **66.9%** of survey respondents indicating that they have used it in the past year.

92.2% of respondents come for the traditional purpose of checking out materials.

A majority of survey respondents (50.7%) indicated that they use the library "daily or almost daily" or "weekly," indicating a **large population of heavy users.**

Computer use and Wifi use are somewhat low overall, with **28.4%** of survey respondents **using a public computer** and **29.1% using Wifi.**

28.7% reported using Library **ebooks or e-audiobooks**, as compared to **7.5% using databases.**

The library should ensure that all public services staff are capable of answering basic patron technology questions, that **25%** of staff are trained to answer intermediate technology questions, and that **10%** are trained to answer advanced technology questions.

Host group instruction on **online job-seeking, career development and small business development** resources to promote workforce development and entrepreneurship.

Patrons requested additional DVD movies, ebooks, audiobooks, programs for adults and seniors (note: **58.9% identified as age 50+**), and additional seating space.

Over 80% of respondents had at home indicated that they owned an Internet accessible computer, a smartphone, or a DVD player. **69%** said they had an ebook reader or tablet as well.

Study rooms and additional places for plugging in devices were requested.

Current customer service is generally highly regarded and valued by the community (averaged as "excellent" in surveys). Automation of services in a way that detracts from the "personal touch" may not be desirable.

The Library should assist with small business development and workforce training to develop skilled employees in the County (priorities of both Garrett County Government and the Maryland State Library).

Additional evening & weekend hours were requested.

Interlibrary loan service is excellent, well-used and makes up for deficiencies in the collection.

Patrons indicated interest in passport services and a digital archive of the local newspaper.

Provide individual assistance through one on one help by appointment with library staff or volunteers for at least 30 minute sessions to promote digital literacy at the individual level. Facilities are largely inadequate for full classes, and personalizing services better addresses patrons' true technology needs.

Interest in self-checkout was noticeably split, with many being strongly against it and many others being supportive. There was also interest in a community workshop where people could use Library-supplied tools.

The Library's partnership with the Western Maryland Regional Library has been an invaluable asset, providing physical and digital materials, as well as website support and staff training, not to mention direct financial assistance.

Develop and maintain a Technology Plan that includes the following: replacement schedules, emergency data and tech services recovery procedures, security plans and procedures for updates.

Patrons overwhelmingly requested additional free programs for the public. Many supplied staff with very interesting and innovative ideas, which have been collected for future reference.

More e-materials were requested.

Teen programs and services are underdeveloped. Many teens have after-school jobs, sports, and other commitments, making reaching this group difficult.

Awareness of tutoring services needs improvement.

The Library should assist the County with staff training opportunities using Library resources (a priority for the County Government).

Add web development software at each location.

Provide wireless printing enabling patrons to print from their own devices.

Patrons also overwhelmingly indicated that they would like the Library to partner with service groups, local government and businesses in each municipality to enhance Library services.

ACCIDENT

- Renovation is recommended to add a meeting room, an additional restroom, under-carpet wiring, and increased security for staff area. An outdoor reading area was requested by patrons.
- Space is otherwise adequate for current purposes.
- The current team has excellent synergy. Recent outreach in the Accident area has been strong at community events.
- Patrons expressed interest in a recreation center, a playground next to the Library, more community events that provide opportunities to socialize (such as a jobs or volunteer fair), and peer-to-peer and intergenerational classes on various subjects such as computer use.
- Patrons expressed the opinion that Oakland is seen as an island unto itself within Garrett County.
- Patrons would like to see more business development, fewer vacant storefronts, more nightlife, more rental housing, and more social opportunities for people in their 20s or 30s.

FRIENDSVILLE

- The Friendsville Library building is inadequate and needs replacement. It should be the first priority for capital projects.
- The branch is understaffed and day-to-day duties make pursuing new initiatives or staff development difficult.
- Replacing the Friendsville building with a larger facility will require additional permanent staffing.
- Dedicated programming space is unavailable. In-house programming is therefore uncommon, but rather replaced with off-site programming at the local school. Meeting space located in a basement area in a new library was mentioned as a possibility at several community meetings.
- The Friendsville Library's hours are irregular and should be extended and standardized to better serve the community.
- The current Friendsville branch manager has developed an excellent relationship with the community and is skilled at outreach.
- The Library's current joint-use partnership with the Town Hall is positive and should be maintained.
- School-age children and teens are not often found at the Library. The collection contains relatively few materials for those groups.
- Community development is hampered by the presence of a large floodplain within the town.
- Patrons expressed interest in making Friendsville a well-rounded place where everyone is welcome, an educated place where people read books not iPhones. They are looking for reasons for people to want to come, or to stop as they pass on 68. They expressed a wish for a safe place with open, friendly, respectful people. People feel that what is there now is a good base, that there's a good "feel" to it, and that they should maintain it. Drug-free, creative, friendly, tolerant, supportive, resilient community. Place that draws young people in. They want the town to be more than a "hunting camp or retirement community" – a place where people can raise a family, a place that

fosters renewable energy and sustainable food methods. They want a town where it's possible to walk everywhere – they say you don't "see people on the street" in other towns. They like how Michele knows everyone on a first name basis. There is a need for support groups for addicts, partnerships with Al-anon and AA, places where people can connect with others face-to-face, and job fairs/business fairs on their end of town, as well as a place for the homeless. They'd like to

see a farmer's market, and an anchor restaurant for the town – one person said that "food is the glue that holds a family together." Many want an artistic area where people can be creative. A building with rentable space for events would be valuable. They appreciate Friendsville's historical depth, want the old buildings appreciated and restored, and want the empty stores filled. They want a community that embraces its natural features and embraces the wild outdoors. They feel that they need a community vision, and a citizens group that discusses issues regularly. There is an antipathy towards big box stores. They want to see an economic director come in for the County and assist in pulling in businesses. Some would like to see more focus on the "left out" group of millennials, and an effort to connect to a younger generation and single moms.

- A new Friendsville library building should be open and airy, with lots of natural light. There should be a class/meeting room for projects and small meetings. Workroom and breakroom for staff at new library. Restrooms should be away from the checkout desk. There should be a gathering place outside with comfortable chairs (mentioned several times). Make the library a hub. More day hours for seniors. Comfy chairs for relaxing. Emergency shelter as part of library with showers. Kids and community could help physically build Library in a small way, or move supplies. Solar power.

- Patrons expressed concerns about the school – they were afraid if they lose their school they'll lose their identity. The elderly don't like driving at night. There were concerns about keeping the water clean, "family breakdown," and drug use – patrons specifically cited drug trafficking in the park due to its location near multiple state borders. Patrons were concerned about people using screens too much, feeling that it made them disconnected from others. There was concern about the declining population, lack of affordable housing and kids leaving after getting an education – they felt that the town might become a bedroom community for Morgantown. There was concern that the town is not doing enough for teens. There was concern about the lack of nightlife, but also a divide between younger people who want one and older people who don't. There was also a concern about the media stigma and perception of the town. A worry about food insecurity was expressed – people worried about running out of food. People perceived a lack of purpose, and a lack of attachment to community. They felt that government should be reaching out to the more isolated people on the outskirts. Homeschooled kids were not, they felt, up to reading standards, and were closeted, with poor socialization. The Summer Reading Club has low turnout. There is an overall lack of money, and lack of jobs. There is a perception of a poor work ethic. Schools were viewed as lacking in tech skills. Many say they want a balance between growth and remaining a small town. There is worry that the potential for growth is small due to the flood plain. Internet in the area is perceived as bad, and the County's project raises skepticism – they think it won't make it to Friendsville. They were concerned about vandalism caused by unattended kids. They felt as though they need volunteers and leaders – and leaders that inspire volunteerism – and there is also a lack of trust, and passion. Don't want big box stores, "reinvent the small town" instead.

- Patrons would like to see the Library have a presence at community activities and become more community aware. Stay positive, promote the positive, and focus on progress. Market what is already here, especially the river and trails. Have the Library act as a facilitator and encourage volunteerism with incentives. Help kids feel empowered. Create an outreach committee for kids to provide positive reinforcement and help foster their interests.

- Patrons expressed that they felt as though the County is on a different page from Friendsville.

GRANTSVILLE

- A small expansion is recommended to add additional seating, quiet rooms, and expand the meeting room.
- Greater outreach is needed to improve program attendance.
- The collection needs overall refreshing, and the rate at which new materials come in and old ones are weeded should be improved.
- Patrons expressed interest in developing a friendly, kind, safe community, with people helping others. A community that fosters innovation and resourcefulness. More jobs. More urgent care hours, a food pantry, and a teen reading club
- Patrons expressed concerns about bad Internet. They felt that there was a lack of progress, a need for more population and businesses (getting worse), and worried about people moving away. They were concerned about lack of jobs, but people also don't want to work or have a poor work ethic, and employers are not paying enough. There is a lack of affordable housing, a lack of child care, a need for something for kids to do after school, and a lack of transportation. Lack of money, and they perceived a bureaucracy getting in the way of improvements. A need was expressed for people willing to work and volunteer. They noted problems with drug dealers. Resources for landlord/tenant assistance were needed – rent keeps going up, which drives people away. There are no homeless shelters, which was perceived as frustrating, and symptomatic of people unwilling to think of others.
- Patrons would like to see the Library work with rock painting/hiding rocks for promotional purposes. Town newsletter that is published regularly. Instagram is seen as a good way to reach teens. Encourage volunteerism. Encourage the development of a barter system/exchange of services. Work with service groups and the school system. Provide a safe place for teens. More evening hours for library. There was enthusiasm for an interest fair, and interest in the notion of a 24-hour lobby.
- Patrons feel that the town is in slow motion – moving forward but with room for improvement.
- An idea was put forth on hosting businesses in library space – giving them access codes in off hours to rooms.

KITZMILLER

- The Kitzmiller community feels undervalued and forgotten by the County generally, and there is a lot of resentment about the closure of the school. People want their town to succeed. Programs unique to Kitzmiller would help give them town pride.
- The Kitzmiller Library building (the former Kitzmiller Elementary School) is aging and needs replacement. The Library would do well as part of a purpose-built joint-use building that included other facilities. Space is adequate for current use, but a meeting room, improved ADA access, and on-site storage are important.
- The Kitzmiller Library's hours are irregular and should be extended and standardized to better serve the community.

- Day to day usage of the Kitzmiller branch is low, though programs are popular. Due to the geographical isolation of the region, it is unlikely to attract patrons from outside of the immediate area (Kitzmiller and Elk Garden, WV).
- The geography of the Kitzmiller area also makes Internet connectivity problematic.
- For safety/security reasons, additional staffing is desirable at this location.
- Patrons expressed interest in Kitzmiller as a close, happy, friendly community. They wanted more programs for the Library – the community feels closer during activities. They also wanted support groups to address issues, as well as Little League and soccer programs for the community.
- There is a lot of town pride – patrons there feel that they stick together and don't let outsiders criticize them.
- Patrons are concerned about drugs and a lack of law enforcement presence in the area. There is a public perception of the town as inferior, and its people as unintelligent – Kitzmiller children are picked on in the schools, making them feel bad about themselves.
- Patrons would like to see the Library keep doing events to bring people together. Keep the Library open. Library hours seem to be fine – there are a lot of elderly in the community. There was interest in an "Adult Maker Time," pottery classes, adult coloring, and a "Senior Reading Club."
- Patrons liked the notions of an Adult Winter Reading Program, an ongoing permanent Reading Club for kids, Guys Read, and 1000 Books Before Kindergarten.

MAIN LIBRARY

- Private study rooms are desired.
- Additional parking is desired.
- The Main Library's building is aging and plagued with legacy issues from weather damage. It is unable to expand further in its current footprint. Relocating to a new building on a different site is recommended.
- Patrons expressed interest in having lots of events (free or low cost), saying that the town calendar of events should be full. Patrons want a peaceful, business-friendly town, one connected to the rest of the world. They want it to stay a friendly, safe, caring community; a healthy place, with no trash, low crime, assistance getting people off drugs, and an active environmental group. They'd like to see better traffic law enforcement and a place for the homeless. One said they like the library as it is – quiet, and wishes it had a quiet room. Patrons like friendly, helpful staff, think interlibrary loan service is excellent, and think there should be more programs for the young.
- Patrons expressed concerns about bad Internet. They were concerned that bad weather keeps the population low. There was concern about lack of amenities - no evening hours for businesses, and lower income overall. Drugs and homeless people with health issues were viewed as problems, but medicine is seen as expensive and healthcare unaffordable, due to things getting more expensive overall. There was concern about people needing jobs, and yet companies having trouble finding good workers. Some groups were seen as trying to help but many were perceived as uncaring, and there was anger at selfish people who don't make an effort. Communications in the area are typically from PA, not MD – people feel cut off from the rest of the state due to the distance to Annapolis and Baltimore (one participant had to commute there 4x/week). Youth leave for college (though some parents don't want them to or understand its importance, citing the book Hillbilly Elegy). Lack of transportation/taxi service. Volunteers are aging and younger people have to work too much to spare time for it. Student debt and lack of trade schools hurt affordability. One expressed concern about "bells and whistles" on Library.
- Patrons would like to see the Library be hospitable, welcoming, and to work with service groups, local government, and local businesses. They would like to see a forum for expressing views. Add vocational classes, improve guidance counseling, point students to Garrett College, and add a college shuttle to solve transportation issue.
- Teens had a very bleak view of adults – thought many didn't care, or didn't know how to take action.

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Our Values

Staff will strive at all times to uphold and promote the following values:

- Equal access for all
- Intellectual freedom
- Lifelong learning
- Reliability of information
- Fostering democracy
- Diversity
- Social responsibility
- Privacy
- Service
- Stewardship of public resources
- Collaboration

Our Mission

The Ruth Enlow Library uses its collection, programs, services, and technology to transform its community:

- By championing literacies and lifelong learning,
- By bringing people and groups together; and
- By promoting democracy and civic engagement.

Areas of Focus, 2018-2023

REACHING OUT

• Improving awareness and use of fine-free Student Cards within the Garrett County school system.
• Developing programs and services targeted to teens and school-age children to foster community pride and love of reading.
• Improving the Library's presence in the community online and off.
• Further integrating with State library initiatives to make our services that much more effective.
• Strengthening the Friends of the Library as a vital library support network.

FOSTERING 21ST CENTURY LITERACIES

• Developing programs designed to raise literacy in at-risk populations, such as preschool-age children and school-age children with low testing scores.
• Promoting information literacy and media literacy in the community.
• Developing a system for providing one-on-one computer instruction to patrons.
• Developing an ongoing series of life skills classes targeted to teens and young adults.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

• Providing a safe, neutral venue for ongoing civil discussion of community issues.
• Encouraging collaboration and volunteerism in Garrett County.
• Working to digitize materials relevant to the history of Garrett County.
• Providing Library support to initiatives targeting major County issues, including opioid abuse, affordable housing and economic development.
• Encouraging social interaction in the County with programs designed to bring adults and young families together.

IMPROVING USER EXPERIENCE

• Employing analytic software to improve our collection.
• Encouraging innovation and experimentation with our programs.
• Expanding and/or adjusting hours to best fit our communities.
• Developing and maintaining a technology plan to ensure digital inclusion throughout Garrett County.
• Improving user experience at our facilities and promoting accessibility.
• Replacing the existing Friendsville Branch.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 7/16/2018

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