STRATEGIC PLAN
GLOUCESTER LYCEUM & SAWYER FREE LIBRARY
2014 - 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library is a venerable and beloved institution. The library is the most frequently used municipal building in the city of Gloucester. Programs are supported by an active Friends of the Sawyer Free Library group and the library is regularly patronized by thousands of residents and visitors. Yet, like all public libraries today, it faces daunting questions about its future.

What is the role of public libraries in the age of the Internet, e-books, and streaming videos? Can libraries evolve from quiet repositories of books into something more dynamic and responsive? In particular, how can the Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library remain fully relevant to the needs of Gloucester residents? These are the key questions asked by the Sawyer Free Library's Board of Directors in early 2012.

We began with a lengthy process of choosing a consultant. After reviewing dozens of resumes and interviewing five candidates from around the country, we chose Jay Vogt of Concord, Massachusetts. Jay brought vast expertise with non-profits, including public libraries, and a gentle but firm manner that suited us well.

We then embarked on extensive research into Gloucester's demographics, cultural trends, and best practices among public libraries. In July 2013, we held a community meeting at the Rose Baker Senior Center that drew about 100 city residents. Finally, a smaller group of residents, staff, and members of the Board of Directors synthesized all of this information into a step-by-step plan.

After nearly two years of work, we can say with confidence that public libraries are needed more than ever to help people manage a tsunami of information; to strengthen the bonds of community at a time when other forces push us apart; and to harness technology to improve our lives.

Board of Directors of the Sawyer Free Library

Scott Memhard, President, Meredith Fine, Vice-President, Isaac Wilhelm, Treasurer, Emily L. Glover, Clerk, Jerry Ackerman, William Fonvielle, Val Babson, Howard Frisch, Greg Bover, John McElhenny, Barbara Braver, Daniel Ottenheimer, Joan Ciolino, Fred Cowan, Mayor Carolyn Kirk (ex officio)

Strategic Planning Committee

Jerry Ackerman, Barbara Braver, Carol Gray, Meredith Fine (co-chair), William Fonvielle (co-chair), Freyja Sanger.

VISION

To be fully relevant as the needs of Gloucester's public evolve.

MISSION

The mission of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library is to inspire lifelong learning, foster intellectual curiosity, and strengthen our community by:

1. Actively promoting the open exchange of ideas;
2. Providing inviting and attractive physical and virtual spaces that encourage connections among people of all ages;
3. Acquiring and maintaining collections that celebrate the history of Gloucester;
4. Collaborating with community partners to better serve a more diverse population; and
5. Sustaining an environment for the Library staff that nurtures creative thinking and problem-solving.

GOALS

To fulfill its mission, the Sawyer Free Library commits to six goals:

1. Actively promote education and learning through collaboration with local schools and other educational, cultural, and civic organizations.
2. Bridge the digital divide by supporting technology access and literacy.
3. Reconfigure the Library space to be more welcoming and to better serve community and individual needs.
4. Sustain an environment for the Library staff that nurtures creative thinking and problem solving, and focuses on customer service.
5. Celebrate the history and culture of Gloucester through our collections and programs.
6. Increase public awareness of Library services and opportunities.

SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CIVIC NEEDS

The Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library is confronting a number of challenges and paradoxes in carrying out its mission. Many reflect local demographic and economic changes; others are provoked by rapid changes in how people seek and get information and spend leisure time – global-scale changes that present huge challenges everywhere.

<u>**THE LOCAL PICTURE**</u>

Population Trends. Gloucester's population is steadily shrinking and aging. The school-age population is diminishing. Persons over 65 now account for more than one-sixth the total, well above the state average. The median age now is about 42, or two years older than in 2000, apparently driven in part by retirees or empty-nesters relocating to a coastal community.

Education. Almost 90 percent of the population over age 25 has at least a high school diploma, slightly above the state average. About one-third hold bachelor's degrees, 5 percentage points below the state average. An unusually high number aged 45 to 65 have advanced or professional degrees.

Economic Outlook: Technology is gaining as fishing-related employment, the city's historic economic base, shows few signs of recovery after decades of decline. Manufacturing, led by technology and including food processing, employs about a quarter of the labor force and accounts for about half the city's total household income. The balance of local jobs are mostly in health care, retailing, government, or food and beverage and tourism-related businesses, with tourism gaining. Many of these are low-paying, part-time or seasonal. About a quarter of the labor force commutes more than 30 minutes each to work, twice the number of a generation ago.

Incomes: Although there are highly visible pockets of wealth, Gloucester incomes are well behind much of the state. The gap between rich and poor is widening. Overall income lags state averages by about 10 percent and income growth by about 20 percent. Incomes adjusted for inflation fell between 2000 and 2010 by 20 to 40 percent in nearly all brackets below $50,000 a year, but about doubled in brackets over $100,000 a year. Even well-off households, those reporting $100,000 a year or more, averaged about 20 percent less in 2010 than the same quintile statewide. Unemployment is persistent, currently at about 7% after topping 12% between 2008 and 2011.

Ethnic Distribution. Racial composition is overwhelmingly (96 percent) white. About 3 percent say they are Hispanic or Latino. Black and Asian account for less than 1 percent each. About 8 percent is foreign-born, more than half from Italy, Brazil and Hispanic

America. Eleven percent of the population speaks a second language at home, led by Italian/Sicilian and Portuguese.

BROAD CULTURAL TRENDS SHAPING LIBRARIES

People are increasingly learning and accessing information via technology, and in rapidly changing ways. They are reading more e-books, and accessing more information via mobile technology. New tech products are being introduced daily. Library resources are shifting from physical books to digital information, and staffing procedures from helping access books to helping access technology.

Much digital information is freely accessible: Faster information growth is happening outside of libraries, on the Internet. While many people get much of the information they want from the Internet, on their own, libraries can provide guidance to hard-to-locate resources, including some not readily open to individual users.

Consumer expectations: People have more choices and expect more convenience; libraries must increasingly compete for their patronage. Libraries can no longer present themselves as always having the best knowledge available and now must respond by providing access channels that meet patron needs.

A "digital divide" persists: Increasing income inequality heightens the divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not. Those lacking access to digital resources rely on libraries to provide them.

Reliance on Internet resources paradoxically both expands horizons and increases isolation: Online social-media web sites, chat rooms and bulletin boards open opportunities for global sharing among those with shared interests, reshaping concepts of socialization. Libraries are taking on new roles as community and cultural centers for those seeking freer and more intimate and personal relationships in their quests for knowledge, information and learning.

BROAD TRENDS IN LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

The pace at which digitalization and Internet connectivity have disrupted and altered how the world gets and uses information is widely known and needs little elaboration. The digital divide is likely no greater nor smaller in Gloucester. An entire generation under age 45, or more than half the total population, now is Internet-savvy, with a majority now relying on tablets, smart phones and other mobile devices to gain and use information. But gaps exist in knowledge and levels of comfort with technology, including older users. Some trends that must be factored into libraries of the future include these:

Mobile Applications: Some believe apps will replace books as the primary means of distributing content. Kindle and Nook readers, specialized to deliver books in electronic form, are being supplanted by apps that function across more general digital platforms.

Learning Personalization: The Internet's deployment of search engines has conditioned the tech-savvy population to easily accessing managing content and experiences tailored for their individual needs and desires. People want their stuff and they want it now.

Social Learning: Learning historically has been a social process. The Internet can be both isolating and socializing depending on user preferences. Socializing influences include such current applications as Facebook and file-sharing, but through intranet connections, "cloud" shared-work applications, and more, now reach far beyond casual personal encounters, into the worlds of finance, technology, the arts and almost infinitely beyond.

Gamification: Games-based learning via digital devices is an emerging trend in both individual and workplace learning and is finding favor in educational settings.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): This is courseware, often free to the user, that is provided online by private entities, colleges and universities. Libraries are beginning to facilitate delivery to individual users and provide social settings for collective learning by those utilizing this technology.

Webinars and Videos: Online, instructional webinars and video teaching can be found on virtually every imaginable subject and "how-to" tasks.

LEARNING SKILLS NEEDED IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The ability to acquire these skills separates students of all ages who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today's world from those who are not. These skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration.

Information, Media and Technology Skills: Today's technology-driven environment demands that effective citizens and workers have a range of functional and critical thinking skills including information literacy, media literacy and information/communications/technology literacy. Libraries as centralized, public learning centers can play an important role in helping their communities acquire, maintain and upgrade these skills necessary for personal success.

Life and Career Skills: The ability to navigate the complex and globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life

and work skills. Libraries through their resources and position as educational centers are positioning themselves to help their constituents attain and expand these skills.

MATCHING GLOUCESTER'S NEEDS WITH CURRENT TRENDS

Bridging the Digital Divide. While more people are comfortable with digital and Internet technology, many may always have trouble dealing with getting information online. This requires libraries serving a diverse population, such as Gloucester's, to maintain both print and digital resources, as well as provide staff able to guide users to the information they want in multiple formats.

Mobile Access. Mobile smart-phone and tablet software applications have become preferred tools for gaining information by a generation that makes up more than half the total population. Gloucester must strive to stay abreast and provide appropriate tools for meeting universal needs as well as accessing unique collections such as historical resources.

The Enduring Fascination with All Things Gloucester: As one of the nation's earliest colonial settlements and its oldest seaport, as well as its natural attractions for artists and other visitors, Gloucester has developed a long, multicultural, and embracing history that is fundamental to its character. Further, the community daily strives to maintain and enhance that history and character through its support of myriad organizations each proud to celebrate the past. The Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library, with its deep and broad local collections and its established Lyceum programs, is a natural focal point to work in concert with other institutions in helping citizens understand this history.

School Library Needs: Hampered by a relatively low tax base to support public education, Gloucester in recent years has been able to provide only minimal library services, carried out by volunteers, in its elementary and middle schools. The Gloucester library is in a position, to collaborate by providing professional help and sharing collections to alleviate subpar circumstances, if provided with sufficient staff resources.

Increasing Online Learning: With the growth of online learning and with the city's limited access to other, traditional higher education resources, the Gloucester library can provide advanced and specialized education to the community via MOOC and other online channels. Many who use these resources learn best in group situations, and this is a realm in which the city's centrally located and easily accessible public library can play a central role.

OTHER LOCAL TRENDS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Historical Fragmentation Among Community Institutions: Gloucester's diverse population, with equally diverse interests, has led to an unusually large number of social, artistic, literary, and other organizations whose goals are often parallel and even overlap. As a place supported by and accessible to all citizens, the library can help foster collaborations and partnerships.

Historical Opportunity in Programming: The number of potential adult learners in the community is growing and economic change is creating new demands for new knowledge and training. The library, which already hosts classes in English as a second language, is a clear candidate to fill this learning void.

Changing space needs: The current library was built well before the advent of the Internet age. Recent investigation has revealed not only potential for reducing or consolidating print collections in favor of digitally accessed information, but a large amount of space available for conversion to other uses, including meeting, classroom, and activity spaces.

Increasing Customer Service Orientation: Many if not all the topics addressed in preceding pages can be carried out only by a staff that is sufficiently large, well-trained, and dedicated to public service in a world of rapid change. The Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library must continue to commit itself to maintaining and enhancing a culture in which all its staff and volunteers have opportunities to improve how they serve the public and are valued for doing so.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC GOALS

The Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library commits to six strategic goals that were developed in an iterative process beginning as a series of broad discussions among the members of the Strategic Planning Committee. The public meeting at the Rose Baker Senior Center led to the emergence of a set of provisional goals based on the collective ideas of the hundred participants. These goals were refined by small groups made up of Library board members, Library staff, and self-selected members of the public. Finally, the Strategic Planning Committee further honed the goals for inclusion in this plan. The objectives that give life to each goal will be translated into action plans over time as plan implementation accelerates.

1. Actively promote education and learning through collaboration with local schools and other educational, cultural, and civic organizations.

2. Bridge the digital divide by supporting technology literacy and access.

3. Reconfigure the Library space to be more welcoming and to better serve community and individual needs.

4. Sustain an environment for the Library staff that nurtures creative thinking and problem solving and focuses on customer service.

5. Celebrate the history and culture of Gloucester through our collections and programs.

6. Increase public awareness of Library services and opportunities.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Actively promote education and learning through collaboration with local schools and other educational, cultural, and civic organizations.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

1.1 Protect and promote universal, free access to information, literature, and ideas.

1.2 Provide online courses for the community, including curriculum-based programs in the library in a group setting with teaching assistants or guides, and in collaboration with area educational institutions.

1.3 Collaborate with the League of Women Voters on projects involving participation in government.

1.4 Reach out to Art Haven and other community organizations and identify resource-sharing needs.

1.5 Consider how to use our affiliation with the Harbortown Cultural District to further some of these strategic objectives.

1.6 Initiate focused book groups, (e.g. history, science fiction, biography, etc.) and organize events such as wine and cheese socials around library programs. The first of these might be "Meet your Library" as an introduction to library services as well as a social opportunity bringing people into the library.

1.6 Collaborate with local schools and other school partners:

   a. Formalize communication with the schools and establish an appropriate timeline for meeting on a regular basis, both at the administrative level and targeted teaching staff.
   b. Develop a multi-year plan forging a connection with teachers involved in project-based learning in order to share library resources and better support their efforts.
   c. Design and establish a pilot program in an elementary school that will promote use of library resources and support its curriculum.
   d. Identify supportive measures for schools without librarians and begin to establish those supports.
   e. Promote use of library databases and other services by registering every student as a library user.

f. Identify barriers to library use by school students, and define and advocate means for solutions to those barriers.

g. Reach out to Maritime Heritage Center, the Cape Ann Museum, and other school partners to share information in order to reduce redundancy and create more efficient access to schools.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Bridge the digital divide by supporting technology literacy and access.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

2.1 Provide more access to high-quality digital technology with the addition of more computers and other technological devices for use on premises (i.e., provide tablets to use inside library only).

2.2 Offer a dedicated kiosk for services such as printing boarding passes, providing directions, and making accommodation reservations.

2.3 Develop a dedicated SFL app for mobile devices.

2.4 Survey patrons to determine technology training needs.

2.5 Provide instruction in the available technologies and resources in the library: technology information desk, digital instruction with webcasts, screencasts and webinars.

2.6 Form a technology committee with technology experts from the schools and the City to consider resource sharing and collaborations.

2.7 Sell flash drives with library logo at low cost.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Reconfigure the Library space to be more welcoming and to better serve community and individual needs.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

3.1 Complete strategic weeding of all collections; move collections for more logical grouping. Allow patrons easier and more transparent access.

3.2 Remove two lower shelving units in the reference department to accommodate laptop study tables and partitioned areas for quiet study space.

3.3 Create a magazine and newspaper reading nook by moving new books closer to the main entrance and installing wall-mounted magazine shelving where the new books were.

3.4 Remove old magazine displays on the main floor and replace the space with laptop study tables and other work surfaces.

3.5 Assess signage needs and implement clear, directional signage.

3.6 Move forward with children's library redesign.

3.7 Establish a "welcome kiosk" near the entrance to orient visitors and provide directions, and that highlights Library services and events and those of other community organizations.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Sustain an environment for the Library staff that nurtures creative thinking and problem solving and focuses on customer service.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

4.1 Increase the number of staff who attend Massachusetts Library Association's annual meeting.

4.2 Ensure that every staff member has an individual professional development plan with time built into the schedule to allow an opportunity to achieve each plan.

4.3 Provide quarterly speakers about the latest trends in technology.

4.4 Increase customer service training.

4.4 Purchase software to track patron use.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

Celebrate the history and culture of Gloucester through our collections and programs.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

5.1 Host local artists and craft persons for demonstrations/exhibitions and recruit the loan of private collections for shows.

5.2 Collaborate with the Cape Ann Museum and the city Archives Committee to produce local history programs.

5.3 Draw on the Library's collections of art, prints, and photographs for shows, exhibitions, and educational programs.

5.4 Assure that Library collections are properly preserved and cared for with curatorial attention provided to the degree possible. Support collections with targeted fund raising.

STRATEGIC GOAL 6

Increase public awareness of Library services and opportunities.

RESULTS/OBJECTIVES:

6.1 Provide budgeted funding and dedicated staff for marketing and public relations, and establish a marketing/public relations advisory board.

6.2 Create a comprehensive list of library resources for use on website and in printed collateral. Create attractive brochures and other materials listing resources, events, specialized collections, hours. Distribute these widely.

6.3 Create database of current library users including aggregated reports on usage of present services. Use data to better understand both our core and underserved population sectors.

6.4 Design more events for specific targeted audiences such as seniors, under-25s, young families, ethnic groups, artists, musicians, poets, writers, historians, business people; entrepreneurs, investors, homeowners, hobbyists, and retirees.

6.5 Exploit traditional and new-media channels by capitalizing on events, addition of new resources, and other activities.

6.6 Build and maintain an ever-larger e-mail list to alert both regular and infrequent users to events and resource opportunities. Identify demographic sectors and special-interest segments, with e-mail addresses, and directly target them with information about library events and services as appropriate.

6.7 Utilize the existing backpack system in schools to alert families about library programs.

6.8 Continue developing and sponsoring events to pull in library non-users and new audiences. Examples include family movie nights; café-style events (in partnership with coffee houses); events promoting community awareness.

6.9 Build active relationships with the business community and build and publicize resources useful to the business community and entrepreneurs.

6.10 Proactively build relationships with special-interest, neighborhood and community groups and seek ways to help them augment their activities.

6.11 Consider opportunities to co-sponsor community-wide events with other organizations, as appropriate, through in-kind relationships.

6.12 Study and adopt, as appropriate, outreach strategies that are successful at other libraries.