**Charlton Public Library
Charlton, Massachusetts**

**Long Range Plan
FY2020-FY 2024**

Charlton Public Library
Long Range Plan
FY20-FY24

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Submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

By Library Director, Cheryl Hansen
&
The Charlton Board of Library Trustees

Date: June 20, 2019

# MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Charlton Public Library is to provide free and open access to the citizens of Charlton to the accumulated wisdom of the world. Recognizing that public libraries are one of the cornerstones of the American tradition of equal opportunity, the library's goal is to support an informed citizenry by serving their cultural, educational, and informational needs through the use of traditional and emerging technologies**.**

# VISION STATEMENT

The Charlton Public Library will freely share the power of knowledge to all in our community. We will anticipate and meet the informational, cultural, and social demands of our citizens using both traditional and technological means.

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Established in 1754, the Town of Charlton is forty-four square miles in area and as such is one of the largest towns in area in Massachusetts. Located in south central Worcester County, Charlton is fifty miles or less from five major New England cities: Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and Providence. The town's central location, rural atmosphere and abundant available land as well as easy access to major highways (I 90, I 84, I 290, and I 395) have led to a rapid change in the population and the character of the Town.

## Population

| Year | Population |
|------|-----------|
| 1960 | 3685 |
| 1970 | 4654 |
| 1980 | 6719 |
| 1990 | 9576 |
| 2000 | 11263 |
| 2010 | 12981 |
| 2014 | 13229 |
| 2019 | 12411 |
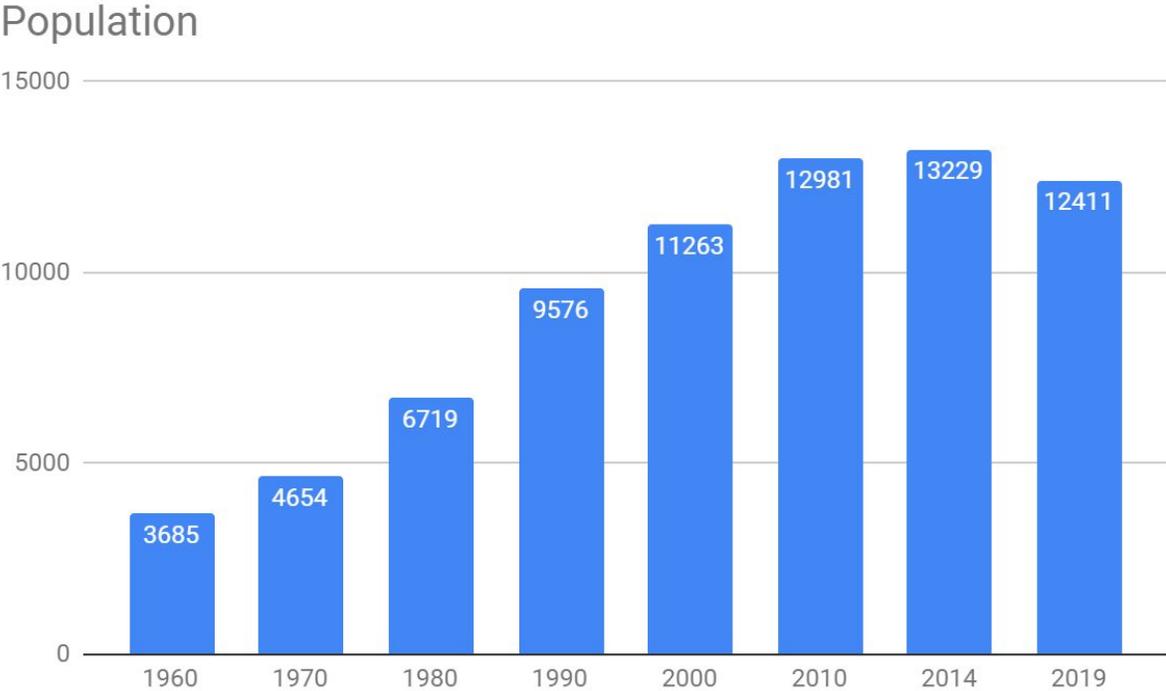
While rapid growth and changing demographics is common in rural towns outside of metropolitan areas in Massachusetts, the rate of growth in Charlton had been substantially higher

than in most other towns in central Massachusetts.  From 1970-2014 Charlton's population almost tripled.  That growth seems to have now leveled off.

United States Census Bureau statistics for 2017 report 4,889 households in Charlton with a median household income of $93,921. 92.6% of households in Charlton own a computer.

## Age of Population

Age of Population

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 5 | 810 | 789 | 710 |
| 5-19 | 2811 | 2911 | 2461 |
| 20-24 | 412 | 699 | 972 |
| 25-44 | 3873 | 3093 | 3812 |
| 45-64 | 2490 | 3948 | 4566 |
| 65+ | 867 | 1501 | 1682 |
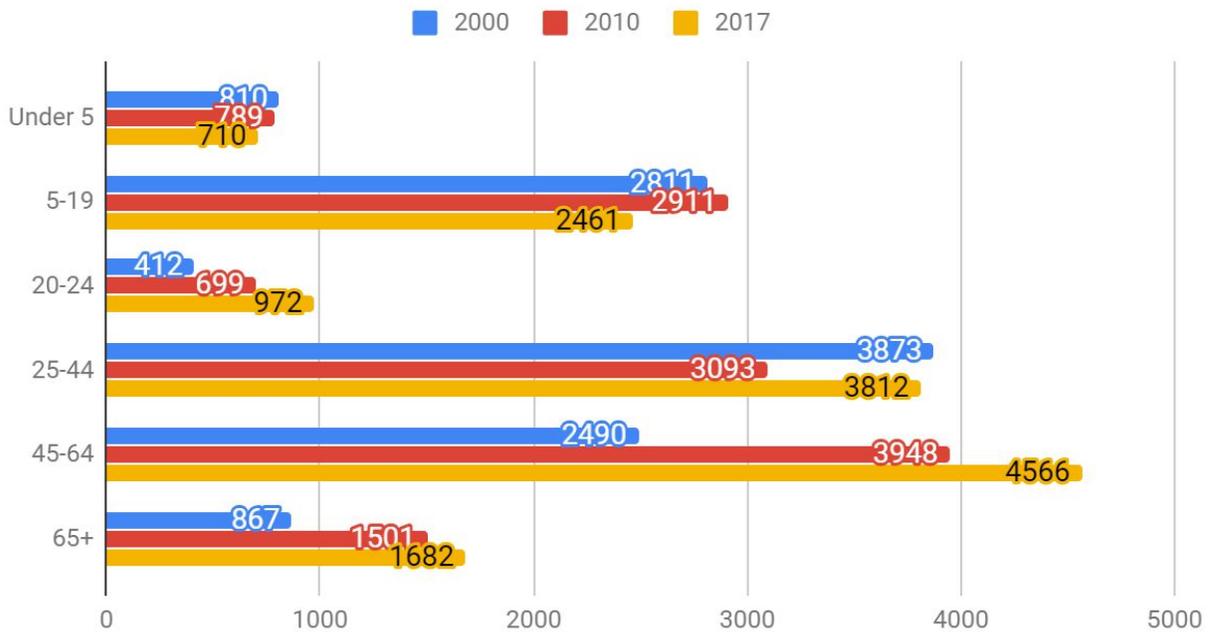
 Out town is aging.  The number of school aged children is dropping and our adult and senior population is increasing. The median age has increased dramatically in the past few decades; in 1980 the median age was 28.2.  The median age in Charlton in 2017 was 43.1. At 34.1%, people aged 45-64 are the largest population group in town.  97.8 % of the population in this age group have a high school education or higher and 30.5 % of those people have a bachelor's degree or higher.

However, one of the more interesting findings from the chart above is the 58% increase in the 20-24 age group in just 7 years. One could hypothesize that this may be due to "boomerang kids" and the trend of this age group to delay leaving the family home.

Charlton is part of a regional school system with the neighboring town of Dudley. The regional high school is located in Dudley. There is also a regional/vocational high school located in town. According to 2017 American Community Survey statistics, 32% of households in Charlton have children under the age of eighteen. There are 3,351 children living in Charlton over the age of 3 who are enrolled in school. The majority of children attend the public schools in town.

The community is not only rapidly increasing in size, it has changed demographically. The population is no longer dependent upon limited and low-paying rural jobs in town. Charlton has become a predominately white collar community with the majority of the employed population working in management, professional, and/or office positions.

# LIBRARY HISTORY

The Charlton Public Library began in 1816 as a private library association known as the Female Social Library. One hundred and eight women paid a one dollar subscription fee; there is no indication that the library was used by men. A member was entitled to borrow one book or up to three pamphlets at a time. The books were housed at the home of one of the members; presumably the home of the librarian. Among the duties of the librarian, in addition to housing, collecting and cataloging books, was to deliver the books to the subscribers.

In 1860, a group of young men founded their own library known as the Charlton Young Men's Library Association or the Charlton Agricultural Library Association. As farming was the primary occupation in town, the latter name is understandable. This library registered fifty-eight men and nine women who each paid a one dollar subscription fee and annual charge of twenty-five cents.

In 1882, the members of both libraries voted to merge the two libraries and transfer the library to the town to be a public library. The transfer agreement stated the following conditions: the town shall make an annual appropriation of not less than one hundred dollars for new books each year and the library shall be kept in the "Center" Village.  Should the town fail to meet the requirements, the agreement declared that the library would revert to the Young Men's Library Association. At the time of the transfer the library contained 493 books. One member voting in favor of the transfer wrote,  "I like very much the idea of a good library free to all citizens of the town and the Young Men's Library would I think reach a larger number under the proposed plan than the present."

The town voted to accept the transfer and in 1882 the Charlton Public Library was founded. The library was originally kept in the home of the first librarian and then in a room in the Centre School.

In 1905, a Charlton native, William Henry Dexter, presented a Memorial Hall to the town. The building included a room for the library as well as space to house all town offices. In his speech at the dedication of Dexter Memorial Hall, Mr. Dexter noted that at first he had "thought only of erecting a library building." However, the need for town offices was clear and he built a Hall encompassing space for both.

The library stayed in that same 1,100 square foot room for the next ninety-three years. In 1998, town offices were moved across the street to the old high school building and a town meeting vote transferred custody of Dexter Memorial Hall to the Board of Library Trustees. The library then expanded into the rest of the approximately 3,100 square foot building. This was still not enough space.

The need for a new, enlarged library had been apparent for many years; a master plan prepared for the town in 1970 noted that "the library is considered to be deficient with regard to total volumes, reading space, and total floor space, and expansion of facilities is recommended." In 1979, a building committee was formed to study the feasibility of adding on to Dexter Hall to enlarge the library and police department. An architect was hired, plans were drawn up. The year the project was to be voted on at Town Meeting, proposition 2 ½ was passed and the project was tabled for lack of sufficient local funding. In 1983, an LSCA Title II Grant application was prepared but not submitted because it was learned that the library was ineligible to receive the grant due to the fact that library staff did not meet state minimum qualification requirements. In 1990, a Charitable Trust Fund was established to raise money to renovate and furnish a new library. Eight years later architectural plans for an addition/renovation were designed.

In December of 2001, an application for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction program was submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. In 2004, the library was granted 2.4 million dollars subject to the completion of securing local funding and other grant

requirements. All requirements were met, and in July of 2007 the newly renovated and expanded 7.2 million dollar building was open to the public.

The renovated library is approximately 27,000 square feet. It features three meeting rooms; including the 2500 sq. ft. *Dexter Hall Meeting Room* on the third floor.  All meeting rooms may be reserved for public use.  The main level features a comfortable seating area, quiet study rooms, a local history room, a book sale room, and a café area where patrons may purchase freshly brewed coffee. Twenty-one computers are available for public use as well as wireless access throughout the building.

The lower level Children's Room is a hub of activity with story times, programs, and special performances scheduled throughout the year.  The outdoor Reading Garden was completely built with privately raised funds and is a great place to get some fresh air, read a book or magazine, or just watch the world go by.

# LIBRARY USE

## Circulation
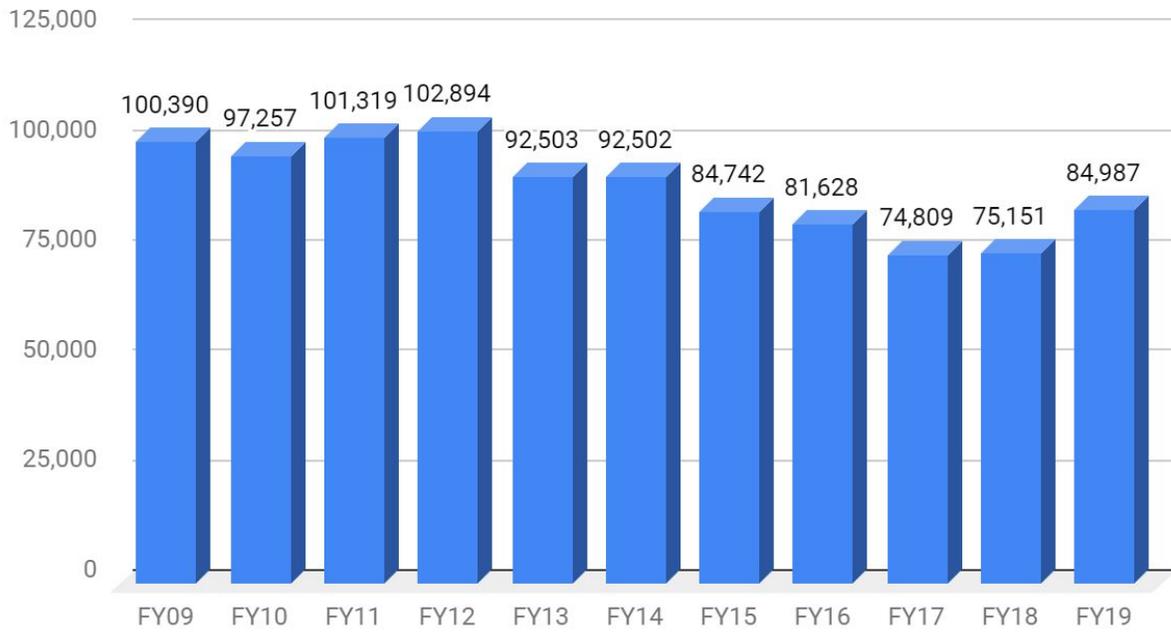


## Digital Circulation

## MEETING ROOM USE

| Year | Value |
|------|-------|
| FY10 | 412 |
| FY11 | 666 |
| FY12 | 533 |
| FY13 | 593 |
| FY14 | 640 |
| FY15 | 736 |
| FY16 | 1060 |
| FY17 | 1199 |
| FY18 | 1173 |
| FY19 | 1195 |
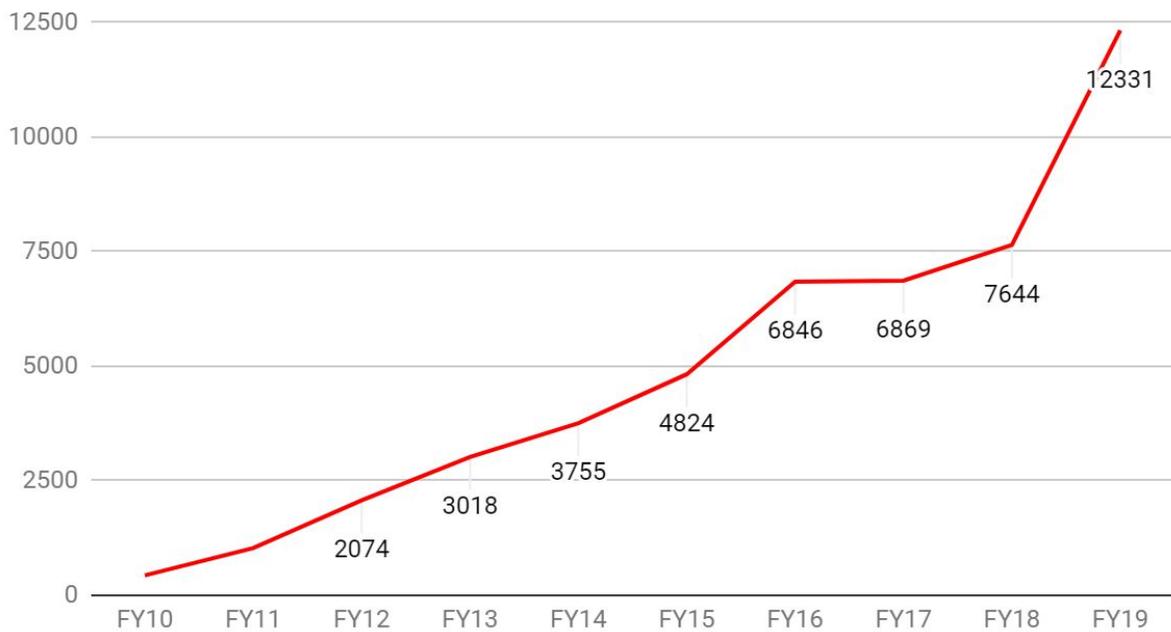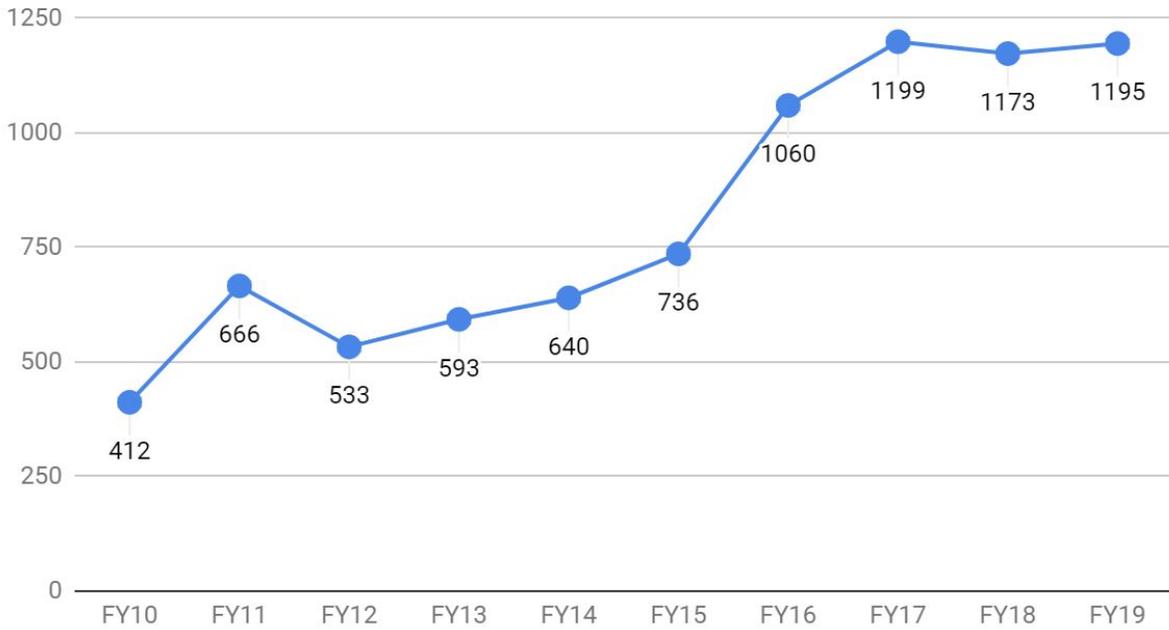
## Attendance and Number of Programs

Legend: ■ Attendance  ■ # of Programs

| Year | Attendance | # of Programs |
|------|-----------|---------------|
| FY10 | 5008 | 280 |
| FY11 | 8578 | 409 |
| FY12 | 7472 | 352 |
| FY13 | 8578 | 387 |
| FY14 | 8302 | 419 |
| FY15 | 5985 | 302 |
| FY16 | 6642 | 378 |
| FY17 | 7985 | 372 |
| FY18 | 6180 | 419 |

Year
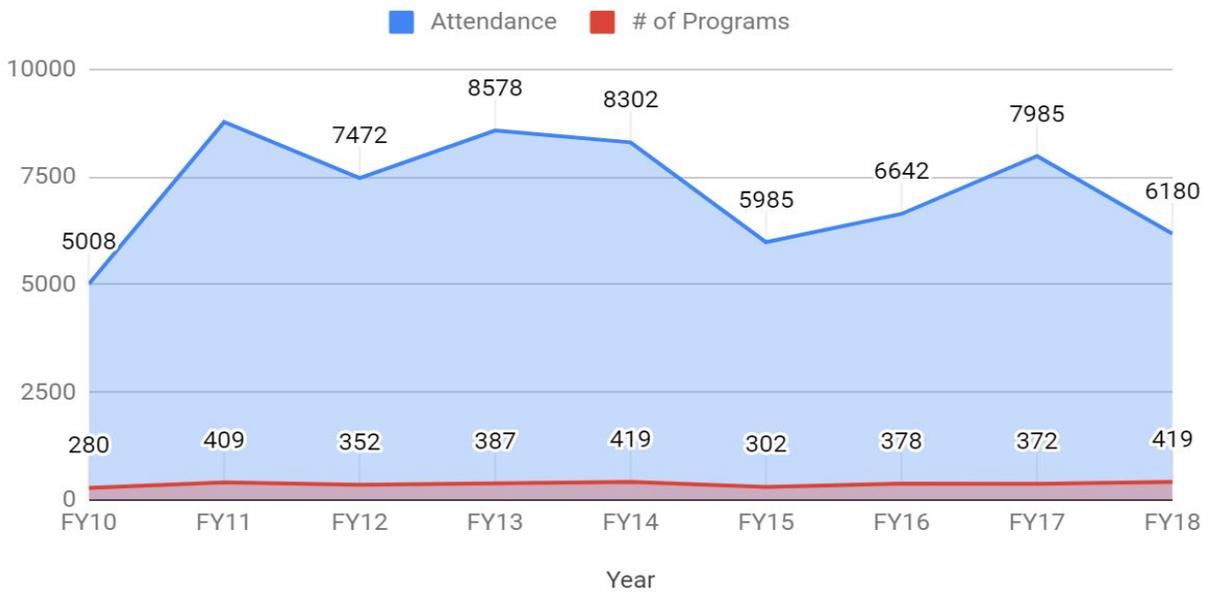
# Process/Planning Methodology

In October of 2018, a library survey was developed. Surveys were dispersed in the library and were available online via the library's website, Facebook and Twitter pages, and were emailed to our mailing list subscribers. One hundred and five surveys were completed. Results of the survey were used to determine what library services the community valued and what was envisioned for the future. A Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (S.O.A.R.) analysis was done with the library staff. We thought it was very important for staff to be heard when developing the plan.

Statistical information about the community was provided by the Town of Charlton and census data via American Fact Finder.

The Board of Library Trustees formally adopted the Long Range Plan on June 20, 2019.
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# ASSESSMENT OF USER NEEDS

## Survey results:

· The majority of respondents were 45-64 years old; 80% were female

· 82% of respondents were Charlton residents

86% of respondents visit the library at least once per month:

**Library Use**

Once or twice a year
2.0%
Every few months
12.0%

Daily
10.0%

Once a Week
30.0%

At least once a month
27.0%

More than once a week
19.0%
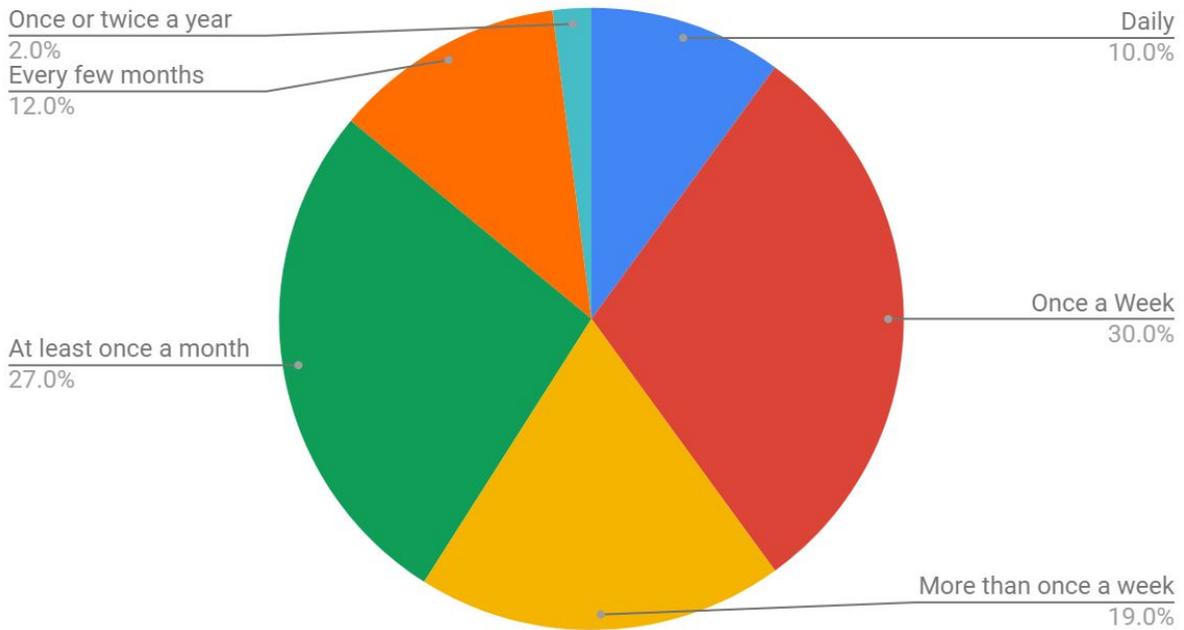
31% of respondents seldom use the library website:

## Website Use
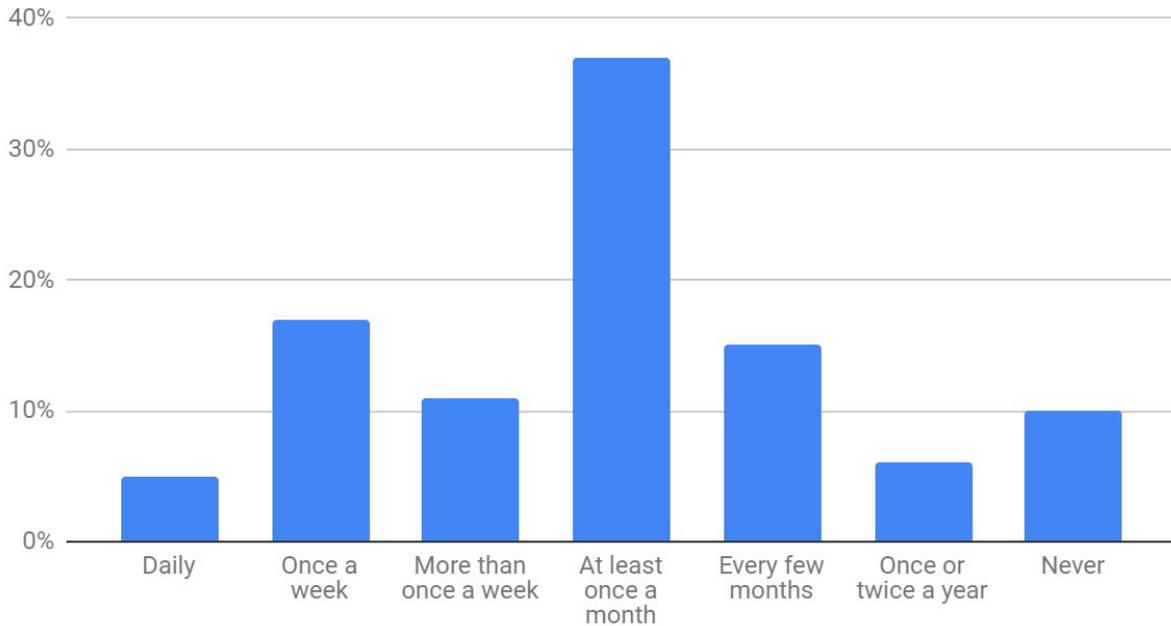


The majority of survey respondents use the library website to find out about library programs, to access the catalog, and to access practical information about the library. Only 23% use the website to access digital resources; combine that with the fact that 31% rarely use the website leads me to believe that we need to better market the library's digital resources. 95% responded that the library website is easy to use.

## How Do You Learn about Programs/Services?
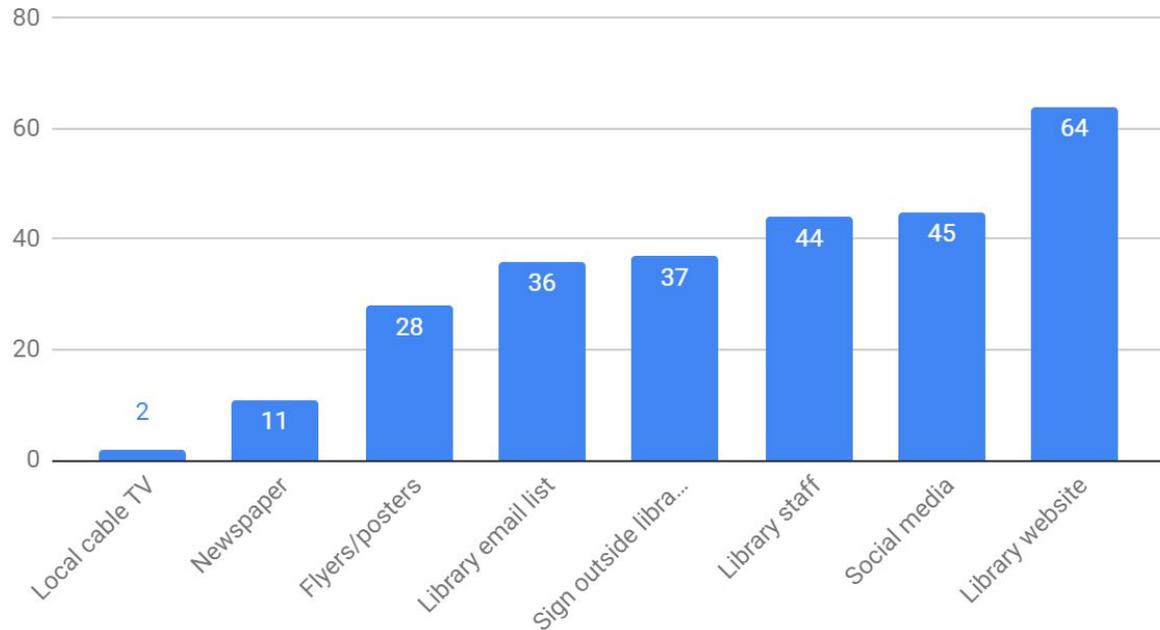


This chart reemphasizes the previous data that says the majority of respondents use the library website to find out about library programs. It is pleasantly surprising to see that word of mouth, library staff talking to patrons, is so high in the response rate.  That correlates with the next graph that shows a friendly, helpful staff is highly important to our community.

## Which library service do you consider most important?
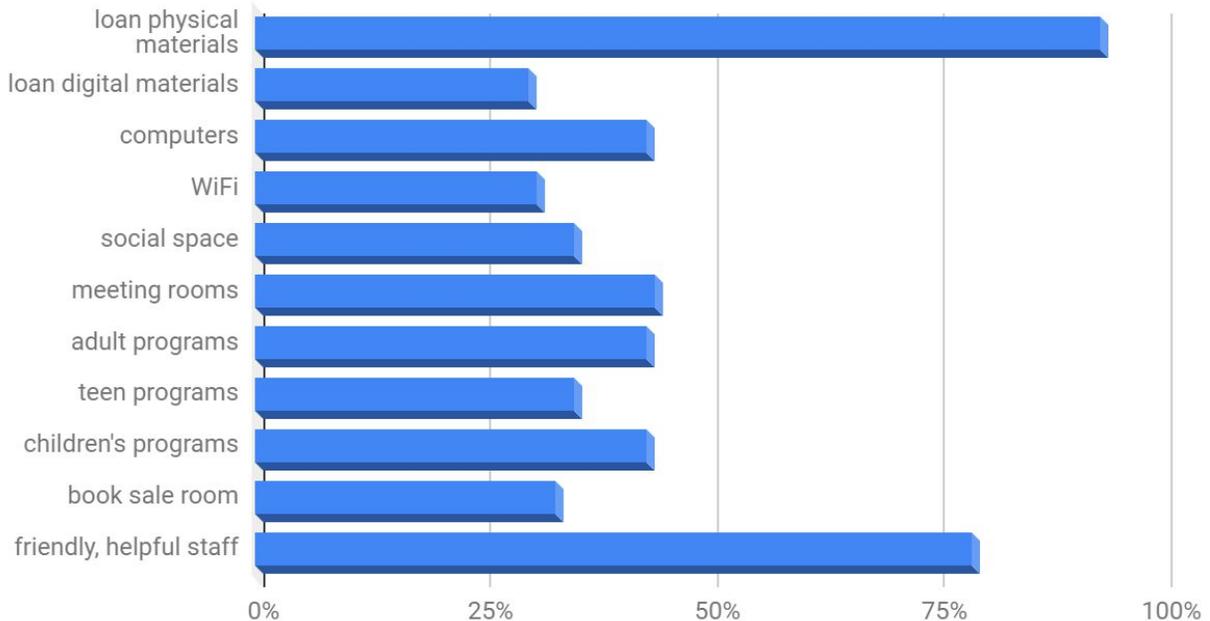


It is clear that the services that the community values as most important are the provision of books, audiobooks, DVDs, etc. to loan and a friendly, helpful staff. Every other service is valued similarly in the 30-44% range. 90% of people who completed the survey indicated that the number one reason that they visit the library is to check out library materials, with the majority indicating that they are at the library to borrow a print book. However, anecdotally, library staff observe that a high percentage of people come into the library and never check out materials; they are here simply using the space for a variety of reasons.

According to respondents, the adult collection needs more bestsellers, mystery, crime and thrillers, self-help books, and biographies/memoirs. The children's collection needs more middle grade fiction and STEM/STEAM materials.

Data indicates that about half the people who completed the survey use digital materials and about half do not. Although digital circulation is continuing to increase significantly each year (see graph on page 7) 83% of circulation in FY19 was physical not digital materials. The Overdrive digital collection provided through the library consortium is used significantly more than any digital resource purchased solely for Charlton users.

The most requested items to add to the library's "library of things" were musical instruments and power tools.

**Have you ever had difficulty finding a parking space at the library?**



Yes
30.0%

No
70.0%
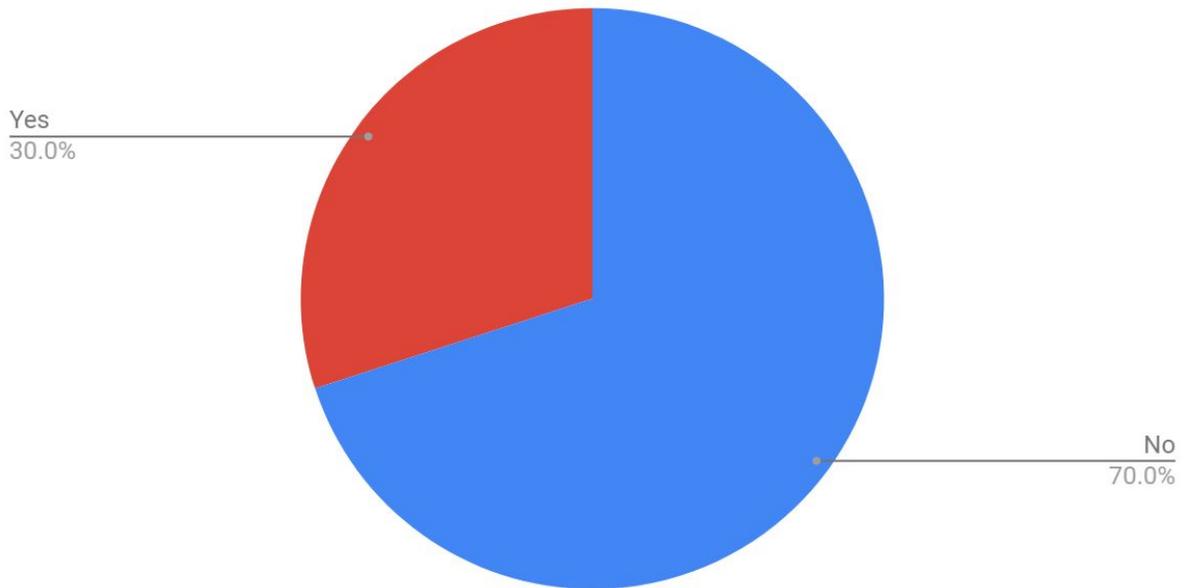
The parking question garnered lots of comments from respondents.  Here are a few:

- When there are sporting events too many people use library spaces.
- I've left when I couldn't find a space and I've also parked in areas that I shouldn't. Parking is a BIG reason why I don't go.If parking were easier, I would definitely go more often.
- If I'm lucky. I'll find a space up front that isn't taken by the neighbors.
- Only when the sports fields are being used and people are using library parking spaces even after signs were put up that prohibit parking for sports events. So rude.

## Where does the library excel?

| Category | |
|---|---|
| books | ▐ |
| programs | ▐ |
| staff | ▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐▐ |
| digital resources | ▐ |
| building | ▐ |

20   40   60
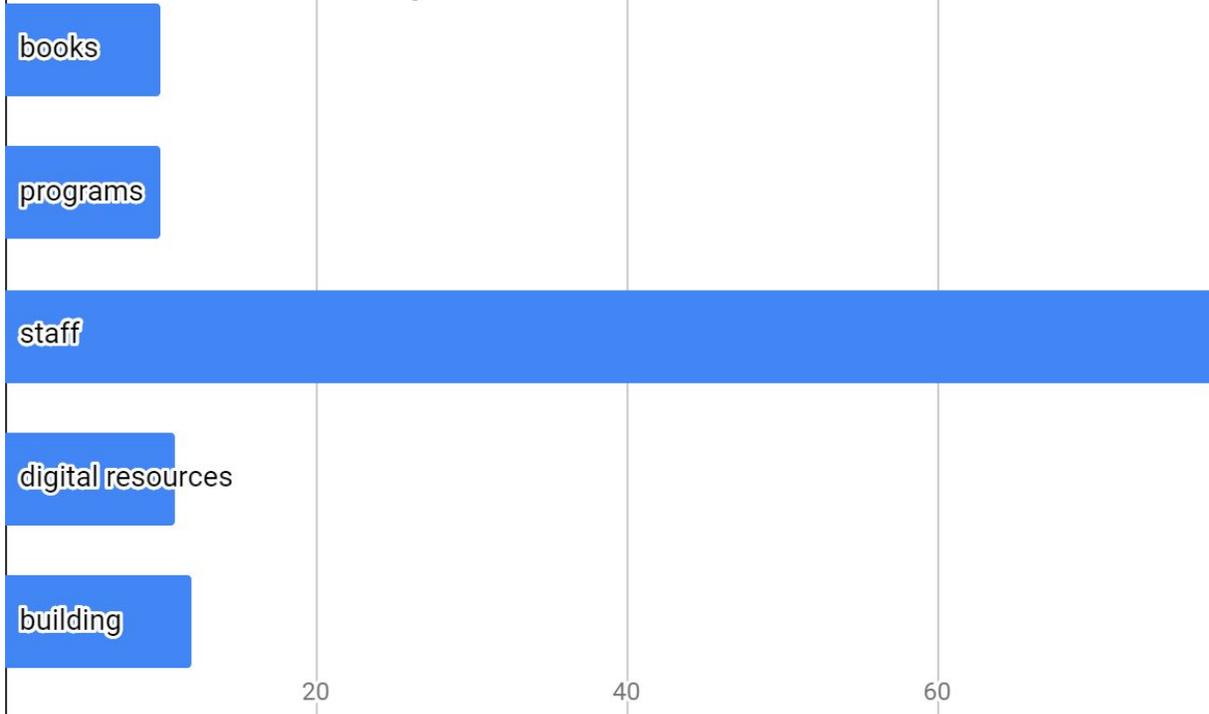
The last question of the survey asked where the library needs improvement. These suggestions have been divided into four categories: programs, materials, computer, and building.

Programs:
- Brown Bag Learning series
- concert series (folk and roots music)
- teen classes on Photoshop, the trades
- parenting class on cyber controlling your children
- after hours scout group meetings are sometimes noisy/disruptive to other after hours programs
- there should be an instructor at Lego Club
- local authors
- more advance notice of programs and more advertising platforms
- more adult programs
- more teen/tween programs

Materials:
- more variety
- suggestion box for new books
- more new movies
- organize dvd collection by type

- more adult genres
- more religious books for children
- more educational materials for teachers, homeschoolers
- print collections are sparse or maybe just don't coincide with my quirky taste
- more toys and interactive materials for children to explore and play with

Computer:
- Internet upgrades
- Charging stations
- WiFi isn't strong enough in the study rooms

Building:
- doors bang loudly
- paper towels instead of air dryers in bathrooms
- more public use, gathering space
- more open hours on the weekends and another night
- additional original works of art on the walls
- better working bathrooms
- too dark on the main floor
- making a left turn out of the driveway onto rte. 31
- better/softer seating for adults in the children's room

# SOAR results (staff):

| S-STRENGTHS | | O-OPPORTUNITIES |
|---|---|---|
| *WHAT IS WORKING REALLY WELL?* | | |
| *WHAT'S VALUED?* | | *HOW CAN WE BE EVEN BETTER?* |
| | | *WHAT ARE OUR WEAKNESSES* |
| *WHAT GOOD THINGS DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE LIBRARY?* | | *WHERE CAN WE ADD VALUE?* |
| | | *HOW CAN WE BETTER MEET PEOPLES NEEDS?* |
| MULTI-TASKING | | HOMEBOUND DELIVERY |
| BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS | | PARKING |
| ADORABLE STAFF | | PATIENCE LEVEL W/PARKING |
| HAPPY PATRONS | | TOO SOCIAL |
| FRIENDLY STAFF | | OVER SHARING |
| GOOD PROGRAMS | | TOO LOUD |
| FLEXIBLE | | DISRESPECT FOR OTHERS IN BUILDING |
| ACCOMMODATING | | PAID VS FREE SERVICES? |
| HELPFUL | | PATIENCE W/PATRONS AND EACH OTHER |
| PLEASING BUILDING | | OUTREACH-PROACTIVE |
| ABILITY TO EMBRACE ALL | | NOT ENOUGH TIME IN THE DAY |
| NON-INTIMIDATING | | HAVING EACH OTHERS BACKS |
| VARIETY OF SERVICES | | STAFF TRAINING |
| GOOD MANAGEMENT | | INFO SHARING |
| HOURS | | JOB AWARENESS |
| COMMUNITY CENTER | | RECOGNIZE EVERYONE'S IMPORTANCE AND UNIQUENESS |
| SOCIAL INVITING | | FAMILIARITY WITH WEBSITE & ONLINE SERVICES |
| SOCIAL SERVICES | | COMMUNICATION |
| MEETING ROOMS | | ART DISPLAYS |
| THERAPY CENTER | | TALK UP THE LIBRARY |
| INFO CENTER | | |
| FREE WIFI | | PROFESSIONALISM |

| A-ASPIRATIONS | | R-RESULTS |
|---|---|---|
| **MONEY IS NO OBJECT** | | *WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT FOR PATRONS/STAFF?* |
| *YOUR HOPES FOR THE LIBRARY AND YOUR DEPT.* | | *WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THE CHANGE?* |
| | | |
| INSULATION IN CHILDREN'S ROOM CLOSET | | HAPPY STAFF/PATRONS |
| PRIZES OUT OF STAFF KITCHEN | | COMPLIMENTS |
| PAINT | | SINCERITY |
| STAFF RAISES | | SURVEY RESULTS |
| UNLIMITED STORYTIME BUDGET | | |
| DIGITAL DIRECTORY | | SELF RESPONSIBILITY |
| VALET PARKING | | INCREASED USE OF LIBRARY |
| PARKING GARAGE | | |
| BOOK MOBILE | | DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE |
| CAFETERIA | | |
| GYM | | |
| CHEF | | |
| ESCAPE ROOM | | |
| MASSAGES | | |
| WINDOW BLINDS | | |
| MOBILE DEVICES FOR PATRONS | | |
| TEEN ROOM | | |
| NEW AV CASES | | |
| LIBRARY PET | | |
| FISH TANK | | |
| SRP | | |
| WIRELESS PRINTING | | |
| WEBSITE MANAGER | | |
| PR STAFF | | |
| NEW COMPUTERS | | |
| WINDOW IN OFFICE-CHILDREN'S | | |
| BLINDS | | |
| CLUTTER-FREE STORAGE | | |
| MORE PARKING | | |
| AC 24/7 | | |

# GOALS

Goal: The Charlton Public Library will have a strong commitment to exemplary and professional customer service.

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| All staff will strive to make each experience a positive one for each patron. | Staff members will greet everyone who enters the library in an appropriate manner. | Ongoing | All staff |
|  | Staff members will adjust levels of help to meet individual needs. | Ongoing | All staff |
|  | Staff members will be proactive by asking patrons if they need assistance and by encouraging questions. | Ongoing | All staff |
|  |  |  |  |
| The library will provide opportunity for professional development so that staff may better serve the community. | Library staff will attend educational workshops and trainings. | Ongoing | Director |

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Provide opportunity for staff to attend local, state, regional, and national conferences, | Ongoing | Director |
| Library staff will be perceived as professional. | Follow appropriate dress guidelines. | Ongoing | Director |
| | Abide by all Town/Library policies and procedures regarding code of conduct. | Ongoing | Director |
| Build a capable and proud team who enthusiastically provide excellent services, programs, and resources to the community. | Staff work together cooperatively in decision-making, creative problem-solving, and innovation via monthly staff meetings. | Ongoing | Director, Staff |
| | Continue weekly management meetings. | Ongoing weekly | Director, Head of Youth Services, Admin. Assistant |
| | All positions will be graded correctly in Town/Union Classification Plans. | FY20 | Director, HR Director, Town Administrator |

## Goal: Generate public awareness of services, collections, and activities.

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use of library resources will increase each year. | Post about a library program, service, resource, etc. every day via various social media platforms. | Ongoing | Director, Head of Youth Services, YS Assistant |
| | Expand use of patron subscribed email lists to disseminate information about library programs and services. | Ongoing | Head of Youth Services |
| | Submit information regularly to local newspapers and community newsletters. | Ongoing | Director, Head of Youth Services |
| | Continuously update the website. | Ongoing | Director, Head of Youth Services |
| | Purchase and install an electronic sign for outside of the library to promote services. | FY20 | Town of Charlton Sign Committee |

## Goal:  Offer a wide choice of library materials.

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provide a diverse collection. | Increase town funding for library digital services. | FY21 | Director, Trustees, Town Administrator |
| | Add to the library's "Collection of Things." | FY20-FY23 | Director, Head of Youth Services |
| | Continue to monitor usage statistics of print and digital materials and purchase accordingly. | Ongoing | Director |
| | Purchase more STEM/STEAM materials. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services |
| | | | |

Goal: Promote the Library as a primary community gathering place for cultural, informational, and recreational meetings and events.

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provide developmentally appropriate programs for children and their caregivers. | Procure outside sources of funding and allocate money for programming from the library's state aid account. | FY20-FY24 | Director, Head of Youth Services |
| | Contract with special performers/speakers at least 4 times per year to provide children's programs. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services |
| | Continue weekly Story Times and other ongoing programs for children of all ages. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services, YS Assistant |
| | Continue the Summer Reading Program for children. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services, YS Assistant |
| | Continue programs so that all first graders in the Charlton Public School System receive library cards. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services, YS Assistant |
| Implement cultural and recreational programs for young adults. | Procure sources of funding for young adult programs. | FY20-FY24 | Director |

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Offer at least 4 programs per year for young adults | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services |
| | Continue the Summer Reading Program for young adults. | FY20-FY24 | Head of Youth Services, Staff |
| Provide cultural and recreational programs for adults. | Procure outside sources of funding for adult programs and allocate money for programming from the library's state aid account. | FY20-FY24 | Director |
| | Offer at least 15 programs per year for adults. | FY20-FY24 | Director, Adult Circulation Clerk |
| | Continue the Adult Summer Reading Program. | FY20-FY24 | Director, Adult Circulation Clerk |
| Provide cultural and recreational programs for adults in their 20's. | Initially offer at least 4 programs per year for this age group. | FY20 | Director, Adult Circulation Clerk |

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Improve library parking. | Continue to work with the Recreation Commission to troubleshoot the sports parking issue. | Ongoing | Director |
| | Adapt signage as necessary. | Ongoing | Director |
| | Hire a parking attendant. | FY22 | Director, HR Director, Town Administrator |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Goal: Improve the library to better accommodate the future needs of its users.

| Objectives | Actions | Timeframe for Activity | By Whom |
|---|---|---|---|
| Display more local artist's work. | Purchase more art display hardware, easels, etc. | FY21 | Director |
| Reconfigure the Early Learning Play Area | Purchase more learning manipulatives, soft seating and other furniture. | FY21 | Director, Head of Youth Services |
| Offer wireless printing. | Purchase or lease a wireless color printer. | FY21 | Director |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |