Rice Public Library



Photo Credit: 16 Hoops Photography/WinterHolben

Strategic Plan 2024-2029

MISSION

- **Promote** literacy and lifelong learning in a welcoming environment
- **Ensure** access to local, national, and global resources for all individuals
- **Offer** a collection that reflects the varying interests of our community through a variety of print, electronic, digital, and emerging media
- **Address** the educational and cultural interests of the community
- **Collect**, preserve, and disseminate Kittery and regional historical information

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1872 Arabella Rice, of Portsmouth, NH, left $30,000 in her will to start a free, public library in Kittery, where her father grew up.

1874 Rice Public Library was founded and housed in two rooms in a building between Government and Walker Streets.

1889 After fully funding the project and breaking ground in 1888, a brand new brick building opened November 9 to house the 3,200-volume collection.

1907 Eleanor “Nellie” Lovell became the third Head Librarian and did not retire until 1947, at the age of 92.

1964 The first Children’s Room at Rice was established on the top floor, in the large room that now holds the teen collection. Soon after, the Maine Room was created to begin collecting books, clippings, and artifacts related to local history.

1977 Hope Neilson became the Library Director and stayed until 2005, after which she volunteered every week. She was the librarian with the second-longest tenure.

1989 The Taylor Annex (at 2 Walker St.) opened on October 30, housing the fiction, A/V, and children’s collections.

2019 Rice Public Library became a Town department on July 1. Residents voted on November 9 to fund the addition.

2022 On September 10, donors and project leaders attended a ribbon cutting in front of the new addition.

2024 The Ann Grinnell Children’s Garden, funded 100% by generous donors, was officially unveiled on September 5.

RICE PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2029

CONTENTS

1 Welcome

2 Strategic Plan Process

3 Strategic Plan Overview

4 Goal 1: Lifelong Learning

5 Goal 2: Community Engagement

7 Goal 3: Early Literacy

8 Goal 4: Technology

9 Appendix: Survey Summary

11 Acknowledgements

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https://rice.lib.me.us

Welcome

The Rice Public Library's mission to promote literacy and lifelong learning in a welcoming environment must, by necessity, evolve as the definition of "literacy" expands to include new media. But, above all, it must also evolve as the wants, interests, and needs of our community develop and change. The effort that resulted in the reopening of the library in June 2022 spoke to our town's will and spirit, while also providing an opportunity to take stock, both of what we are and what we want to become.

With that in mind, the director, staff, and Library's Advisory Board began a process of assessment that has now concluded in this Strategic Plan. The community's voice was clear, and this plan incorporates what we heard. We thank all of you who completed the survey, dropped by with suggestions, and attended meetings and focus groups. Your criticisms, praise, and ideas are all included in the vision presented here of how the Rice Public Library will evolve in the coming years.

Signed,

Dr. Susan Goodman
Library Advisory Board Chair

Lee Perkins
Library Director

At a Glance

FY 2022-2023:

- **5,107 Attended Youth Programs**
- **1,581 Attended Adult Programs**
- **89,672 Items Circulated**
- **18,300 Facebook & Instagram Views**
- **42,536 Visits**

Since June 2022 Addition Re-Opening:

- **1,994 New Library Cards**
- **1,150 Museum Pass Uses**
- **220 Nintendo Switch Sessions**
- **1,384 Weekly Newsletter Subscribers**

"It's as good as entering a greenhouse or 'Cheers'... when I enter I breathe deeply, feel relaxed and 'everyone knows my name.'"

Strategic Plan Process



Step 1:
The Town of Kittery hired consultants from Maxine Bleiweis & Associates to conduct surveys and interviews with the community.

Step 2:
A 24-question survey was made available on paper and online, in late March 2023, with responses being collected until May 2023.

Step 3:
Responses from 423 patrons and community members were reviewed and organized, to highlight common concerns, suggestions, and feedback.

Step 4:
A Community Forum on June 14 with approximately 50 people in attendance, led by the Library Advisory Committee.



Step 5:
During the week of the Community Forum, the Library Advisory Board, staff members, and representatives from several focus groups in Kittery (businesses, teens, the arts, etc.) met with Maxine Bleiweis & Associates to help answer more targeted questions.



Step 6:
Starting in August 2023, the Library Advisory Board began working through the data and responses from the survey and focus groups to formulate the Strategic Plan.

Step 7:
In the fall of 2023, the Service Priorities, Mission Statement, Goals, Objectives, and Measures were completed.

Step 8:
In the winter of 2023-24, the Strategic Plan was drafted and reviewed by staff members, Town of Kittery administration, and the Library Advisory Board.

"Rice Library reminds me of the Frank Capra movie 'It's a Wonderful Life.' Without Rice Library, what would Kittery become?"

Strategic Plan Overview

A strategic plan is developed to establish a road map of goals and objectives for Rice Public Library, and inform budgeting, staffing, program development, collection management, and service delivery for the ensuing five years.

Goal 1 LIFELONG LEARNING

Support the members of the Kittery community to expand their knowledge base, initiate ideas, and make connections through common interests, concerns, needs, and expertise.

Goal 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Provide broadly accessible program opportunities and services that celebrate diverse community interests and needs, and feature voices from within the community.

Goal 3 EARLY LITERACY

Promote early literacy. Children 5 and under will have programs and services designed to promote school-ready skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Goal 4 TECHNOLOGY

Expand opportunities to support the technological needs of our community.

"I'd love to see a get-together[...] some evening after 6pm or Saturday to welcome 'newcomers' who haven't yet been to the library. 'Haven't been in to the library yet? Please join us on x date for a reception and tour of the new space!'"

Goal 1

LIFELONG LEARNING

Provide materials in multiple formats, and opportunities to engage people—individually or in groups—in activities that promote learning, curiosity, and literacy.

Support the members of the Kittery community to expand their knowledge base, initiate ideas, and make connections through common interests, concerns, needs, and expertise.

ACTION ITEM #1

Provide more opportunities for our community members to learn about diversity and connect.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Increase diversity-focused programming.
- Host Summer English Language Learning (ELL) classes with Kittery Adult Education.

ACTION ITEM #2

Explore options for our Maker Space, including creating classes and STEAM learning kits and hands-on activities.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Investigate other libraries that provide maker spaces and make plans/concrete plans.
- Move from exploring to creating programs.

ACTION ITEM #3

Create book and discussion groups that create opportunities for community members to meet and connect through ongoing dialogues in a safe and welcoming setting for all.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Offer the public opportunities to volunteer to run book clubs (some examples: silent book club, mystery, teen, etc.)





"I hope the library continues to build its educational role: bringing people together to learn how to live in an ever changing social and environmental world."

Goal 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Build on the Library's commitment to providing a secure, hospitable environment where all citizens can feel safe, heard, and seen.

Provide broadly accessible program opportunities and services that celebrate diverse community interests and needs, and feature voices from within the community.

ACTION ITEM #1

Expand the variety of remote and in-person services to make access equitable for all users.



METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Develop and implement a plan to add remote service options.
  - Increase reach for both returning and new patrons.
- Increase titles and Libby offerings in multiple languages.
- Promote Adult Education technology classes on-site.
- Promote our resources online.
- Add a video streaming service.
- Investigate adding Part-Time staff so tech drop-in times can be added.

ACTION ITEM #2

Collaborate with the Kittery Community Center, Kittery School Department, and other local agencies to enhance opportunities for more citizens to participate.



METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Identify ways to connect with outside agencies to provide programming and services.
- Invite (and accept invitations) to connect and collaborate with these agencies.
  - How many programs did we create?
  - How many patrons [new and old] reached?
- Year 1: Report our numbers
- Year 2: Identify opportunities to collaborate.
- Year 3: Ramp up programs with Kittery Community Center, Kittery Schools, and Adult Education

"I lost power yesterday. When I asked about a quiet spot to set up my laptop to work, the librarian lit up and was so helpful! The spot was perfect and I realized I could even have done Zoom meetings if I needed to without bothering anyone else."

Goal 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (cont.)

ACTION ITEM #3
Develop and widely publicize a service schedule to maximize on-site and remote access.

METRICS OF SUCCESS
- Update hours of service according to survey responses.
  - How many hours did we add?
- Publicize change in hours.
  - Was there an increase in patron traffic/collection usage?

ACTION ITEM #4
Develop a plan to make books and materials more accessible to those without access to transportation.

METRICS OF SUCCESS
- Investigate changing York County Community Action Corp. bus to transport patrons to the library.
- Add delivery of books to shut-ins by the Friends of Rice Public Library.

ACTION ITEM #6
Assess the feasibility of a mobile library/bookmobile program.

METRICS OF SUCCESS
- Year 1: Identify good role models for bookmobile programs.
- Collect the data from the identified Maine or New Hampshire libraries.
- Year 2: Report to the Advisory Board.
- Delineate the next steps to the Advisory Board.

ACTION ITEM #7
Partner with the Friends of the Rice Public Library to advance their goals in support of the library.

METRICS OF SUCCESS
- Assist the Friends in advancing goals beyond the scope of what is currently being offered.
- Have a conversation with the Friends about what they want to do at each annual meeting.

ACTION ITEM #8
Promote and expand opportunities for volunteerism, through the Town's volunteer portal (discussion groups; book groups; maintaining the gardens; Maker Space programs; IT advice, etc.), in coordination with library staff.

METRICS OF SUCCESS
- Create opportunities for the volunteer portal.
  - Were these opportunities fulfilled?



"Staff have always been very helpful when looking for particular items and wayfinding within the library. Have often been disappointed, showing up to the library and finding it closed. My own fault for not checking ahead of time, but limited library hours also contributes."

Goal 3 EARLY LITERACY

Provide programs and services to all children, before they enter kindergarten, designed to foster a love of learning and ease the transition to schooling.

Promote early literacy. Children 5 and under will have programs and services designed to promote school-ready skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

ACTION ITEM #1

Collaborate with the Kittery Community Center, Kittery School Department, and other local agencies to enhance opportunities for more citizens to participate.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Identify and create opportunities to collaborate with the Kittery School Department.
- Establish outreach to each school (including preschools).
  - How many students/families became library users as a result of this outreach?

ACTION ITEM #2

Add Story Time on one Saturday or one evening per month during the school year.

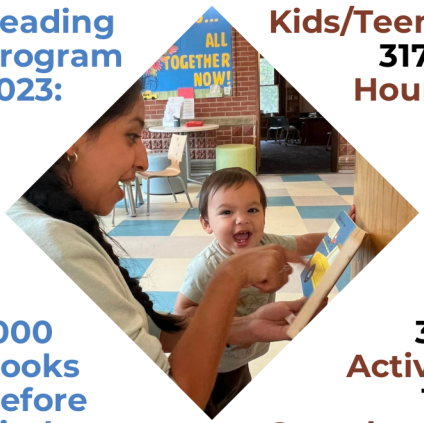
METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Add at least one new monthly Story Time, either in the evening or on Saturday.
  - Tally numbers of participants for the year.



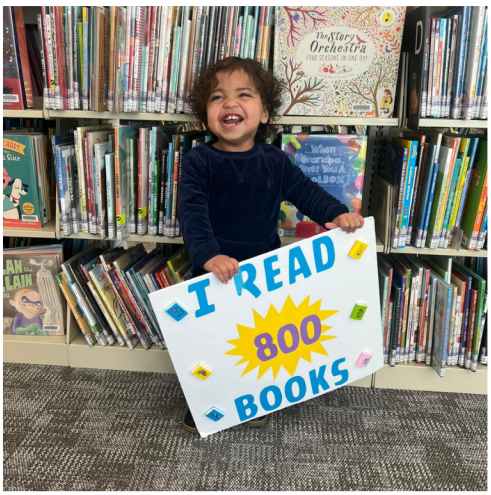
Summer Reading Program 2023:

117 Kids/Teens
3170 Hours



1000 Books Before Kindergarten:

32 Active
12 Completed



"Children's story time has been a great thing for our family. We love the children's area in general and the toys available for younger kiddos."

Goal 4 TECHNOLOGY

Provide access to education and resources designed to help people adapt to an ever-changing technological landscape.

Expand opportunities to support the technological needs of our community.

ACTION ITEM #1

Expand digital resources including streaming video and audiobooks, offered in multiple languages.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Add additional digital resources in various languages.
  - How was the budget reallocated to ensure more money for digital over physical media?

ACTION ITEM #2

Initiate a partnership with York County Career Center in Sanford and Kittery Adult Education for on-site job application training, resume writing, and technology assistance.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Build a partnership with York County CareerCenter and Kittery Adult Education.

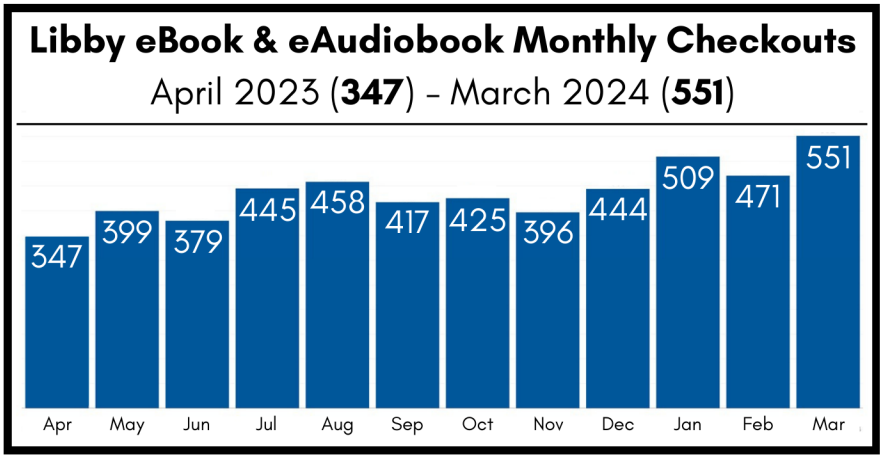
ACTION ITEM #3

Expand technology programs and assistance, with in-person and virtual learning opportunities.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

- Explore technological advances and how we can incorporate them into what we offer.
- Add new devices and build new programs around them.





"I really enjoyed the class given by a staff member when changing from cable to platform streaming. She really helped to de-mystify it."

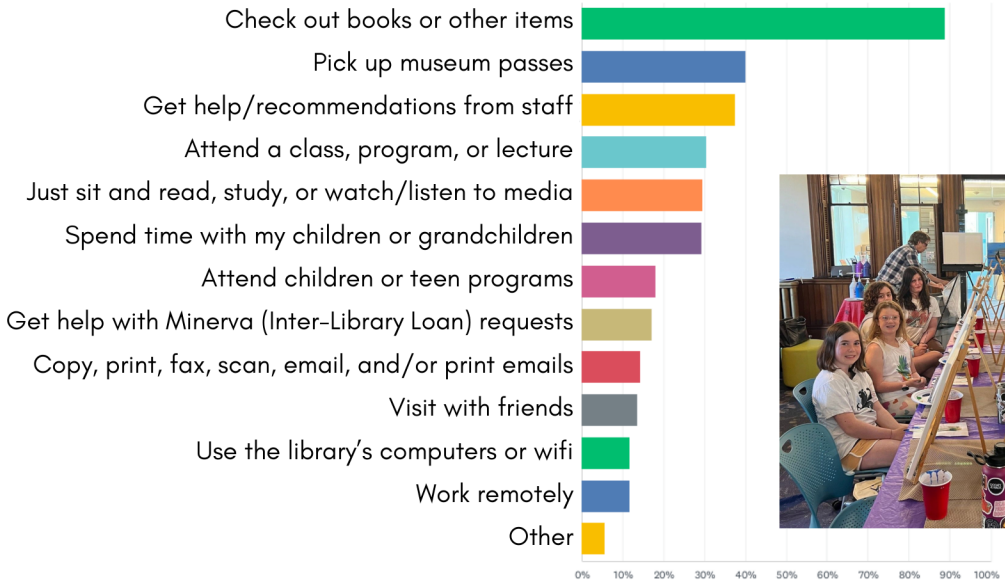
APPENDIX:

Survey Summary

The full results of the survey are available on the library's website under the tab **Strategic Plan 2024-2029**.

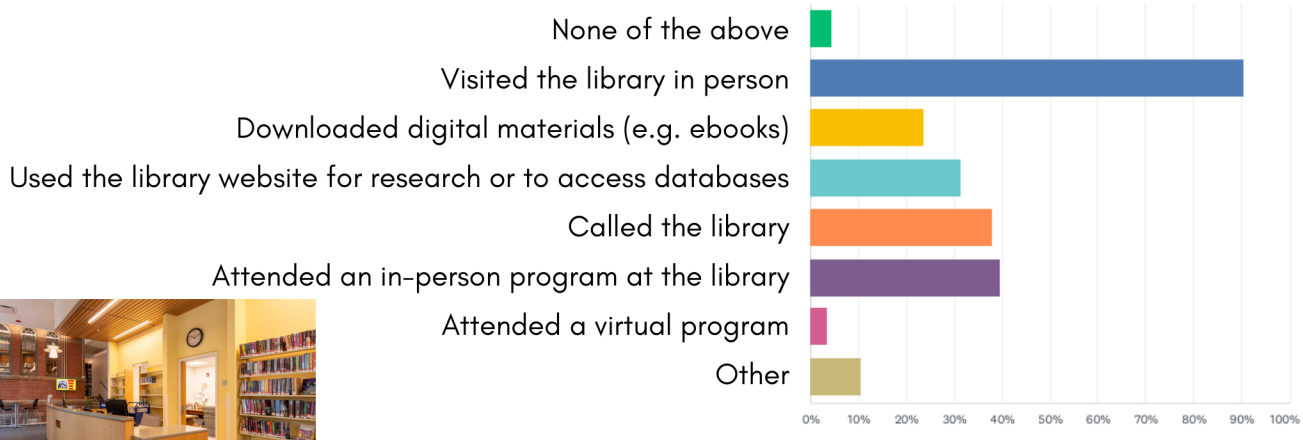
A visualized summary of a number of the multiple-choice questions are below.

What do you typically do when you visit Rice Public Library? Please choose all that apply.





How have you used Rice Public Library in the past 12 months? Please choose all that apply.



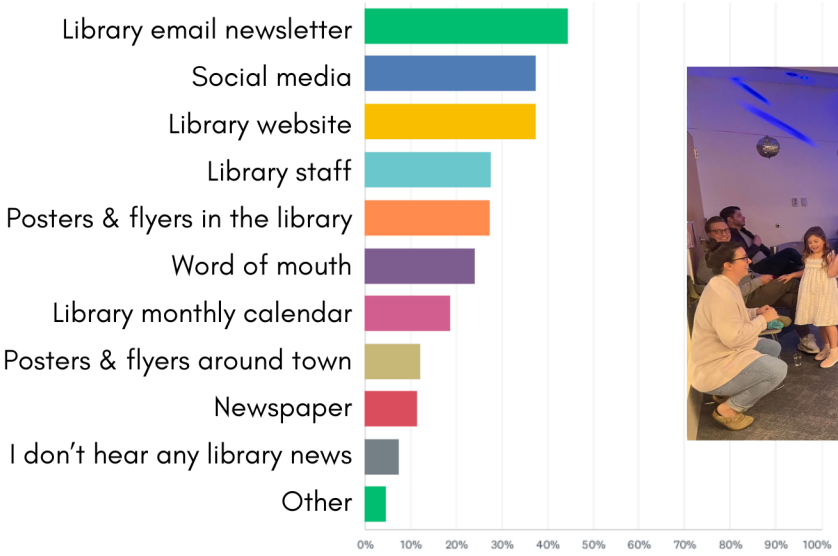


"I think it's very welcoming. The challenge is becoming more visible, more an attraction to residents[...] The Foreside has become a destination... I would love to see the Library brought into the loop of 'need to see and visit' just as Lil's or the art galleries are."

APPENDIX:

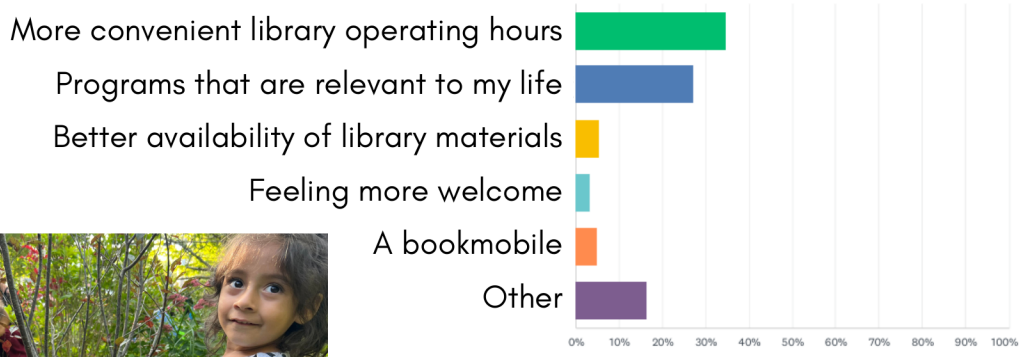
Survey Summary

How do you usually find out about library news and events? Please choose all that apply.





Which of the changes below would encourage you to visit the library more often? Please choose all that apply.





The data above are from a total of 423 respondents, across both print and online formats of the survey.

"Rice is one of the top benefits of living in Kittery. It's a wonderful, helpful place."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Library Advisory Board

Dr. Susan Goodman, Chair

Lindsay Burrowbridge
Rachel Dennis
Tom Newbold
Cici Nielsen
Dr. Stephanie Wexler-Robock
Kendra Amaral, Town Manager
Judy Spiller, Town Council Chair
Lee Perkins, Library Director



Consultants

Maxine Bleiweis & Associates, LLC.

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Cameron Hamm, Councilor
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