

Morse Institute Library Strategic Plan FY2018 – FY2022



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Letter to the Natick Community

September 2016

Dear Natick Residents,

The library and the community are in a period of major change. As the town's population grows and shifts, new demands are placed on the library to provide a wider range of collections, programs and services. The community itself is doing extensive strategic planning to respond to these changes and the library will play a role in planning for the town's future.

In this strategic plan, the Morse Institute Library commits to providing traditional library services and programs that support literacy and learning. We also commit to incorporating new strategies for better serving the community's evolving needs as well as its changing expectations for the public library. Members of the Library's Strategic Planning Committee, along with the 660 residents who completed a library survey, shared their vision of a vibrant library that serves a diverse community, supports life-long learning, and creates a welcoming place where people can share interests and learn from one another. In addition, residents envisioned new ways that the library could support the economic development and growth of the community.

During the strategic planning process, residents also expressed a strong desire for expanded weekend hours and improved parking.

The Board of Trustees will advocate for the resources required to offer additional weekend hours, and will reevaluate the current allocation of library resources and configuration of library hours.

The Board also acknowledges that parking for the library is inadequate. In the library survey, there were hundreds of comments expressing dissatisfaction with the inconvenience and prohibitive cost of parking near the library. Residents reported that this deters visits to the library, and makes it especially difficult for parents with young children. The Board shared this feedback with the Board of Selectmen and the Parking Advisory Committee in July. We will continue to work with town departments and officials to seek options for better parking and access to the library.

The Board of Trustees is deeply grateful for the ongoing support of elected officials, the Friends of the Library, library staff, volunteers, donors and, most importantly, library patrons. It is the people who transform the library building and bookmobile into a community center where residents come together to learn, enjoy, and enrich their lives. The Morse Institute Library is a place for everyone. We remain committed to offering the best service, materials and programs to all.

Very truly,
Morse Institute Library Board of Trustees

Joseph Keefe, President
Kathleen Donovan
Elliot Goodman
Gerald Mazor
Sally McCoubrey

Acknowledgements

The Board of Trustees and library staff would like to thank members of the Strategic Planning Committee, who gathered to share their vision for the library and the community over the next years.

Strategic Planning Committee:

- Nanna Atake, Teen Community Representative
- Amy Bloom, Natick Public Schools Representative
- Kathleen Donovan, Library Board of Trustees
- Patti Donovan, Community Representative
- Bruce Evans, Natick Finance Committee
- Jane Finlay, Assistant Library Director
- Tobe Gerard, Community Representative
- Deb Hoadley, Library Consultant
- Rauf Huseynov, Community Representative
- Demetri Kyriakis, Library Staff
- Anna Litten, Library Staff
- Adam Schwarz, Community Representative
- Linda Stetson, Library Director
- Maria Tumang, Friends of the Library President
- Greg Tutuny, Community Representative
- Joe Weiss, Community Representative

The Board also recognizes and appreciates the members' ongoing commitment to the library, and to the Natick community.

Snapshot of Library Service in FY2016

Number	Description
507,185	Books, DVDs and other materials checked out
303,537	Visits to the library
62,356	Reference questions answered
19,325	Residents with library cards
15,035	People attending a program
25,596	Internet usage through the library's wireless service
25,324	Public library computers usage
4,856	Visits to the bookmobile

Planning Process Summary

Early in 2016, the Morse Institute Library began work on its next strategic plan for FY2018 – FY2022. The desired outcomes of the planning process were:

- To learn more about the community and library staff's vision for their library
- To create a document that would guide the library in both short term (12 – 24 months) and long-term (3 – 5 years) decision-making
- To complete and submit the strategic plan by October 3, 2016 to meet the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners certification requirement

To gather community input to inform the next strategic plan, the Morse Institute Library formed a 15-member Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), inviting a diverse group of Natick residents to participate in the plan.

The library also conducted a survey (Appendix B) to collect input from the larger community. The survey was distributed online and in paper, and was completed by 660 residents.

The SPC met three times. The group reviewed the library's Vision and Mission statements, discussed the strengths and opportunities for the library, and shared their vision for the Natick community over the next 10-20 years. The SPC reviewed library survey data and looked at demographic trends since the library's last strategic plan. The SPC identified the following key indicators to address in the library's next strategic plan:

- Natick's population increased by 1,224 (.037%) from 2010 to 2014 (based on *American Community Survey* estimate for 2014)
- Natick's school enrollment increased by 601 students (almost 13%) from 2010 to 2015
- 16.8 percent of Natick's residents speak a language other than English at home

After the SPC's final meeting, a sub-committee consisting of the consultant, the trustee and the library's director and assistant director reviewed input from:

- Discussions with the Strategic Planning Committee
- Quantitative and qualitative library survey data from 660 residents
- Two staff focus groups scheduled so that all staff could participate
- Feedback on mission, vision and priorities from the Board of Trustees
- Review of community demographics based on census data
- Staff reports to the state detailing library performance statistics

The sub-committee completed several drafts of the plan. The final draft was reviewed, amended and approved by the Board of Trustees on September 20, 2016.

Vision and Mission

Vision

The Morse Institute Library will be the place where people of Natick and the MetroWest area can gather to learn, enjoy and enrich their lives.

Mission

The Morse Institute Library's mission is:

- To provide free access to materials and quality information and technology services to library users of all ages and abilities;
- To serve as a major educational resource with programs and learning opportunities for all, so residents of Natick and the MetroWest area can meet, learn, and create together;
- To serve as a community and cultural center with meeting and exhibit spaces for individuals as well as municipal and civic groups.

The Morse Institute Library strives to meet the needs of all members of the Natick community through active outreach and by being a welcoming place for all.

Strategic Goals Overview

Goal 1: Support Enrichment and Life-Long Learning

"Foster a life-long love of learning and creativity, especially among our youngest readers."

"I most value the library when it is exposing me to ideas that I would not have seen otherwise."

Goal 2: Foster Community Engagement and Connections

"I believe that libraries are evolving to become the hub of community activity."

"Thanks for...being such a comfortable space for my family."



Goal 3: Build Partnerships and Collaborations

"I think more collaboration with other groups such as schools, service organizations and businesses is key."

"The more the library partners with schools the more they can help kids..."



Goal 4: Expand Outreach and Communication

"Bookmobile service on a scale of 1-10 is a 100."

"Increase community-wide knowledge that the library has more than books."



Goal 5: Promote Innovation and Creativity

"It would be fantastic if the library could be an incubator of sorts."

"More arts workshops for adults, please!"

Goals, Objectives, Activities & Outcomes

Goal 1: Support Enrichment and Life-Long Learning

Objective 1: Provide learning opportunities for different ages, abilities and interests.

Projected Outcome: The library becomes known as a resource center for learning.

Activities:

1. Create, develop, implement and evaluate a technology education program for adults.
2. Evaluate current early literacy programming for children (ages 0-5). Investigate other programming in the area. Apply lessons learned to current programming.
3. Provide at least one Science, Technology, Art, Engineering and Math (“STEAM”) programming opportunity per month.

Objective 2: Build a diverse set of programs to engage and meet the interests of the community.

Projected Outcome: Library’s calendar reflects the variety of programming for all ages: STEAM, Arts, cultural programs, educational opportunities, lecture series, book talks, etc. Something for everybody.

Activities:

1. Build programming responsibilities into more staff positions.
2. Develop a programming plan/schedule for each fiscal year.

Objective 3: Ensure the Library’s collection reflects the needs of the community.

Projected Outcome: A current and relevant collection in many formats to meet the needs of a variety of users.

Activities:

1. Add unusual collections that meet the needs of the community. Conduct a community survey to assess need, interest and partner possibilities.
2. Add new and emerging technologies – downloadable media, and more.
3. Maintain a vibrant, current print collection.

Objective 4: Promote the love of reading for all ages.

Projected Outcome: A culture of reading in Natick.

Activities:

1. More book groups for all ages.
2. Build more appealing and cross-generational book displays.
3. Rethink a “One Town, One Book” program.
4. Schedule more author visits, especially children’s authors.
5. Provide robust Readers’ Advisory Training for all staff.

Goal 2: Foster Community Engagement and Connections

Objective 1: Create and adapt spaces for all ages that are vibrant and engaging.

Projected Outcome: A welcoming and engaging space that is more efficient and comfortable for both the staff and the public.

Activities:

1. Develop a master plan to replace worn out furniture with comfortable seating; replace carpet; repaint interior; and improve lighting.
2. Evaluate signage and service points in each department.
3. Use existing data from tracking software to evaluate and create spaces for quiet study and update policies accordingly.
4. Evaluate staff workspace for efficiency and customer service needs.
5. Redesign the first and second floor public computer areas, and service points.

Objective 2: Develop opportunities for the public to volunteer and contribute to the services and programs at the Library.

Projected Outcome: More volunteer opportunities for the community and stronger community engagement.

Activities:

1. Identify and plan for volunteer opportunities throughout the building.
2. Work in cooperation with the Community Senior Center, Natick Community Organic Farm, the schools, tax volunteer program, and other community organizations to identify potential volunteers.

Objective 3: Expand the Library's online presence.

Projected Outcome: The Morse Institute Library becomes a virtual destination.

Activities:

1. Increase web-accessible resources available to the public 24/7.
2. Create a social media outreach plan.

Objective 4: Create a platform where librarians, individuals and organizations exchange knowledge on topics of interest to the community.

Projected Outcome: A more informed and engaged population.

Activities:

1. Host discussion panels on topics of current interest for all ages.

Goal 3: Build Partnerships and Collaborations

Objective 1: Foster relationships with municipal departments and community groups to benefit Natick residents.

Projected Outcome: Increased awareness and use of library services and space.

Activities:

1. Host an open house for town employees, committees and boards.
2. Promote our meeting spaces to community groups and utilize underused spaces.

3. Create formal and mutually beneficial partnerships utilizing strengths of all parties.

Objective 2: Increase collaborations with public and private schools.

Projected Outcome: A better educated student population/learning outcomes.

Activities:

1. Create mutually beneficial learning experiences with area schools, at all levels.
2. Foster a deeper relationship with Walnut Hill School for the Arts.
3. Expand outreach to early childhood education providers.

Objective 3: Work with local organizations to provide greater access to local history, arts and culture of Natick.

Projected Outcome: Residents develop an understanding and appreciation of Natick's rich history and current arts and cultural environment.

Activities:

1. Begin using technology as a platform for increasing access to Natick local history documents.
2. Collaborate with Natick Historical Society to support local history learning projects.
3. Collaborate with Walnut Hill School for the Arts, TCAN, the Natick Cultural Council and other arts organizations to support an appreciation of Natick's rich cultural presence.

Goal 4: Expand Outreach and Communication

Objective 1: Continue to work with town government to ensure appropriate and sustained municipal funding for the Library.

Projected Outcome: Adequate funding to meet the services and hour needs of the public.

Activities:

1. Lay the groundwork for securing municipal support for expanded weekend hours, including Sundays.
2. Re-evaluate configuration of service hours.
3. Maintain and increase appropriate level of funding for the Minuteman Library Network (MLN).

Objective 2: Promote and increase the visibility of the Library and its resources.

Projected Outcome: Higher library attendance, usage, and circulation of materials.

Activities:

1. Develop tools for traveling library information kiosk and programs.
2. Host events to showcase library resources
 - Annual open house for public, town, staff and committee members.
 - 20th Anniversary of new building – April 2017.
3. Create marketing plans and programming for library databases and collections.
4. Prepare for 150th Anniversary of the Morse Institute Library in 2023.

Objective 3: Provide exceptional customer service for a diverse community of library users.

Projected Outcome: Consistent and appropriate staffing to ensure continued excellent customer service.

Activities:

1. Provide diversity training so we may better serve our patrons.
2. Require library staff to attend workshops, seminars, and training opportunities.
3. Create substitute positions in all service departments.

Objective 4: Build Library staff capacity to improve and expand outreach services.

Projected Outcome: Increased awareness of library programs and bookmobile services.

Activities:

1. Design best practices for outreach. Include outreach in more positions.
2. Provide resources to support bookmobile services.

Goal 5: Promote Innovation and Creativity

Objective 1: Serve as a place for showcasing local art, music and other creative works.

Projected Outcome: Increased attendance at the library through art shows, music programs, and other creative events.

Activities:

1. Plan programs and performances with the Walnut Hill School for the Arts.
2. Work with Natick Center Associates and Natick Center Cultural District to expand Natick Nights and other opportunities.
3. Explore a new way to present Creative Connections (i.e., new name)

Objective 2: Be a place that cultivates ideas and innovation and allows community members and staff to innovate, create and share new ideas.

Projected Outcome: Greater flexibility and quicker adaptation of innovative projects presented by community members, as well as library staff.

Activities:

1. Expand Innovation Studio programs to include adult programs (i.e., Kids @ Heart).
2. Create an effective channel for staff to share ideas and develop ways to reward creative thinking.
3. Investigate possibility of an automated materials handling system for improved workflow, which will allow staff to have more time to interact with patrons.
4. Provide “shadowing” opportunities for staff to learn more about different areas of the library.

Appendix A: Library History

19th Century

The library you see today began in 1808 as a modest collection of about 100 books in the home of Samuel Morse, just up the street from today's building. Thirty-nine years later, that early circulating library evolved into the Citizen's Library, and accumulated 425 books by 1852. Natick resident Henry Wilson, the country's vice president during Ulysses S. Grant's second term, was one of the original shareholders of the Citizen's Library. The town stepped in with funds for books and a librarian as well as a room to house the collection in 1857.



In 1862, the Morse Institute Library was born as the legacy of Mary Ann Morse, Samuel Morse's granddaughter. Declaring that she had "a strong and abiding interest in the welfare and prosperity of my beloved town," Miss Morse left her entire estate to build a library and fill it with books (maintaining the building and paying a librarian was up to the town). Her will gave the library its name and established an elected, 5-member board of trustees to govern.

However, for the next 11 years, the Morse Institute Library only existed on paper. The first hurdle was financial: as large as Mary Ann Morse's estate was, it wasn't big enough to carry out her wishes. The first task of the initial board of trustees was to increase the funds. The second hurdle was political: in April 1863, Natick officially accepted the Morse bequest, then, in April 1864, the town officially un-accepted. The trustees argued before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that the town, having agreed to the bequest and elected a board of trustees, couldn't back out. The court agreed with the trustees, and the town was required to support the library.

By 1872, the trustees more than doubled the value of Mary Ann Morse's estate and her vision finally began to take physical shape. The original Morse Institute Library building, designed by George B. Thayer and constructed by Underwood Brothers, was dedicated on December 25, 1873, and opened its doors to the citizens of Natick a week later, on January 1, 1874. Less than two weeks later, all of downtown Natick burned down. The library escaped with only minor damage.

20th Century

Like the early circulating and Citizen's libraries before it, Morse Institute Library grew to meet demands for increased library services. Additions were built in 1927 and again in 1964. By the mid-1980s, Morse Institute Library once more needed room to grow. Plans began for a major renovation that would provide more space, and would bring the library

fully into the era of electronic information, allow for handicapped access, and provide the facilities needed to become a real cultural and civic center of Natick.

In July of 1990, the Friends of the Morse Institute Library was established as an independent, nonprofit organization to support library projects and services. This volunteer group has been involved in raising funds for such things as: refurbishing the stained glass windows and antique furnishings, museum passes, special programs, the new bookmobile (which was officially dedicated in January of 2002), the Speed Read collection, the self check-out stations and additional furnishings throughout the library.

At town meeting in the spring of 1994, town meeting members voted overwhelmingly to provide seven million, four hundred thousand dollars for renovations and a major addition to the library. During the next few years, the library raised over a million dollars from individual donors, the Friends of the Library, and area businesses to furnish and equip the new facility.

In the fall of 1994, library staff and volunteers packed up the collection and moved a few blocks west into temporary quarters. Both of the earlier additions as well as a building next door were razed to make way for the current building, designed by A. Anthony Tappe and Associates and built by Callahan & Sons. The renovations to the original 1873 library preserved the library's place in Natick history, while the new addition provides the foundation and space to take the library into the future.

The new facility, which opened in April 1997, tripled the public space of the old library and provided meeting spaces for public use; spacious areas for children's and young adult services; reference and circulation departments with space to expand and the internal technological capabilities to allow the library to meet the growing use of electronic services. Space is available to expand the collection of library materials and to house the library's collection of local history and genealogical materials. In 2004, funding from a gift enabled construction of an archives room, which provides a secure, temperature and humidity controlled environment for the library's special collections.

Library patrons, area businesses and service organizations immediately embraced the new library. Use and circulation almost tripled in the first ten years the new facility was open to the public. The Lebowitz Meeting Hall and the Community Room are used by local organizations and businesses for programs and meetings. Study rooms are popular with tutors and study groups, as well as telecommuters and business people working offsite. The library's meeting rooms were used over 5,700 times in FY2016.

The library's bookmobile continues a long tradition of expanding access to library materials and services by visiting neighborhoods, senior housing, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, the US Army Soldier Systems Center, and community events.

21st Century

The library and the community are in a period of major change. As the town's population grows and shifts, new demands are placed on the library to provide a wider range of

collections and programs, services and formats which are accessible to users with special needs, more sophisticated technology, and programs to make library resources available to users with limited English skills. The community itself is doing extensive strategic planning to respond to these changes and the library will play a role in planning for the town's future.

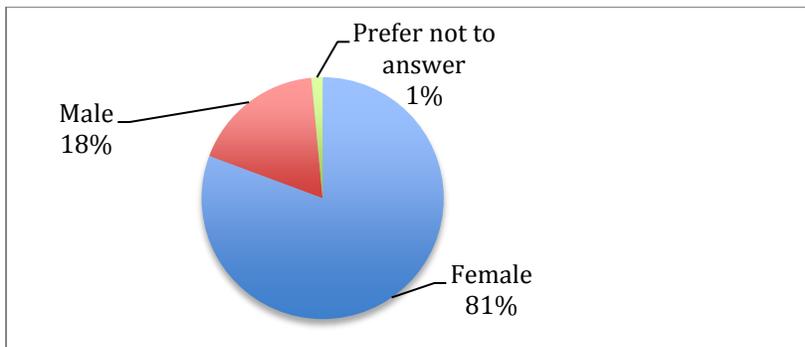
The library continues to be governed by a five-member board of trustees. The trustees are elected by popular vote to 5-year terms. The trustees appoint the library director, who manages the operation of the library. On an annual basis, Natick Town Meeting appropriates the operating funds for the library.

Appendix B: 2016 Library Survey Results

Survey Details:

- Survey was available from May 19 – June 17, 2016.
- 660 responses received (383 from direct online link, 233 from pop-up invitation on library website and 44 on paper).
- Based on number of people in the population who were eligible for this survey (26,500), the survey results have a 99% confidence level with a 5% +/- margin of error.

Question 1: What is your gender?



Question 2: What is your age?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
10 or younger	0.2%	13
11-17	2.1%	118
18-24	1.1%	50
25 to 34	10.6%	157
35 to 44	23.8%	1
45 to 54	21.5%	14
55 to 64	17.9%	7
65 to 74	13.2%	70
75 or older	7.6%	142
Prefer not to answer	2.0%	87

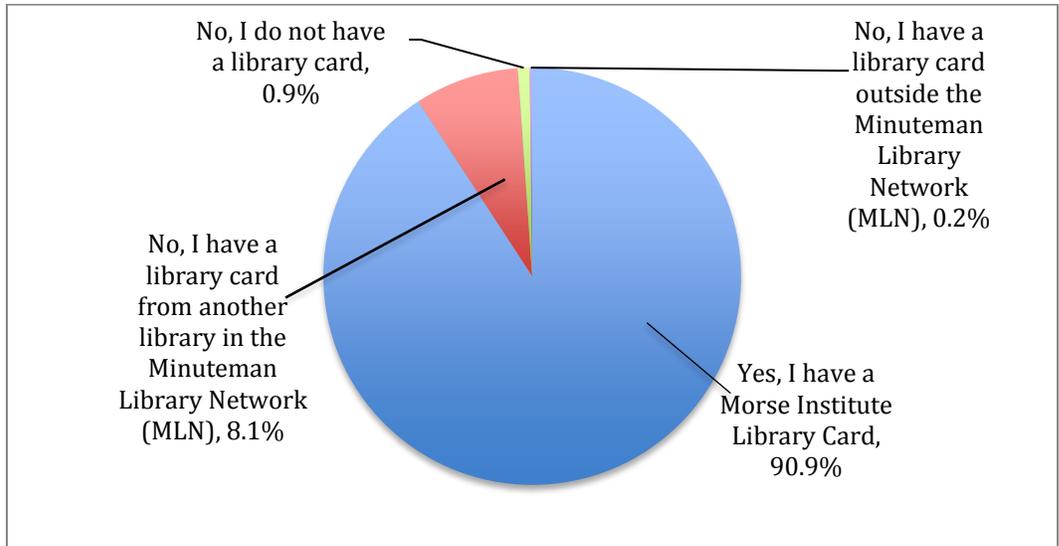
Question 3: How many children are currently living in your household (under the age of 18)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	49.7%	325
1	15.7%	103
2	26.6%	174
3	6.7%	44
4	1.1%	7
More than 4	0.2%	1

Question 4: How long have you lived in Natick?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
20 years or more	35.4%	233
10-19 years	20.4%	134
4-9 years	18.1%	119
1-3 years	12.3%	81
I do not live in Natick.	10.9%	72
Less than one year	2.9%	19

Question 5: Do you currently have a Morse Institute Library Card? (Check all that apply.)



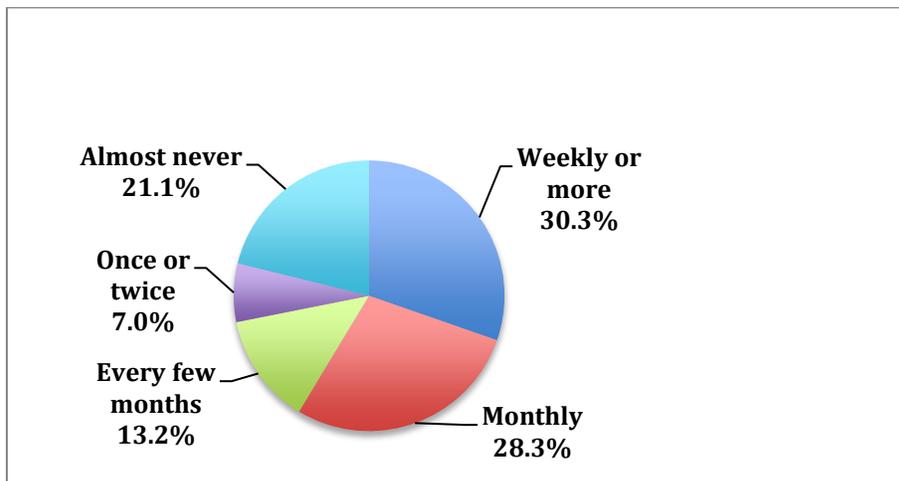
Question 6: In the past year, how often have you visited the Morse Institute Library?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Weekly or more	37.4%	246
Monthly	37.1%	244
Every few months	15.1%	99
Once or twice	5.3%	35
Almost never	5.0%	33

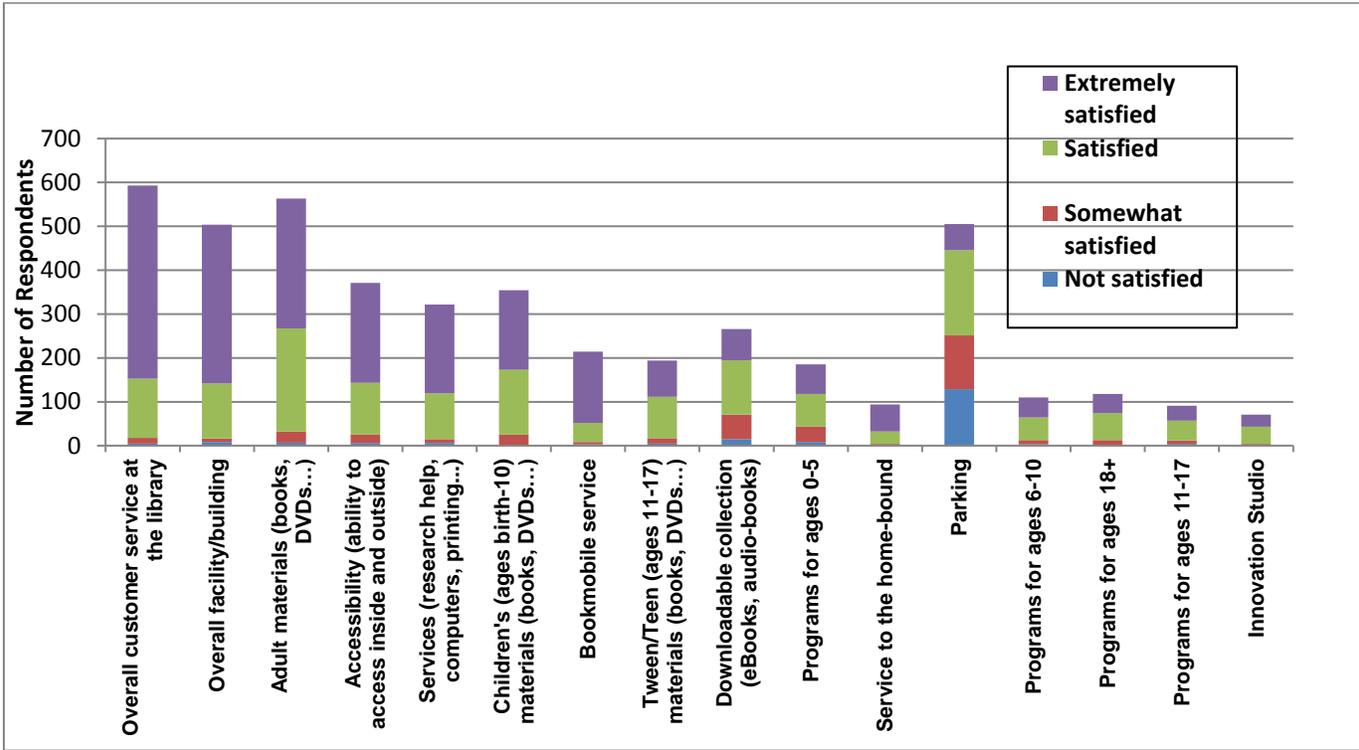
Question 7: If you used the library in the past 12 months, what did you or your family do? (Check all that apply.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Borrow books or other materials (DVDs, audio books, magazines, etc.)	92.8%	606
Borrow a museum pass	38.0%	248
Find a place to work, study or read	35.4%	231
Use the library's Wi-Fi	29.6%	193
View an exhibit	22.5%	147
Use Bookmobile services	20.5%	134
Attend a meeting not sponsored by the library (outside organization)	19.6%	128
Use a public computer	18.1%	118
Use the copier, printer, scanner, fax or microfilm	17.5%	114
Use online databases and resources	17.3%	113
Attend a program for ages 0 to 5	16.7%	109
Attend a program for ages 18+ (such as book clubs, music performances, or lectures)	14.4%	94
Ask for research or homework help	10.3%	67
Use the library for social connections	8.3%	54
Attend a program for ages 6-10	6.9%	45
Attend a program for ages 11-17	6.1%	40
Volunteer	6.0%	39
Use the Innovation Studio (3D printer, Telescope, or workshops)	3.8%	25
Attend ESL (English) classes	1.2%	8
Use the Foundation Center database	0.9%	6

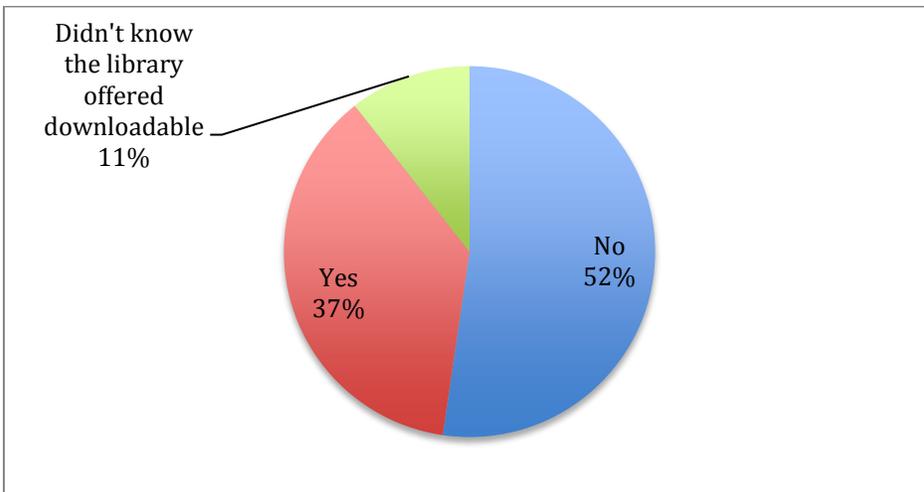
Question 8: In the past year, how many times have you used the online resources from work or home (including the library website, online resources, catalog, or library's Facebook page)?



Question 9: How would you rate the library's....(if you have not used a service, or are not familiar with it, please leave that rating box blank.)



Question 10: Do you use the library's downloadable eBooks and/or audiobooks?



Question 11: To improve your library experience, what three areas should the library focus on?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
More materials (print books, DVDs, audio books, music and magazines)	41.5%	274
More downloadable eBooks and audio books	35.3%	233
More outreach to the community (home-bound service, programs held outside the library, increased Bookmobile service)	22.4%	148
Programs for ages 30+	18.5%	122
Programs for ages 0-5	15.9%	105
Technology support (computer classes, more public computers, Wi-Fi access)	15.5%	102
Expand the Innovation Studio (such as adding sewing machines, video recording equipment, etc.)	14.1%	93
Improved website and online resources	14.1%	93
Programs for ages 6-10	11.4%	75
Increase spaces for quiet study and reading	10.6%	70
Programs for ages 11-17	9.7%	64
Increase spaces to meet and gather	9.5%	63
Expand collection to include unique items* (such as mobile hotspots, energy meters, cake pans, etc.) (Please give specifics below)	7.0%	46
More materials in other languages* (please give specific languages below)	3.9%	26
Programs for ages 18-29	2.7%	18
Expand ESL (English) programs	2.6%	17

Question 12: During the strategic planning process, some themes and ideas have emerged. Please choose your top three (3) priorities for the library in the next 5 years.

