



Blake Memorial Library Strategic Plan 2022-2027
Approved by Blake Memorial Library Board of Trustees: December 8, 2021

1. Introduction

The governing body of the library, The Blake Memorial Library Association, was incorporated under the laws of the State of Vermont on January, 11, 1902. The Association is composed of no more than 100 members of whom $\frac{3}{4}$ shall reside in the towns of Corinth and Topsham. Annually, they elect a Board of Trustees that meets regularly with the Library Director (whom they hire) to govern the affairs of the library, which serves the residents of Corinth, Topsham, surrounding communities and beyond.

2. Vision

Blake Memorial Library is a community resource developed by community members to promote learning and sharing. We aim to encourage the people of Waits River Valley to read, to explore, to think critically and creatively, and to come together to share ideas and inspire each other; we strive to provide them with the tools to do so. Blake Memorial Library supports civil discourse to strengthen and preserve democracy.

3. Purpose of Planning

In 2019, the prior 5-year plan expired, and because of delayed renovation, the year spent with Covid 19, and Library Director turnover, in May of 2021, a committee was charged to develop a new plan. It is clear that the concept of libraries continues to evolve. The strategic planning committee endeavored to produce a plan that addresses the historical concept of libraries, the implications of advances in technology, and the changing needs of the community. The purpose of the strategic plan is to build a vision for the 21st Century library and what we aspire to become for the Corinth/Topsham community at large.

4. Planning Process

The Board of Trustees designated a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of Trustees, the Blake Memorial Library Director, and community volunteers. In 2021, the Library received a Libraries Transforming Communities grant from the American Library Association to support the strategic planning effort. One community meeting was held on July 25, 2021, and ideas were gathered. A survey was generated and made available to meeting participants on paper. The survey was also made available to other patrons on paper and online. The results of the survey and community engagement were incorporated into the plan. The Pandemic revealed the library's role as part of invisible infrastructure—though doors were closed, it was still relevant. The committee plans to revisit the plan every 6 months.

The Plan

1. What we plan to continue to uphold as core values:
 - Excellent Customer Service
 - Maintaining a vital and relevant collection with online and curbside access to books, audiobooks and film
 - Keeping current with information and library technology
 - Various quality programs for patrons of all ages and interests
 - A meeting place for groups who need a space to come together
 - Civil civic discourse
2. What will the 21st Century Blake Memorial Library look like in 5 years?
 - Increased youth and young adult services
 - Continued recruitment of volunteers of all ages and capabilities
 - A place that continues to enable learning, exploring, creating, and sharing among community members
3. What are our goals and strategies to achieve each goal over the next five years?

Goal: Books (print and electronic)

Strategy:

- Continue to develop print collection¹
- Continue to promote reading and encourage literacy
- Attract and retain interest from a younger and more diverse population by improving and diversifying our collection²
- Continue to expand audiobook collection—CD and downloadable content
- Improved e-book accessibility (with renewal options)

Resources: *shelf space, staffing, collection dollars, program dollars, grants*

Goal: Opportunities to learn

Strategy:

- Special hours and facility access for community groups
- Workshops taught by community members
- Develop young adult programming
- Provide resources for online education, and prep for college and trade schools
- Develop parenting, education and homeschooling resources
- Help community stay current with technology trends

Resources: *staffing (volunteers) and physical space*

Goal: Opportunities to socialize, be creative, and play

Strategy:

- Expand reading and discussion groups

¹ Create a section for library classics

² Continue to expand graphic novels collection

- Encourage poetry, writing, and art workshops for kids and adults
- Continue hosting parent and toddler groups
- Recruit young adult advisory group to network with each other and with community service opportunities
- Encourage opportunities to play games³
- Expand after school, vacation, and summer camp activities
- Makerspace—space established specifically for inspiration and creative experimentation

Resources: *smart scheduling, volunteers, limited space, picnic table, outdoor tent, thrift store toys, grants*

Goal: Opportunities to exhibit work/skills

Strategy:

- Host skills exhibitions and demonstrations
- Recruit and develop art and creative committees

Resources: *space for exhibits, volunteers, grants*

Goal: Fostering economic development/employment opportunities for individuals

Strategy:

- Continue to help people with online applications
- Maintain employment resources⁴
- Entrepreneur workshops

Resources: *limited staffing, space, computers, printers, copiers and fax machine*

Goal: Bring library resources and services to people in the community and bring people to the library

Strategy:

- Provide activities and connection to homebound patrons with Zoom, or other online technology⁵
- Partner with community organizations, like LRHC, WRVS, and senior groups and centers
- Develop a rack card for campgrounds, Air B&Bs, and other local businesses with BML services and hours
- Expand our marketing efforts
- Continue to enhance remote options for programs, particularly during inclement weather months
- Reach out to immigrant community and learn how we can better serve them

Resources: *volunteer staffing, small budget in limited supplies, grants*

Goal: Make stack browsing more enticing

Strategy:

- Signage for Dewey Decimal stacks indicating different subject matters
- Scavenger hunts

4. Infrastructure/Staffing/Resources

³ Create family game day with card and board games; participate in International Game Day; explore gaming, larping and other activities for teens and young adults

⁴ The State of Vermont, for example, offers workshops for accessing state contracts

⁵ Enlist volunteers to bring books to homebound patrons; consider satellite book drops/mini free libraries

- Staffing—manage personnel and/or hours in order to:
 - Enhance patron access to resources and programs
 - Provide specialized staff—especially in the area of youth service
 - Expand committee participation with community members
 - Strengthen the board, the Association, volunteer base, and fundraising committee
- Work on increased comfort and utility of library space⁶
- Explore options for environmental sustainability
- Technology
 - Employ appropriate technology for library operations and stay current with developing technology trends by
 - Continuing education for staff/volunteers
 - Regularly evaluating technology
 - Bringing in experts when necessary to help ensure our viability as a technological resource

5. Fundraising

- Re-envision plant and book sales
- Develop storage⁷
- Raffles
- Investigate possibilities of online sales
- Continue inviting more volunteer support
- Grants
- Capital campaign
- Increasing town contributions
- Planned giving

6. Next Steps

- Develop an action plan to begin implementing the strategic plan
 - Use existing Building and Grounds, Personnel and Fundraising Committees to do that work
- Board to authorize resources as available and needed
- Implementation of needs will be prioritized based on available resources and may not all be met
- Board to re-evaluate plan on an annual basis

End of Strategic Plan, approved by Blake Memorial Library Board on December 8, 2021

⁶ Rethink shelving and consider movable, or adaptable, shelving

⁷ Movable trailer that can be parked anywhere