Vestal Public Library

2017 – 2021

Strategic Plan

Carol Boyce, Director

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Vestal Public Library Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan provides a cohesive vision and direction for expanding and strengthening the Vestal Public Library (VPL) during the period 2017-2021.

The plan is based on the Board of Trustees' examination of our Mission, Vision, and Values as it applies to the relevant demographics of our stakeholders. From this examination a list of objectives and strategies was developed and the method to implement the plan was determined.

Strategic Plan Objectives:
1. Increase the number and frequency of programs and events targeted to the adult population.
2. Retain a large selection of educational programs and activities for toddler through teen patrons.
3. Keep abreast of rapidly evolving technologies used by the Library and our patrons, implementing those that are deemed appropriate.
4. Provide education to staff members.
5. Provide materials for all types of learning and entertainment both at home and at the Library.
6. Aggressively seek grants and donations to provide for growth of materials and programs.
7. Develop better methods of promoting the Library and activities to all users.
8. Improve the library interior.
9. Develop "partnerships" with local residents, organizations, and businesses.
10. Periodically seek input from Vestal School District taxpayers.

Appendix A identifies the issues and trends pertinent to the Library and Appendix B lists a timetable for completing the action items we believe will help us reach our goals.

The Board of Trustees will review this plan quarterly to assess whether goals are being met, update action items, and document new goals.

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The Vestal Public Library

1. **Mission Statement**
   The mission of the Vestal Public Library (VPL) is to be recognized as the resource for life-long learning, community involvement, and entertainment. Located in the heart of the community, the library will provide a welcoming, accessible, comfortable, and safe environment for users of all ages.

2. **Vision Statement**
   The Vestal Public Library has been chartered to serve the taxpayers within the Vestal Central School District. Our mission is to provide the community with opportunities for personal and social growth, education, and entertainment through well-chosen materials, programs, events, and meeting spaces, and to seek continuous community input to ensure we fulfill these goals.

3. **Values Statement**
   Our Values include:
   - Nurturing lifelong learning and personal growth.
   - Maintaining a physical library space that continues to meet patron needs.
   - Providing professional development opportunities for staff to remain current in new systems and technologies.
   - Encouraging opportunities for social and cultural interaction.

4. **Town of Vestal Demographics**
   The 2010 Federal Census lists Vestal's population at 28,043. The Library's tax base which includes residents from the Town of Apalachin and the Town of Binghamton increases that total. We also serve patrons from surrounding communities in Broome County and residents in the northern tier of Pennsylvania.

   Relevant Demographics for Town of Vestal Population
   - 28,243   Population as of 2015 (increase of .7% since 2010)
   - 49.8%   Population under 30 – primarily BU under and graduate students
   - 28.5%   Population between 40 and 60 years
   - 21.7%   Population over 60 years
   - 78.5%   Population born in New York State
   - 11.8%   Population born in the Northeast
   - 88%   Live in a married household
   - 81.3%   Identify as Caucasian
   - 11.6%   Identify as Asian
   - 4.3%   Identify as African American/Black
   - 2%   Birth rate
   - 48%   Of homes valued from $100K-$200K
   -      Median Income per household $61,244
   -      Asian family income $120,673
   - 29%   Population living on retirement income
   - 10.2%   Population living in poverty (majority between 18-34 years old)
   - 3   Average Family Size
   - 95%   Have high school education
   - 43%   Have bachelors or higher
   - 45%   Of degrees are in science and engineering

- In 2013   Vestal School District enrollment was 3447. It continues to decline.
- Abt 300   Enrolled in the 2017 Kindergarten class; highest 674 in 1979

During the early to mid-20th C., Vestal grew as a bedroom community for the large corporations once located in the Town of Union on the north side of the Susquehanna River. Vestal is now a university town with the Binghamton University (BU) main campus as our primary employer. BU has a total enrollment of 17,000 students, with plans to increase enrollment to 20,000 by 2020. Because the university has a large on-campus library to fulfill most student needs, the student body is not a dominant factor in the VPL user base.

The VPL is located within easy walking distance of the Vestal High School and one elementary school. Students from the four other Vestal school campuses (Glenwood, Tioga Hills, Vestal Hills and African Road) must drive to the VPL. Students use the VPL for studying, tutoring, programs, and activities.

Due to the loss of large industries, the Town of Vestal and surrounding communities are transitioning from families with young children to a more mature population. Elementary and High School enrollment has slipped to numbers similar to the 1960's. While we still need a strong youth program, we also need to provide information and activities for older adults.

5. **Vestal Public Library History**
   The Willow Point Community Library, located in a home and stocked through the New York State Lending Library, was Vestal's first library. Within 3 years the town opened a larger, more centrally located, Vestal Free Library. A rapidly growing population during the mid-20th C. required a larger facility with a larger inventory of materials and programs. The current library opened in 1974 in 17K sq. feet of space, later adding 4K square feet of additional space for meeting rooms. Originally a municipal library, the voters of the Vestal School District voted in 2016 to separate the library from the town, creating an independent entity funded by a library tax and operated by an elected Board of Trustees.

Strategic Planning Process

Under the new 2016 Charter, the VPL is required to submit a Strategic Plan to New York State.

1. **Data Gathering**
   In preparation for developing a plan, the Library Board of Trustees produced two surveys; one directed to our youth patrons and one to our adult patrons. Each survey asked questions specific to the likes and interests of that audience along with questions about the days and times when patrons preferred to use the Library. The surveys were very beneficial.

   In addition to surveys, the Board held a formal Strategic Planning Meeting attended by board members and the public. Participants were asked to provide a wide range of information beginning with positive and negative aspects of the Town and the Library. After a discussion, the participants were asked to suggest what they would like the Library to offer in the form of materials, classes, programs, and events.

   Library staff and patrons contributed comments regarding various aspects of the Library. They also offered suggestions and recommendations on an informal basis.

   The Board's planning included researching and speaking with staff at other libraries in the Four County Library System as well as conducting "online visits" to libraries in the four county system, New York State, and surrounding states.

2. **Planning Committee**
   The planning committee consists of the five (5) library trustees, members of the former board of trustees, Friends of the Library, the Library Director, and community members.

   The Library staff and the board of trustees continued the planning process by developing tasks to support the goals and objectives.

3. **Strategic Plan – Evaluation and Management**
   The approved 5-Year Strategic Plan will be filed with New York State and made available on the Library website.

   The Board of Trustees will review the plan quarterly to evaluate the continued appropriateness of the goals and the progress made on accomplishing each. Changes or additions identified at any time throughout the year will be noted and discussed at the review.

Objectives and Strategies

1. **Objective:** Increase the number and frequency of programs and events targeted to the adult population.
   Strategy:
   a. Use the surveys received to identify the programs requested.
   b. Develop a list of programs for the coming year.
   c. Identify the equipment needed for the programs chosen.
   d. Identify presenters/teachers for the programs.
   e. Examine costs involved, the budget, and whether to charge for some programs.

2. **Objective:** Retain a large selection of educational programs and activities for Toddler through teen patrons.
   Strategy:
   a. Use the surveys received to identify the programs requested.
   b. Evaluate current Youth programs to identify the level of satisfaction.
   c. Develop a list of new programs for the coming year.
   d. Identify any new equipment or supplies needed for the new programs.
   e. Examine costs involved, the budget, and whether to charge for some programs.

3. **Objective:** Keep abreast of rapidly evolving technologies used by the Library and our patrons, implementing those that are deemed appropriate.
   Strategy:
   a. Monitor libraries of similar size for possible advancements.
   b. Research appropriate items to determine where our money is best spent.
   c. Identify the types of technology appropriate for the audience.
   d. Seek grants and donations to purchase those not in the budget.

4. **Objective:** Provide education to staff members.
   Strategy:
   a. Identify free online education that can be taken by staff members.
   b. Increase the education budget to pay for classes and seminars not available online.

5. **Objective:** Provide materials for all types of learning and entertainment both at home and at the Library.
   Strategy:
   a. Define the programs to be offered.
   b. Examine the VPL budget to determine the amount available.
   c. Select materials for those programs that can be used across other activities.
   d. Review new offers from the Four County Library System.

6. **Objective:** Aggressively seek grants and donations to provide for growth of materials and programs.
   Strategy:
   a. Provide grant writing education for a select number of staff.
   b. Develop a list of needs and wishes that could be obtained through a grant.
   c. Develop a quarterly newsletter or simple brochure to market the library.
   d. Set a goal of writing two grants during the first year, then one per quarter the following year.
   e. Develop a capital plan to construct a new library building with 10 years.

7. **Objective:** Develop better methods of promoting the Library and activities to all users.
    Strategy:
    a. Identify the tools patrons use to learn about Library activities such as classes and programs; focus on promoting the VPL through those entities.
    b. Develop eye-catching mini-exhibits for promoting activities for the current and coming week.
    c. Use the best method to reach each age/type of Library patron.
    d. Produce a Library Newsletter of events for the quarter….make it available at the circulation desk and place small quantities at other sites in the community.
    e. Place program schedules in the Vestal Town Crier. Pay ad fees or donate to the paper as a gesture of thanks.
    f. Establish a Community Calendar of activities and events at the Library.

8. **Objective:** Improve the library interior.
    Strategy:
    a. Reorganize the interior to improve traffic patterns, reduce noise, and improve the overall look.
    b. Unclutter all surfaces.
    c. Create well-designed colorful signs.
    d. Remove signs from doors and place in a kiosk-type structure either in the lobby or as soon as you enter the library.
    e. Repaint dingy walls.
    f. Replace aging library furniture.
    g. Replace circulation and reference desks.
    h. Reduce noise levels by moving noisy activities away from other patrons and asking staff to keep voices low.
    i. Create a classroom instead of using a meeting room for the purpose.
    j. Add single, comfortable chairs for those who want to stop to read.
    k. Arrange a group of comfortable chairs for a small group of patrons who want to visit or perform a quiet activity together.
    l. Consider adding a self-service "café" near the group reading area.
    m. Add an attractive, free-standing, lockable cabinet to the large meeting room to store equipment for group activities such as game day.

9. **Objective**: Develop "partnerships" with local residents, organizations, and businesses.
    Strategy:
    Identify individuals who have the skills and are willing to:
    a. Teach or assist with a class or program.
    b. Fund programs or purchase needed items.
    c. Promote the VPL.

10. **Objective**: Periodically seek input from Vestal School District taxpayers.
    Strategy:
    Obtain input from our patrons through the use of:
    a. Surveys.
    b. A suggestion box.
    c. Strategic planning meetings.
    d. Outreach to local groups and individuals.

Implementation of the Plan

1. **Assess the Libraries Strengths and Weaknesses**
   - Location.
   - Size and layout of usable space.
   - Staffing.
   - Hours of operation.
   - Technology.
   - Materials.
   - Programs.
   - Use of meeting rooms.
   - Usage fees charged for meeting rooms.
   - Collaboration with the Vestal Museum on programs.
   - Programs and classes offered.
   - Collaboration with Binghamton University.
   - Collaboration with local organizations.

2. **Communicate the Plan to the Library Staff and Community**
   - Ensure the Staff understands our mission and this plan.
   - Involve the community by sharing our goals and objectives.
   - Use the Plan to drive improvements, expansion, and Library services.
   - Execute those goals and objectives achievable within our budget to demonstrate our commitment to the plan.
   - Seek grants, donations, and volunteer assistance to complete items beyond our current budget.
   - Publicize our achievements and seek help attaining other goals.

APPENDIX A

Issues and Trends

1. **Demographic**
   Relative to the VPL and Town of Vestal:
   - The population may grow at a very slow pace.
   - University graduates do not remain in the community.
   - The town will continue to experience a modest decline in the school-age population.
   - Vestal is a very literate community with a large percentage of the population having advanced education.
   - Vestal is a full-service community with a police force and a very low crime rate.
   - The median household income is $61,244.
   - School taxes are fairly high; town and county taxes somewhat high.
   - The percentage of seniors citizens will continue to grow.

2. **Financial**
   Factors defining the VPL budget:
   - The library is funded by a separate tax that appears on the Vestal Central School District school tax invoice.
   - The school district does not provide any funding to the library or have any administrative role in the operation of the library.
   - The vote to establish the library as a separate entity from the Town of Vestal set a guaranteed budget of $700,000 annually.
   - Increases in the budget must be approved by the tax base.
   - Increases can exceed the New York State Tax Cap by approval of a majority of the Library Trustees; however the voters can reject any increase.
   - Minimum wage rates are scheduled to increase each year.
   - Library employees have unionized and the trustees must negotiate a union contract.
   - The Library leases the building from the Town of Vestal.
   - Funds once provided by the County are no longer available.
   - The library needs an endowment to build a new facility.
   - Our costs for services from the Four County Library System are under contract until 2020 and amount to a 3% increase per year.

3. **Usage and Activities**
   Factors influencing increased usage of the VPL:
   - Library space will need to be redesigned to better meet the new programs and classes being considered.
   - The trend toward declining circulation of library books.
   - The need for staff education to keep up with technology and library services.
   - The use of the library as a place to socialize and interact will increase.
   - The growing need for a larger materials (books and media) budget.
   - The increase in demand for cultural, educational, and recreational programs to meet the needs and wants of the community.
   - The need to reposition the Library as a source for a broad range of information.

4. Technology

Actions needed to stay abreast of technological changes:

- Requirement to keep staff current on technology for Library systems.
- The need to purchase a trending technology such a 3D printers.
- Ability to teach and assist patrons who seek help with using technology.

5. Physical Location

Actions to ensure the continuance of the VPL:

- Modernize the interior of the current location.
- Plan for either purchasing and renovating the existing facility or finding a new location.
- Prepare for the need to develop a capital campaign to fund a new building at a new location.

APPENDIX B

<u>Timetable</u>

Completed	Complete By	Action Item
20 Jun 2017	20 Jun 2017	Approve 2017-2018 Budget
	30 Jun 2017	Communicate the plan to staff
	31 Aug 2017	New website up and running
	31 Dec 2017	Introduce 3-5 adult classes
	31 Dec 2017	Install wireless security cameras
	31 Dec 2017	File charter amendment to increase size of Library Board
	30 Jun 2018	Reorganization of Library interior
	31 Jul 2018	Conduct patron survey

APPENDIX C

Approved Updates and Changes

Review Date	Update or Change	Date Approved