

Five Year Plan for the Amherst Town Libraries

The Jones Library, Munson Memorial Library, and
North Amherst Library

2011 – 2016

Approved by the Jones Library Board of Trustees
September 28, 2010

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Five Year Plan for the Amherst Town Libraries: The Jones Library, Munson Memorial Library, and North Amherst Library, 2011 - 2016

VISION for the Amherst Town Libraries

We believe in the freedom to read, to learn, to discover, to change your life.

MISSION STATEMENT

We serve and inspire people of all ages by providing multi-cultural resources for lifelong learning. We welcome everyone to our historic buildings. We celebrate our Amherst history and literary heritage, including American poets Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost.

Assessment of User Needs and Plan Methodology

The Long Range Planning Committee (“Committee”), formed by the Trustees of the Jones Library, Inc. and the Amherst Town Libraries at the end of 2009, spent 10 months collecting public and staff input for the Long Range Plan in a variety of ways, then synthesized and prioritized the great volume of information received into Amherst’s Libraries’ 2010 Long Range Plan.

The Committee comprised Library Director Bonnie Isman; Curator of the Jones Library Special Collections Tevis Kimball; Department heads Beth Girshman, Adult Services, and Carolyn Platt, Technical Services; Trustee President Patricia Holland; and Trustees Carol Gray and Sarah McKee.

Other Trustees provided input at Committee meetings as well as in writing. The Jones Library’s Special Collections and its Green Committee also provided draft copies of specialized plans specific to them. (Attachments A, Special Collections Long Term Plan, and B, Long Term Sustainability Plan)

The Committee’s principal information-gathering tool was a one page survey to collect public and library staff input on how Amherst’s libraries were performing, and on how they could be improved both generally and in respect to specific issues, e.g., use of space and provisions for teens. (Attachment C, “Give Us Your Ideas” Public Survey) This survey was available, for signed or anonymous responses, both online through www.joneslibrary.org, as well as in paper copies distributed through all three libraries, at the Amherst Regional Middle School’s Latino Achievement Night, at the Amherst Town Hall, at the Bangs Community Center, and at a Jones Library Pizza Party that more than 50 teens attended.

In addition, two Community Round Table Forums held at the Jones Library with Trustees’ participation attracted, respectively, mostly staff and immigrant participants in the Library’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program. At the latter Forum, one ESL participant after another retailed inspirational accounts of how the ESL program had transformed their lives. This greatly enriched the long range planning process.

The Committee obtained extensive publicity for the survey and Forums through the Libraries’ website and FaceBook page, a prominent display in the Jones Library’s central Atrium, Friends of the Jones Library System; the Amherst Community TV station, a televised oral presentation to the Select Board, the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, and press releases to five local newspapers.

The June 30, 2010, *Daily Hampshire Gazette* ran the article, “Amherst seeks ideas on library,” and a July 2, 2010 *Amherst Bulletin* headline proclaimed, “Jones seeks comment on library issues.” Attachment D. This was the first time that Amherst’s Libraries have cast this wide a net for public input to a long range plan. Both paper and electronic methods proved productive. The next section of this Plan describes the results.

In July, the Committee began to formulate six goals around which to structure the Long Range Plan. The Committee presented these to the full Board of Trustees and library staff in another more targeted survey, asking for proposed objectives and action items under each goal. Following a series of meetings of the Director and department heads, staff generated a joint response.

The Committee sought ideas by visiting other libraries. A group of Trustees, with the mechanical engineer then assessing the Jones Library’s HVAC systems, toured the first Massachusetts “Green” (LEED-certified) library, in North Adams. Committee members also visited in-state public libraries in Agawam, Belchertown, Chicopee, Gill, Leverett, Northampton, Pelham, Sunderland, and Wrentham, as well as public libraries in Litchfield, Connecticut; Saratoga Springs, New York; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The Committee furthermore reviewed long range plans from Massachusetts and out of state libraries. It had in addition the benefit of the Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal. Attachment E.

Results of the survey of Amherst Libraries’ patrons, June – July 2010

Patrons of all three Amherst libraries submitted a total of 206 replies: Amherst residents, 148; residents of neighboring towns, 53; out of state residents, 5. There were 73 paper surveys submitted and 133 survey forms completed online.

The following list presents the five most popular comments on each survey topic. Some respondents addressed fewer than all of the survey topics.

New services/other ideas:

- More book discussion groups: 12
- Book reviews/staff picks posted on shelves: 5
- Higher salaries for staff: 4
- Replace carpet at the Jones Library: 3
- Restore materials budget: 3

More hours at all libraries:

- Open more hours: 128
- Keep same hours: 29
- Cut hours: 0

Space issues:

- Small meeting/conference rooms: 7
- Café/food space:
 - Yes: 6
 - No: 2
- Welcome/information desk: 5
- More space for computers: 4
- Skype/video conferencing room: 2

Creation of a teen space at the Jones Library:

Yes: 62

No: 47

North Amherst Library addition:

Yes: 99

No: 58

Technological matters:

More computers: 19

Kindles/IPads on loan: 19

Computer help and classes: 11

More databases/digital books/media subscriptions: 9

More power outlets for laptops: 5

Better website: 4

Concerns of the disabled: Though there was no survey question about this issue, several people commented, and all the comments are listed.

Accessible book drops; accessible computer stations; more large-print books; voice-activated computers and computers that read to you; any other computer devices for the disabled; better headphones; better lighting. At Jones Library only: new ramp and railing in front to Amity Street; install railing on front steps; fix Atrium elevator; fix problem at front door where ice slides off; hold events on first floor or ground floor.

Other recurring ideas: More comfortable chairs, including for laptop use; easier parking; more authors' talks, Wii games for teens; solar power display in atrium; better signage; hipper tote bags.

Community Background: The Town of Amherst and Amherst Area

Founded in 1759, Amherst is located in the rolling hills of the fertile Connecticut River valley in western Massachusetts. Amherst residents put a high priority on preserving the Town's historic character as well as on protecting open space and active farmland. As the home of Amherst College, the University of Massachusetts, and Hampshire College, Amherst enjoys a tradition of commitment to public education and well run municipal services.

Town residents are actively engaged in Town affairs. They serve as volunteers on a large number of Town boards and committees concerned with, e.g., agricultural land, development, historic preservation, the Town budget, and Townwide capital expenditures. Amherst retains its representative Town Meeting with an elected Select Board as its executive body. Money appropriated by Town Meeting provides approximately 80% of the Libraries' annual budget, with contributions and the endowment supplying the balance. Town services are administered by a professional Town Manager.

While farming is critical to both Amherst's quality of life and economy, economic activity in Amherst springs principally from its educational institutions. In 2008 the University of Massachusetts had a staff of approximately 7,800, making it the region's largest employer. Amherst College reported a staff of 700-899. The student populations in 2009 totaled 27,016 at the University of Massachusetts; 1,697 at Amherst College; and 1,400 at Hampshire College.

Local residents have attained higher than average levels of education. 68% of Amherst residents hold a B.A. or higher degree. Because the primary business of Amherst is education, many residents are

teachers, writers, students, researchers, and professional workers with needs for high quality educational support and library services. Library collections reflect that a majority of Amherst adults read at the college level.

As the University of Massachusetts campus developed from 1940 to 1980, Amherst's population grew at a remarkable pace, increasing five-fold from 6,410 to 33,229 residents. Since 1980, it has increased only slightly, from 35,228 in 1990, to 34,874 in 2000, and then to 35,565 in 2008.

Studies by the Town of Amherst Planning Department project the maximum population at 43,600 if housing, that is, 3,400 new dwelling units, were built on all available lots. Housing ranges from upscale million dollar homes to affordable housing in apartment complexes and government subsidized units. More than 11% of Amherst's housing stock is "affordable" by state standards, reflecting the Town's commitment to provide opportunities for low-income residents. In fact, 33.6% of all students in the Amherst Public Schools had family incomes low enough to qualify for free and reduced price federal lunch programs during the FY 2010 school year.

All three libraries' public computers and other resources for job searches have become increasingly important to patrons in the current economy. The Jones Library's Career Center provides a wide array of self-help resources for job and college searches.

Amherst's population is growing in cultural diversity. In the 2000 census, the Asian community represented at least 9% of the population, and 5% of the Town's residents identified themselves as Black. Worldwide immigration has a local impact. In the 2000 census, slightly more than 9% of Amherst residents reported that they were not U.S. citizens.

Linguistic diversity presents a special challenge. The 2000 U.S. census reported that 6.1% of Amherst's population spoke Spanish, 2.6% spoke Chinese, and a total of 18.7% spoke a language other than English at home. By 2010, the Amherst Regional Public Schools found that students speak at least 40 different languages at home. The Libraries' collection policy is to respond to community demand for materials in world languages spoken by the largest cultural groups.

The attached Amherst population density map shows the location of the Jones Library, Munson Memorial Library, and the North Amherst Library. (Attachment F) The Jones Library, at the center of Amherst, receives more than 300,000 unique visits per year and is an asset to downtown businesses. Its Special Collections draw scholars from throughout the nation and abroad to consult its original materials on Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and others, making an economic contribution to Amherst in that way, as well. The North Amherst Library, at the north end of town, and the Munson Memorial Library, at the south end, tailor their collections to the needs and preferences of child and adult patrons in their respective areas.

The Amherst Town Libraries serve an extensive geographical area beyond Amherst. Of their more than 26,000 cardholders, more than 8,000 live in surrounding towns. The Jones Library in addition makes increasing amounts of the literary and historical material in its Special Collections available electronically to area and worldwide users through its award-winning Digital Amherst website, www.digitalamherst.org.

Multi-Year Goals and Objectives:

This five-year Long Range Plan is based on 1) Goals; 2) Objectives; and 3) Action Items.

Six service and management goals will guide Libraries' planning over the next five years. Objectives are broad topics that will take years to accomplish. Under each objective are "action items," each of which would help to accomplish its objective and would have a specific measurable outcome. These are generally items that could be completed within one year. All but three of the following "Action Items" are for the first year; the remainder are for the Plan's second year. Those responsible for completing each action item are indicated after it in parentheses.

GOAL 1. Create a welcoming and safe environment where all community members connect.

Objectives:

- A) Develop a plan for use of space in the Jones Library to accommodate current and foreseeable needs; implement it as funding permits.

First Year Actions:

- 1) Analyze public service points on first floor. (Children's and Circulation Department Heads)
- 2) Clarify space needs and possibilities for using the Jones Library building in order to facilitate professional design work. (Space Planning Committee)
- 3) Survey teens and community partners (such as Amherst Regional High School, Amherst Regional Middle School, Boys' and Girls' Club, Amherst Leisure Services and Supplemental Education Commission, Big Brothers/Big Sisters) about teens' needs for dedicated programs and space in the Jones Library. (Children's Department Head)
- 4) Work with Trustees and Friends of the Jones Library System to improve the Jones Library's large meeting room. (Library Director; Trustee McKee)

- B) Reduce libraries' impact on the environment and promote environmental responsibility in communities we serve

First Year Action:

- 1) Complete and communicate the goals, objectives, and actions recommended by the Green Committee in its "Long Term Sustainability Plan." (Attachment B)

C) Make the Jones Library easier to use through improved navigation of building, resources, services

First Year Actions:

- 1) Design a plan for “Bookstore-style” signs on shelves in the Jones Library non-fiction stacks, including use of multiple languages where appropriate, and install signage. (Head of Technical Services)
- 2) Gather and analyze patron requests for assistance (directions, how to use the computers, information questions) to determine areas of patron confusion. (Reference)
- 3) Develop and find resources for a housekeeping plan with frequent cleaning schedules. (Building Supervisor)

D) Address building safety, capital improvements, maintenance, and code issues for all three libraries to ensure universal public access to library services.

First Year Actions:

- 1) In Jones Library, replace main elevator controls, replace carpets, repair slate roof and gutters. (Library Director; Building Supervisor)
- 2) Create a long-term plan for capital improvements to all three libraries to update critical building systems. Use local contractors where feasible. (Trustees, Library Director, Building Supervisor, Amherst Town Building Supervisor)
- 3) Do initial research for an addition to the North Amherst Library. (Trustees, Library Director, Building Supervisor, Amherst Town Building Supervisor)

GOAL II. Provide public access to the widest possible array of materials and learning opportunities

Objectives:

A) Increase/restore library materials budget and hours open

First Year Actions:

- 1) Identify gaps in high demand collection areas and materials that are critically needed. (Head of Adult Services and all Selectors)
- 2) Restore funding for Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) cataloging records for prompt catalog updates. (Head of Technical Services)

B) Examine Amherst Town Libraries’ role as regional resource for Western Massachusetts

First Year Action:

- 1) Work with C/W MARS to migrate to Evergreen, a flexible and user-friendly open source software that will handle our acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, and other library functions. (Heads of Technical Services, Circulation, and North Amherst Library)

Second Year Action:

1) Meet with area libraries (such as Amherst Regional High School, and public and college libraries) to identify areas for potential collaboration and cooperative collection development.

C) Ensure that collections and services reflect the diversity of our region

First Year Actions:

1) Analyze results of 2010 census for our region and adjust buying plans.
(Library Director)

2) Develop partnership for ESL Center with Hampshire Educational Collaborative to support services to non-English speaking families. (ESL Coordinator)

D) Determine preservation needs to ensure future access to historical and art collections, establish priorities to reformat materials or provide conservation work

First Year Actions:

1) Continue preservation work associated with allocations from the Community Preservation Act. (Special Collections Curator)

2) Draft a five year plan for marketing, display and preservation of the Fine Arts Collection. (Special Collections Curator)

3) Complete the Disaster Plan to address institutional emergency measures that include collections preservation priorities and disaster response procedures. (Curator of Special Collections)

GOAL III. Promote innovative, community tailored technological resources

Objectives:

A) Provide opportunities for technology assistance and training for the public

First Year Actions:

1) Pilot and promote access for patrons to on-line classes and tutorials. (Reference)

2) Draft plan to provide information technology support service to public at all libraries. (Reference)

B) Make online information resources more accessible to library users of all ages to enrich individual knowledge and promote literacy and learning

First Year Actions:

1) Update operating software and functionality within Digital Amherst.
(Special Collections Curator)

- 2) Define requirements, including opt-in email list for public information, marketing, and fund raising functions, and redesign Jones Library website. (Web Committee)
- 3) Install attractive public events display board at the Jones library. (Computer Technician)

C) Expand public access to electronic/digital materials

First Year Actions:

- 1) Provide E-readers for borrowers. (Head of Technical Services)
- 2) Set collection development goals for E/digital materials. (Head of Adult Services and all Selectors)
- 3) Promote web access to information databases and promote their use. (Reference)

GOAL IV. Develop a friendly, skilled staff with a commitment to serving our region's diverse population

Objectives:

A) Make customer service central to all library operations

First Year Actions:

- 1) Develop a structured plan for training staff at all levels in customer service and determine the resources needed to put the plan in effect. (Library Director and staff supervisors)
- 2) Institute annual customer satisfaction survey. (Library Director)

B) Refine hiring process to fill vacancies in library positions

First Year Actions:

- 1) Recruit widely for well-qualified candidates for all vacancies. (Library Director, Town Human Resources Department)
- 2) Increase awareness of the benefits of a diverse staff through on-going dialogue, at least one staff workshop, and other training opportunities. (Library Director and staff supervisors)

C) Develop a staffing plan to address needs for diversity in staffing and services

First-Year Actions:

- 1) Experiment with the use of digital and translation techniques for library card applicants and other library applications. (Reference Librarian)

GOAL V. Increase communication, dialogue, and community partnerships

Objectives:

- A) Develop a library communications plan for internal and external communications

First Year Actions:

- 1) Identify audiences (Library staff, Trustees, Friends of the Jones Library System, Town Meeting members, Town committee members, other public and private constituencies) for key communications products (press releases, annual reports, daily announcements. (Special Collections Curator)
- 2) Investigate communications partnerships with community groups, e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Emily Dickinson Museum, Town of Amherst School Department, and University and college libraries. (Library Director, Special Collections Curator, ESL Coordinator, Reference Librarian)
- 3) Develop new library “branding” for use in all communications, including letterheads, staff badges, and website. (Department Heads)

- B) Design a feedback mechanism to monitor changing community needs

First Year Actions:

- 1) Create online opportunities for feedback on the library websites. (Website Committee)
- 2) Develop guidelines to respect privacy concern of library staff and patrons using online communications, e-books, and other applications. (Munson Memorial Librarian)

GOAL VI. Expand funding sources and, where possible, reduce operating costs while maintaining excellent services

Objectives:

- A) Seek new public/private partnerships that bring financial advantage to the Libraries

First Year Actions:

- 1) Develop Annual Fund Drive goals, develop infrastructure for a Planned Giving program, and investigate requirements for a Capital Fund Drive. (Trustees)
- 2) Strengthen communication and coordination among Staff, Trustees, and Friends of the Jones Library for fundraising efforts. (Library Director and Trustee Treasurer)
- 3) Establish a program to honor those who have made significant contributions to the Libraries. (Development Committee)
- 4) Submit at least 3 grant applications to local, state, and national organizations. (Professional Staff)

Second Year Actions:

- 1) Implement Planned Giving program.
- 2) Develop infrastructure for grant administration support.

B) Advocate for library support with state and local government bodies

First Year Actions:

- 1) Seek private meetings with local legislators and other officials to discuss library funding needs. (Trustees and Library Director)
- 2) Participate on local budget planning committees and communicate budget developments to Trustees, staff and Friends of the Jones Library System. (Trustees and Library Director)

C) Evaluate new technologies and software to enable reduced operating costs, greater efficiency, new revenue streams, or more effective fundraising and sales

First Year Action:

- 1) Explore self-service options for circulation functions to free staff for other tasks. (Circulation Department)

With each successive year's Action Plan, the Amherst Town Libraries will delete completed action items and add new ones designed to further the accomplishment of this Long Range Plan's continuing objectives and goals.

Attachments:

- A. Special Collections Long Range Plan
- B. "Long Term Sustainability Plan" submitted by the Green Committee
- C. "Give Us Your Ideas" Public Survey
- D. News articles on planning process
- E. Checklist for Existing Facilities: Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal
- F. Amherst population map showing locations of Town Libraries