

Somerset Public Library Long Range Plan 2023-2028



October 2023

Mission & Vision Statement

Mission Statement:

The Somerset Public Library exists to serve as a center of individual growth and recreation for the citizens of Somerset.

Vision Statement:

The Library contributes to the learning process and aids individuals and groups in the pursuit of lifelong learning in order to understand the changing world around them.



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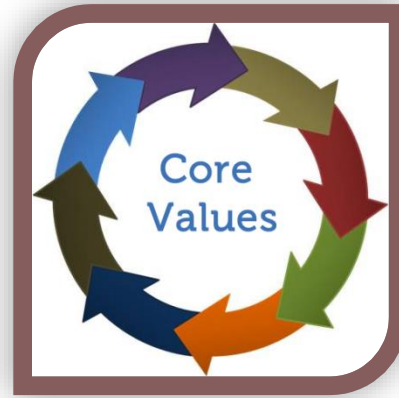
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Somerset Public Library's Values

- We provide quality service and treat all Library users fairly and equally. Our goal is to always provide excellent customer service.
- We provide service to all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race and/or religion.
- We use professional judgment, knowledge, and experience to develop and maintain collections and services. Our staff respects the needs of our patrons and the community.
- We provide convenient access to facilities, resources and services that meet the needs of Library users. We are compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.
- We advocate for and support policies and procedures that protect the privacy of all Library user records, ensuring freedom of information, privacy and confidentiality.
- We partner with our community agencies, governmental organizations, and school districts to provide services.
- We maintain a strong, positive relationship with our Friends of the Library group, and the Library network, both regional and state.
- We respect, honor, and celebrate individual and cultural differences. Our collections, programs, outreach and personnel practices reflect this commitment.
- We have policies in place which guide our procedures, ensure safety, privacy and fairness, and protect the rights of patrons and staff.
- The Trustees and staff are committed to protecting the rights of library users by espousing the American Library Association's "Freedom to Read Statement" as well as the "Library Bill of Rights" and its interpretations both in policies and procedures. We are dedicated to professional and ethical conduct and affirm the American Library Association's Code of Ethics.



Planning Process

In early 2023, the Library Director asked several people to be on a committee to aid in the Long Range planning process. The committee included one additional staff, one member of the Board of Trustees, two members of the Friends of the Somerset Public Library and two community representatives. These names and a timeline were brought to the Library Trustees and Board of Trustees. A timeline was established and steps were taken to complete this project by October 2023. The director with the help of the committee developed two surveys. In addition to these surveys informal conversations took place with staff, town employees and patrons in the library. Once the surveys were completed, several meetings were held where the committee reviewed and worked on the Long Range Plan. The plan was completed and reviewed by the Somerset Library Trustees on October 17, 2023.

The two user surveys were:

- Patron survey
- School district educators Survey

(Survey results can be found in Appendix A)



Community Profile

Somerset, Massachusetts is in the southeastern part of the Commonwealth. As of the 2020 census, the town had a total population of 18,303. It borders on the Narragansett Bay; the east border is formed by the Taunton River and the west border (in part) by the Lee's River. Towns which abut

Somerset are Dighton on the north, Fall River on the east and Swansea on the west. Somerset is 4 miles west of the City of Fall River; 44 miles south of Boston; 20 miles southwest of Providence, Rhode Island; and 197 miles from New York City.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 12.0 miles: 8.1 square miles of it is land and 3.9 square miles of it is water. The total area is 32.30% water and 67.70% land.

The town strives to honor its past and retain its New England character despite economic challenges. Historically, Somerset constructed powerful clipper ships and produced pottery and bricks that built American cities. In addition to the shipbuilding and pottery industries, Somerset was also known for its iron works (Mount Hope Iron Works) and stove (The Somerset Stove Foundry) industries, which kept many in the town employed up into the early nineteenth century. From the First World War into the mid-Twentieth century, Somerset secured and built two major power plants, the Montaup Electric Company in 1923 and Brayton Point Power Plant in 1963. Those major power plants provided power to the town and to communities throughout New England, helping Somerset to prosper for many years and benefitting town residents with a wide range of services and a comfortable tax rate. When those power plants closed in 2010 and 2017, respectively, Somerset began to struggle with a tax deficit, forcing residents to grapple with the loss of some town and library services and significantly higher taxes.

Somerset town leaders are taking action to promote fiscal responsibility while also encouraging new industries to take root. In particular they would like to promote the growth of hospitality and tourism, taking advantage of Somerset's scenic river landscapes.



Demographics

As of the census of 2020, there are 18,303 people and 7,248 households residing in the town.

- 23.2% of population is under 18
- 24.5% of population in over 65
- Average household is 2.5
- Racial demographic: White, alone is 95.5%
- Average per capita income is \$47,396
- Median household income is \$96,967
- 34% percent college graduates
- 92% percent high school graduates



Library Profile

The Somerset Public Library is ideally situated on the main thoroughfare, located between the current Town Hall building and the “Old Town Hall”; sharing parking with these two buildings. The Library was renovated in 2001 and functions adequately for patron use and our current programs.



Our children’s area is a bright spot containing a play area that encourages interactive and imitative play.

Meeting spaces include:

- Local History Room – small conference room containing a conference table room and local history material
- Evans Meeting Room – small room with one large table
- Mendes Room - small living room style meeting room
- Cucinotta Community Room – large meeting room with Smart technology that allows meetings to be live streamed and/or recorded through the local cable studio (SATV)
- Shipyard Room – small meeting room that can used on its own or be combined with the Cucinotta Community Room for additional space

Other tools and assists:

Eight (8) computers for general patron use and two (2) computers to access the online catalog.

The Somerset Public Library is governed by an elected Board of Trustees (6). The municipal budget for the Library is \$668,679 and is supplemented by State Aid from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners contingent upon State Certification. We are currently open 53 hours a week (including Saturdays).

The staff consists of:

- Library Director
- Reference Librarian
- Head of Children’s
- Head of Technical Services
- Head of Circulation Services
- Two full time library assistants
- Two part time library pages



- Five part time library assistants
- Custodian (shared with Town Hall)

The Library has a significant collection of over 140,000 items, including books, and a collection of audio/video material. Electronic resources are also available. The Library has more than 6,000 registered patrons. There is significant regional usage of the Library with the majority of non-Somerset residents coming from Fall River, followed by Swansea. Access to over three million items is available through the SAILS network.

The Library building itself is ADA compliant and has technological aides to help individuals with disabilities to access Library materials. In addition, the library provides a homebound delivery program.

The Library provides significant children and adult programming as well as a center for community groups.



SWOT

Strengths

- Excellent customer service
- Support of new technologies by the SAILS Library Network
- Staff works as a team
- Fully Staffed
- Strong interest in programs and training by patrons
- Strong support from voters in Somerset for budget, hours, etc.
- Supportive Friends of the Library group
- Flexible use of space
- Community use of meeting room.



Weaknesses

- Need to strengthen technology and increase customer service training
- Need for additional meeting spaces
- Need to expand outreach to the community about library services
- Need to medicate sound levels

Opportunities

- Centralized location
- Adequate parking
- ADA compliant
- Opportunity for staff training by network and/or regional Library system.
- Good working relationship with town and elected officials.

Threats

- Changing technologies
- Building HVAC system is aging and in need of replacement
- Aging roof
- Worn and aging carpet



Needs Assessment

Capital improvements to essential systems and structures are imperative. The HVAC unit is at the end of its useful life cycle and has been described by engineers as being in a state of “eminent failure.” The Library is currently working with the Selectmen and the Town Administrator to secure funding for this project. The existing roof will also need to have significant repairs. Finally, the carpeting throughout the facility is over twenty years old and needs to be replaced. There is funding available; however, it is insufficient to meet the facility’s needs.



Improved communications with town residents and school departments is a priority. The library offers a great number of services of which the public and the school employees are not aware. According to our education survey, less than 35% of the teachers were aware of and/or used the library’s resources.

The survey of patron needs varied extensively, but several themes emerged. Data from that survey indicated that library users tend to take advantage of a limited number of services; but, many services/resources are underutilized. The survey cited borrowing materials as the most frequent reason for using the library. There is a need to educate our patrons and citizens about the many resources available through the library.

97.96% of our survey respondents rated the overall service of the Somerset Public Library as a positive experience; however, we always strive for improvement.



The Long Range Plan

The long range goals of the Somerset Public Library are as follows:

Goal 1: Maintain and strengthen the financial stability of the library. Currently the library is fully funded under the requirements set by the MBLC. The town has been very supportive of the library in recent years. We would like to continue this trend.

Objective/actions:

- Work with the Town Administrator, Advisory and Finance Board and Board of Selectmen in using our municipal budget funding in a fiscally responsible manner and cooperate with other departments in resource sharing possibilities.
- Maximize non-municipal funding opportunities
 - Support Friends of the Somerset Public Library fundraising
 - Increase bequest and gift opportunities
 - Pursue grant opportunities
- Encourage State Legislators to provide library funding.
 - Attend annual Library Legislative Day
 - Support local Legislative Breakfast
 - Communicate library needs with individual legislators
 - Invite legislators to library events

Goal 2: Maintain and upgrade the library facility.

Objective/actions:

- The library has an aging roof and HVAC system. The HVAC system is at the end of its useful lifecycle and needs to be replaced. We need to work with the Town to have a new system installed in the library. Currently we have some money set aside for this project, but more funding is needed. In conjunction with the HVAC system the roof will require additional repairs once the HVAC system is put into place.
- The carpeting in the library is over 20 years old and needs to be replaced.
- The town and the community as a whole is in need of more meeting space. Often every single room in the library is being utilized and we often have to turn town organizations away due to lack of space. Through our state aid and building grants we would like to add on at least one additional meeting space.
- Due to activities in the library, it can be noisy which interferes with other patrons' ability to concentrate. Through building grants and state aid we would like to enclose the children's room and add study rooms.



- Increase internet speed and access in the library and the surrounding area. This will be accomplished with the support of an E-rate grant.

Goal 3. Communication: Increase awareness and use of the library and its resources to both the public and our school community.

Objective/actions:

- Develop marketing for delivery across multiple communication channels that highlight library services, programs, and resources.
- Conduct outreach to schools and local preschools through visits and in-library tours
- Conduct community outreach by participating in Town festivals and celebrations.

Goal 4: Provide workshops and training that will aid the community and staff in the use of digital technology and online resources.

Objective/actions:

- Offer technology programming that will increase the user's knowledge of the online environment and electronic devices.
- Provide instructional sessions for adults, including seniors, wanting to learn more about technology and online tools.
- Offer individual pairing with patrons for use of their digital devices. This could be done by our staff and through pairing high school students in need of volunteer hours with seniors.
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff to ensure that they are proficient in using the resources available and to help aid patrons in its use.
- Provide professional development opportunities to school faculty and staff so that they are aware of the resources available.

Goal 5: Deliver exceptional library services and material based on community needs by providing resources and programming to support learning and literacy through all stages of life.

Objectives/actions:

- The library needs to be in the forefront in providing the public with reliable, authenticated sources of information.
- The print collection will be evaluated and reshaped to meet the changing demands of our users.
- Continue to inventory Local History collection and investigate digital opportunities for the preservation of materials. Work with local organizations as partners.



- Continue to maintain the tracking of circulation to make sure our book and materials selection reflect and satisfy patron needs.
- Provide dynamic youth services. Continue to provide engaging and dynamic programming to toddlers and early elementary age children. Expand programming to our tween and teen population.
- Continue summer series cultural programs for adults and our summer reading program for children.
- Work in partnership with town departments, boards and community groups in offering joint programming of interest to their specific mission including but not limited to
 - Recreation Department
 - Civic organizations
 - Sports organizations
 - Genealogy Groups
 - Council on Aging
 - Local Historical Society
 - Friends of the Somerset Library
 - Somerset/Berkley School Department
 - PACE (Special Education Parent's Group)



Contact Information

Somerset Public Library

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Library Staff

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Board of Trustee approval

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees
October 17, 2023

Dr. David Cucinotta	Chairman
Miss Gayle Bradbury	Vice-Chair
Mrs. Elizabeth Ponte	Secretary
Elizabeth Almeida	
Norbert Dionne	
Kim Forbes	

Dr. David Cucinotta, Chairman of the Trustees of the Somerset Public Library

Diane White, Somerset Public Library Director



Appendix A – Patron Surveys

The following pages contain copies of the surveys conducted and the results.

The Library Patron survey was conducted using Survey Monkey™ and was available in printed form.

The Educators survey was conducted using Survey Monkey™ and distributed to educators by the Superintendent of Schools.

The survey for Town Department heads for conducted in paper form only.

Select the link for an online copy

- 1) [Library Patron Survey](#)
- 2) [Educator Survey](#)

