

# Canaan Town Library

## Long Range Plan

2016-2019

This plan has been approved by the Library Director and Board of Trustees 07.23.2016

Amy Thurber, Director

Susan Remacle, Treasurer

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# Introduction

The Canaan Town Library has had a long and illustrious history and in recent years has enjoyed prominence as a cherished community resource in the midst of downtown.

## Library History

In 1804 the Canaan Social Library was founded. During the 1800s, the Library moved from house to house. In 1893, with a Town Meeting appropriation of \$25, the Library made its home at the Whitney residence on Canaan Street. In 1903, the town voted to spend \$100 to prepare the Academy Building on Canaan Street for Library use.

The Library moved to its present home in the Canaan Community Building in 1978. A significant downtown focal point, this building has been home to the Canaan Municipal Court, the Canaan School hot lunch program, the Canaan Players, a private kindergarten, a recreation center, and town offices.

From 2003 until 2011, the Library underwent many renovations and upgrades for safety, efficiency, and comfort. (For further information with regard to this time period please refer to “Improvements and Renovations” section at the end of this plan.) In 2011 we celebrated the grand opening of the spacious, comfortable, and very functional, newly renovated Canaan Town Library.

Included in the plans for the physical space of the newly remodeled Library were many considerations for new technology and new ways the Library could serve its patrons. At that time, the Board of Trustees believed that it was important to lay out a plan for the Library over the next three to five years.

## Long Range Plan Review 2012-2015

In 2011 we asked our patrons to take a survey to determine the community’s perception of Library services, and to get feedback on current and future use of services. Survey respondents were also provided with opportunities to comment on the various questions. A planning committee was formed and tasked with processing the information into a plan that would enhance the Library services to our patrons and provide the community with opportunities to increase active participation at our library.

We received 117 responses to the survey. A synopsis of the results follows:

- 36% of all respondents were between the ages of 51 and 70
- 23% were between the ages of 36 and 50
- The majority of survey respondents lived in households with family members between the ages of 41 and 65
- 75% of survey takers were female
- 94% of survey takers have Canaan Town Library cards
- Half of all survey takers visit the Library on a weekly basis



With regard to computer connectivity, in 2011 most survey respondents had DSL or cable internet connections at home but almost a quarter of respondents did not. The Library's internet and Wi-Fi services were considered important offerings. The online card catalog was used by approximately half of all respondents. The most used services and programs were book sales, inter-library loan, and reference assistance. Other offerings and services such as story time, summer reading programs, photocopier, tax forms, and online access to magazines were used very little at the time.

Suggestions for the Library included : more books, more computers, more electrical outlets, Sunday hours, earlier, later, and more open hours, and expanded parking.

Over half the respondents said they would like the Library to have more books. Other wishes high on the list were more DVDs, museum passes, and more staff recommendations.

Armed with this information, the committee and Library staff identified three areas of strategic opportunity: increasing visibility, outreach, and enhancing collections, and goals within each area to aim for within the next three years. The Library staff and Trustees feel that we have satisfactorily met the strategic goals for the 2012-2015 Long Range Plan.

The success of any Long Range Plan is dependent on many factors, of which Library Staff availability is crucial. Volunteers have also been utilized to assist with some of these objectives at the discretion of the Director.

The Director is ultimately responsible for formulating processes to attain these goals and to report to the Trustees progress and hurdles in reaching them. In turn, the Trustees review the goals and achievements on a regular basis and will continue to do so with the implementation of the next Long Range Plan.

## Long Range Plan 2016-2019

Now that we have reached the end of the first Long Range Plan, the Canaan Town Library Trustees and Director have decided to continue our growth and development with a new plan for the next three years. There was much discussion on how to develop a new plan, and what it should include. It was decided to use newly released information from the Aspen Institute Dialogue as a foundation for the new plan.

### Aspen Institute Dialogue

“Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries” <http://as.pn/libraries>

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. In partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Aspen Institute Dialogue project was initiated by the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program. They published their report in 2014. The purpose of the dialogue and report is to explore and champion new thinking on U.S. public libraries and to foster concrete actions to support and transform public libraries for a more diverse, mobile and connected society. It also focuses on the impact of the digital revolution on information, knowledge, and daily life. This report recognizes and expounds upon the premise that we need a new vision of libraries for the future and that public libraries will need to continue to find new ways to serve community needs.

We found this report to be very helpful in identifying new strategic opportunities for the Canaan Town Library.

The Aspen Dialogue identifies that the emerging values of public libraries are built around three key assets—

- People
- Place
- Platform

On January 31, 2016, the Trustees and Library Director, Amy Thurber, held a semi-public brainstorming session to talk about our Library as People, Place, and Platform. We formulated ideas and found new connections for what might be encompassed in the next Long Range Plan. Those who attended were Library staff, Trustees, Friends, and Library members.

## People

During the brainstorming session we asked:

- Who are our People? (Who is our community?)
- What do they expect from the Library?
- How can we connect our people with their expectations of our library?

<p><b>People</b> We identified these main groups of people in our community</p> <p>Current Library users New residents of Canaan Current resident non-users Housebound seniors Commuters School-aged kids and Teens Busy working-people Churches and congregants Business leaders Artists Job seekers Families with children Homeschooling families</p>
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One of the longest running challenges facing the Canaan Town Library, and many public libraries, is how to get people here? We identified “our people” and discussed many ways to reach out to them.

## Place

In addressing Library as Place, we recognize that the size of the physical space of the Library itself is a challenging fact, but not necessarily a limiting one. The Library’s

“Place” is more than the building on Main Street. Through outreach we now have a presence in several locations, including social media. Storytime is conducted at a nearby church, some programs are conducted at Cardigan Mountain School, we carry out elementary school visits, and sponsor the Meetinghouse Readings.

We asked about Place:

- What makes our Library a great public place?
- In what ways can we transform from a place that only checks out books to a space that provides inspiration, learning, collaborating, social opportunities, and performing?
- What can we do to make the Library space even better?
- How is the Library’s online space currently used and what can we do to make it great?

<p><b>Place</b> We identified and discussed these areas of “Library as Place”</p> <p>Physical space Social area Online presence Makers’ space Community space Meeting room availability Place for internet use and computers Limited space concerns Suitable spaces for testing/proctoring Privacy concerns Accessing and building a presence in nearby locations such as schools or the Canaan Hall</p>
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Many ideas were discussed with regard to utilizing our current allowable physical space to the best of our ability. This is, of course, the challenging part of being space-limited.

We will continue to strive to expand and build upon Place by considering new outreach opportunities and how we may

utilize them in collaboration with community members.

## Platform

The concept of Library as Platform is a modern way of thinking about our future. It follows the premise that the Library is user-centered, providing opportunities for individuals and the community to access a variety of tools and resources with which to discover and create new knowledge.

We asked:

- What does the Library have now and what do people want?
- How can we communicate our online presence and Internet offerings to people who don't yet know about it?
- How can the Library help people find and make sense of high quality and credible information that is available from many sources?
- How can we connect people seeking information to the different sources (resources, people or organizations) that can provide it?



### Platform

We identified these ideas for expanding our Platform

**Social Issues—Boundary respect**

**Computers for check out**

**Use of "Hot spots"**

**EBSCO (online databases)**

**Tablets with catalog to the housebound**

**Deliveries of materials in collaboration with the Senior Center, Meals on Wheels, and local schools**

**Online educational materials**

**Satellite platforms/community**

Ways in which the Canaan Town Library could and should be a platform were considered. Can we provide our community non-traditional ways that we feel are exciting? We feel a renovated Platform will not only draw in new users but provide services above and beyond current expectations.

Platform enables the curation and sharing of the community's knowledge, resources, and innovation. It is interactive in facilitating people individually and in groups. It supports the learning and civic needs of the community.





## **Strategic Plan: People, Place, and Platform**

People: Goals for attending to the people of our community and beyond include being more available to patrons, especially in regard to technology assistance. Increasing community connections (continuing with the Outreach Goal of the previous LRP) is also an integral part of the new plan. The Library Director and Staff will strive to meet patrons with their own language, recognize their needs and communication preferences, and not take for granted that they understand library jargon.

Place: New goals include making the Library a more inviting space. This can be achieved with some relatively minor cosmetic enhancements. Increased accessibility, especially for the handicapped is planned. A major goal is to create and better utilize the space we have by making spaces multifunctional. In our effort to make our Library more progressive, current collections, especially non-fiction and reference materials, will be scrutinized for use and purged accordingly in an effort to open up more space for other uses. Library administrative space will also be evaluated

for efficiency, storage, and ease of use and access.

Platform: Goals for building the Canaan Town Library Platform include connecting people to people. This may be achieved through the use of forums (online and physical), How-To events, coverage and sharing of world events, materials for armchair travelers, inviting in visiting local authors for inspiration of children and adults. Another part of the platform goal is connecting people to resources. We will look into what the Library can do to provide and/or facilitate on-line courses, we will explore the possibility of lending e-book hardware (Nooks, tablets, or Kindles) for in-house use or checkout.

In an effort to build our future patronage and strengthen our community, the Library intends to cater more to kids and teens and perhaps offer downloadables, computer programs, gaming, and trivia opportunities. We plan to connect with local school libraries and see what types of collaborative opportunities are available.

We will explore our potential to offer courses for academic enhancement and credit. We are acutely aware of the busy lives people lead and want to let them know the Library can be available in some form around the clock.



## Conclusion

As with any plan, there are limitations, drawbacks, and unexpected surprises both good and bad.

Funds and space always have been and will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. Library staff will be counted on to devise and implement many of the new goals, and the hope is, as in the past, that Library volunteers can assist in achieving these goals. We are confident that innovative thinking can turn our ideas into reality, allowing the Canaan Town Library to become more diverse, mobile, and connected. These goals are not only intended to enhance the experience of current Library users, but are intended to reach out to the residents of Canaan and surrounding communities. We hope to fulfil these expectations both with the effort of Library staff and in collaboration with other organizations. In moving forward with our Long Range Plan 2016-2019, The Canaan Town Library intends to address the ever-changing future with consideration for its patrons, staff, and the community as a whole.

Canaan Town Library Mission

Inform.

Innovate.

Inspire.



## **Additional Information**

### **Long Range Plan 2012-2015**

*Library Visibility* was realized with an email list and a monthly e- newsletter updating patrons on upcoming programs, new books, and Library events. There is now a Library website and Facebook page which are regularly updated with new information.

Traditional communication was also stepped up with the use of in-house posters, a sandwich board out front, and flyers posted in local venues to advertise Library resources and programs.

*Library Outreach* has been a great success. The Canaan Town Library partners with community constituencies ( mother's groups, Canaan Rec Department, local schools, etc) to provide programs such as story times, cooking classes, workshops and presentations covering various topics, the Meetinghouse Readings, food-for-fines month benefitting the local senior center, a newly formed book club for kids, and pub trivia night, to name a few. All of these programs are very well attended and the Summer Reading Program generates a lot of excitement as well. Program attendance is tracked so we may gauge the popularity of our events and find new ways to meet community outreach goals.

*The Library Collections* have also grown to provide not only more books, audio books, and DVDs, but non-traditional materials are now a significant part of our offerings as well. Those include things like museum passes, Caboodles (family fun kits), crafting tools, and genealogy databases. All Collections are constantly being examined for circulation and use and purged and updated regularly.

## **Improvements and Renovations**

In 2003, fire code violations threatened closure of the building. In response, a Library Advisory Board of volunteer citizens spent three months gathering community and professional input. They arrived at the following recommendations:

- Keep the Library in its present location
- Make repairs necessary to satisfy fire and safety codes.
- Plan further renovations to increase energy efficiency
- Ensure that the Canaan Community Building lives up to its name.

A warrant article requesting \$225,000 for fire code and safety repairs was posted and approved by 64% of the voters. Subsequently, Canaan Selectmen and Library Trustees entered into a Memorandum of Agreement that assures that the Library will remain in its present location.

By the end of the summer in 2005, work covered by the warrant article was completed. That work included replacing the front stairs and railings, insulating the roof, installing a sprinkler system, enclosing the boiler room, reconstructing a stairwell and emergency exits, and rewiring the electrical system. Savings on heating costs and more comfortable summers and winters were and are being realized.

Once the building became safe and meeting all fire and safety codes, we were ready to move forward with interior renovations. Out of consideration for the taxpayers' burden, an aggressive effort to solicit private donations for this project was undertaken. Costs were estimated at \$300,000. Generous gifts provided an encouraging start to this undertaking.

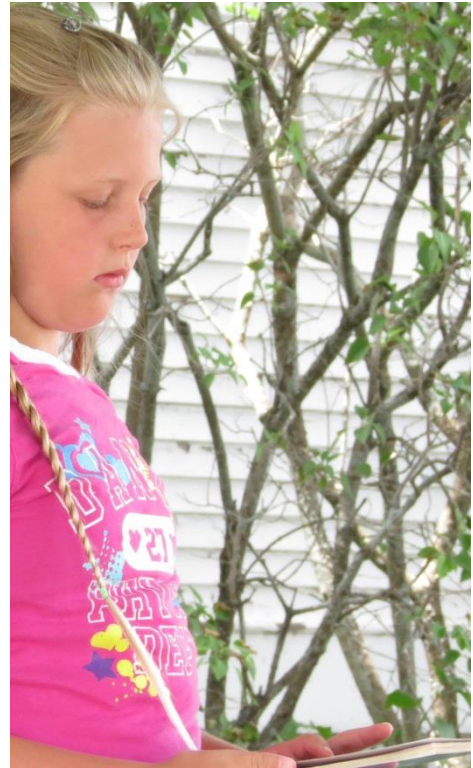


## (Improvements and Renovations con't)

The actual cost for the project was upwards of \$350,000. Thanks to the help and support of the Fundraising Committee, led by Lola Baldwin, and the generosity and commitment of a significant number of community members and friends, the funds were raised over a five year period.

In September of 2009, the newly renovated downstairs section, housing mostly the nonfiction collection, was finally opened to the public. Then began the major phase of the renovation project: removing the stage to allow the creation of a new children's area and completing the renovation of the main floor of the Library. This period was characterized by the need to maintain operations in a veritable construction site. Due to the incredible dedication and adaptability of the staff, Library functions remained unchanged for most of this difficult time.

Renovation of the main floor was by far the most challenging and expensive part of the project. The Library Trustees, along with the Library Director, Amy Thurber, spent an enormous amount of time meeting, planning, reviewing, and deciding each step of this effort. The success of the project couldn't have been achieved without the invaluable commitment and support of Matt Dow (MTD) and his crew, as well as Chris Wadsworth, architect and friend.



### Interior Renovations

- A redesigned children's area
- Reconfiguration of adult space for increased ease and flexibility of use (non-fiction moved downstairs)
- Conference room on the lower level
- Functional front desk
- Energy efficient windows
- Upgraded front entry
- New bookcases, lighting and furnishings
- Study/tutor area
- Comfortable seating for reading and quiet conversations
- Tables and desks
- Additional computer stations
- Handicapped accessible bathroom