



SARGENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

SUMMARY REPORT 2022

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS = 18

- **Focus Group #1** (2/26/22 10-11:30am) = 5
- **Focus Group #2** (3/2/22 7-8:30pm) = 6
- **Focus Group #3** (3/3/22 10-11:30am) = 7

1. WHAT IS THE VERY FIRST WORD YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE LIBRARY?

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|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility• Audiobooks• Books (3)• Comfortable (2)• Community (3)• Comprehensive• Computers• Cozy• Creative• Engaging• Families• Flexible | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendly (5)• Helpful (2)• Inviting• Inclusive• Inviting• Kids• Magazine• Newspapers• Nice• Organized• Personal• Pleasant | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research• Resources (2)• Safe• Small (3)• Small Collection• Small Town• Useful• Videos• Warm (3)• Welcoming |
|---|--|--|

2. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY AND ABOUT THE LIBRARY RESOURCES OR SERVICES YOU USE. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WHEN YOU COME TO THE LIBRARY?

MOST FREQUENTLY USED:

Collections (28)

- **Kids' Books (7):** Kids are her main motivation. Most important - kids collection selection (4) || Children's section - great diversity and brings awareness to cultures, ideas || Books for her classroom (teacher)
- **Audiobooks (7)**
- **Books (5):** Physical books (3) || Getting books—lots of books || Fan of the classics. It feels like sometimes they are lacking, but she knows they're there.
- **Misc. (9):** DVDs (2) || Magazines (2) || Movies || Newspapers || eMaterials || || Sit in library reading periodicals || Ukulele || Video games

Facility (9)

- **Meeting Space (5):** Meeting space for community conversations and book clubs (2) || Meeting room (2) || Big meeting room great space for events
- **Exterior (2):** Like to sit outside || Outside space where kids can play
- **Misc. (2):** Pre-COVID, she visited and used Library as a comfortable reading space. || Likes the local history room

Management and Operations (4)

- **Children’s Librarian (2):** Children’s librarian is helpful. || Enjoys going to the children’s librarian to get recommendations based on her children’s previous reads.
- **Misc. (2):** The staff is very knowledgeable. Provide great customer service. || Their child has volunteered at the Library.

Marketing (3)

- **Newsletter (2):** Wasn’t aware of the Library’s newsletter. Now, they plan to subscribe. || Weekly newsletter
- **Misc.:** Reads information about upcoming and past Library activities

Programs (17)

- **Attends Programs/Meetings (6):** Attends community events at the Library (4) || Attends some programs (2)
- **Art (4):** Art shows (2) || Art sales (2)
- **Crafts (3):** Knitting group || Craft packages were a lifesaver during COVID || Attends craft activities
- **Misc. (4):** Attends cultural events that are educational opportunities || Attended a live bird program without her kids || Attended story hours || Cooking club - Yosh (“a nice way to get people together”)

Services (17)

- **Museum Passes (10):** Everyone in the focus group session uses museum passes (7) || Museum passes (2) || Even during the pandemic, she used museum
- **Book sales (4)**
- **Meeting Room Use by Other Groups (2):** Uses the meeting area for the garden club || Being able to use the meeting/community room
- **Misc.:** Appreciates staff’s reading recommendations

Technology (17)

- **Interlibrary Loan (ILL) (8):** ILL (3) || Use CW MARS website to get books and place holds (2) || Commonwealth Catalog || Likes ordering and picking up materials || Orders print and audiobooks online
- **Libby (5):** Libby (4) || Likes Libby’s tracking feature

- **Online Resources (2):** Uses Library's online research resources (history, travel, etc.). Special shoutout for Consumer Reports || Accesses Great Courses
- **Misc. (2):** Uses Library's computers || Mobile hotspot a lifesaver both for traveling or when Wi-Fi is out/weak at home

LEAST FREQUENTLY USED:

- DVDs (2). However, another participant is an enthusiastic DVD borrower.
- Magazines
- Electronic resources don't always have the right things I'm looking for. The repositories seem limited.
- Doesn't value the teen room. It seems like it never has kids in it. However, the timeframe referenced was the afternoon, a time when teens were in school.

COMMENTS:

- Appreciates the Library. It is the most important local resource. It's a great community library.
- The Library is the center of the community.
- Great link with the school.
- Goes snowshoeing with their kids from Blanchard to the Library
- Loved the train in the children's area. Now, it's gone.
- Book displays serve as reminders of how fun reading can be.
- A participant mentioned not knowing about the available databases.

3. THE LIBRARY IS THINKING A LOT ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THE BUILDING A WARMER AND MORE WELCOMING PLACE FOR ALL AGES. WE'D LOVE TO HAVE MORE PEOPLE SPEND MORE TIME IN THE LIBRARY. WHAT COULD THE LIBRARY DO TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Exterior (13):

- **Patio/Terrace (5):** Would love it if the back of the children's area opened out to the outside. The back patio would be more accessible from inside the Library. || Outdoor space can be more accessible if there's direct access from inside the Library. || Make the patio more obvious || Improve and enlarge the outdoor terrace's usefulness
- **Outside Seating (3):** Would like outdoor spaces with furniture, power, and weather protection (shade) — a pavilion (2) || Wants a shady spot to sit outside
- **Children's Play Space (3):** Playspace for kids (2) || Play area outside
- **Misc. (2):** Better lighting outside. There are two broken lights. Who should we call? || Having a drive-up return box would be great.

Interior (34):

- **Children’s Area (5):** Create a play space for kids (2) || Is there room inside now for a children’s play space? || Offer more cozy seating for an adult and a child or two children (e.g., so a parent can read to their child) || Bring the train table and other toys back
- **Meeting Room (5):** Use the community room more (3) || Some events held at the community center could be held in the Library’s meeting room || Reach out to organizations to promote the use of the meeting room
- **Space Configuration/Use (5):** Use the current DVD collection area for another purpose || Front desk looks like a barrier to the library. It can be intimidating. || Young adults aren’t using the YA room, so she wouldn’t miss it if the space was repurposed || Participant wouldn’t miss the periodical area if the space was used for something else || Assess and optimize space usage
- **Makerspace (4):** Wants a makerspace with various smaller equipment and craft supplies for all ages (3) || Want a makerspace. I visited Watertown’s space, and it was great.
- **Wayfinding (4):** Offer new user orientation sessions (e.g., tours, info.) || Hard for newcomers to figure out where to find things || Collection/Dewey organization of books isn’t easy to navigate without staff help || Signage might help (YA room, PCs vs. OPAC)
- **Gathering/Study/Work Spaces (3):** Offer workspace that’s friendly to phone users || Create more private spaces for patrons (e.g., cubical-type desk spaces) || Create small group gathering spaces/niches throughout the Library || Would be nice to have breakout spaces to sit together in the main area (not in small rooms).
- **Aesthetics/Interior Design (2):** Paint the interior. Looks very 80’s and dingy. It’s an easy fix. || Currently, it feels like it’s a transactional space—not a place to stay.
- **Book Sale Space (2):** Create space for ongoing book sales in the alcove so that people can shop year-round || Ongoing FOL alcove for sale
- **Misc. (4):** Having rocking chairs in the Library would be great. || Offer another drop-off location at the town hall or somewhere else in the town || Need to make the historical room more appealing and accessible. || Have areas where music plays

4. CONTINUING WITH THAT THOUGHT, WHAT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES DO YOU IMAGINE OUR IDEAL FUTURE LIBRARY WOULD OFFER? HOW CAN THE LIBRARY IMPROVE ITS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN THE FUTURE?

IDEAS:

Collections – Library of Things (4): Expand the Library of Things and unique collections (3) || Redefine the Library collection to include non-traditional items. Tools? Cleaning supplies?

Programs (39):

- **Club/Group Activities (7):** Book Clubs || Board games club || Bridge club and instruction || Chess club and instruction || Collector/ hobby groups || Dad and Mom groups || Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts meetings/events
- **Topical Presentations (7):** CPR and first aid training classes || History || Movie nights || Music appreciation || Parenting workshops || Senior citizen-oriented programs || Stand Up Comedy
- **Art (5):** Art in Bloom but somehow related to a book || How to make floral arches or artwork || Art exhibits (e.g., collaborate with schools to showcase kids' art) || Art lessons || Art shows
- **Format/Schedule (3):** Offer virtual events || Hold kids' programs after working hours || Livestream events. It provides digital access and expands the Library's presence beyond the physical building.
- **Public Forums (3):** Opportunities to meet with town committees, communicate with boards and committees, and express concerns about the town || Offer public forums || Could the library offer public forums that address a topic that focuses on local issues? Interested patrons could come and discuss some timely subjects.
- **Speakers (3):** Author talks (local authors, book signings) || Bring in speakers about special interest topics || Author talks, readings, readings, and book signings
- **Classes/Lectures/Workshops (2):** Offer ongoing series (e.g., monthly), such as the one in Harvard || Series of classes on current events and weekly discussion group for current events
- **Misc. (9):** Auctions || Weekly dial-a-story. Kids call in to hear a story read to them. || In makerspace, offer hands-on activities || Charitable fundraisers || Theater for children || Have regular events (e.g., quarterly cultural events) || Offer more adult programs. I checked out the programming, and there weren't very many adult programs offered. Goes to Acton and Concord for programming. || Be mindful of funding and space when considering what programming's possible || Build communities around program offerings, such as a coding group, public speaking, writing workshops, language learning, college preps, etc.

Services (6):

- **Reading Recommendations (3):** Increase website access to information regarding recommended materials. What are people in Boxborough reading? Staff or resident favorites would be great. || Enjoys the Library's reading recommendations. || Likes getting librarians' help to find books, especially new titles.
- **Social Services (2):** Social working resources || Help social services organizations meet community needs (e.g., info, resources, referrals)
- **Misc.:** ESL and other tutoring services

Technology (8):

- **Online Resources (3):** Offer patrons access to video streaming services || Create a centralized calendar of all MA libraries' events || Offer more online resources (databases, eBooks, streaming)

- **Support/Training (3):** Educate residents regarding how to use modern library tools (streaming, eBooks, etc.) || Help citizens learn how to use technology || Offer computer/technology training classes

Misc. (2): The webpage is skimpy. I couldn't find book club information. || Technology in the Library needs to be top-notch—easy to use and easy to understand

COMMENTS:

- Reading challenges broaden our reading/outlook.
- Be aware of book/resource category titles that make people uncomfortable (e.g., fat-friendly, disability).
- There are a lot of book titles about current issue topics. It's not the Library's mandate to educate or guide people.
- She doesn't want to be encouraged to change her beliefs/perspectives. Accept her as she is.
- Library offers a place of connection and a sense of community.
- The Library expands our understanding of who is in the community, their needs, and how to meet them. The Library's role in this will grow.

5. WHAT TECHNOLOGY DO YOU THINK THE LIBRARY SHOULD FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

FOCUS ON:

- **Classes/Instruction (11):** Focus on topics that improve technical literacy (2) || Wants to learn how to access blogs and podcasts and how to use them || Wants to learn photography, like how to take better pictures and how to edit them || Coding for kids || Coding class or tinker cat for kids || Coding programs || How to protect yourself from scams/phishing How to use communication tools, like Facetime || Programs/presenters on technology topics (AI, future technology, etc.) || Tech topics for seniors || Music and video production classes
- **Collections/Online Resources (11):** Music and video production software/applications (3) || Technology tools for kids || Expand kids' access to technology games or online resources (ABC mouse, Starfall). Want access to the Library. || Academic research databases || Adobe software || Expensive software people are interested in exploring || 3D printing, AI, and gaming || Expand ILL collaborations beyond CWMARS || Provide access to information beyond the Library's collection, such as educational talks and performances offered elsewhere.
- **Devices (4):** eBook readers || Many people come in to use library computers because they don't have a home computer. Need to be up to date, easy to use, and linked with the printer. || 3D printers, laser cutters (in makerspace) || Expensive STEAM devices people are interested in exploring
- **Support/Services (3):** Teens can provide tech support. Schedule a time for community members to get tech assistance. It can be intergenerational. || Provide

memberships to programs, such as online coding courses || Connect people who request tech training with people who can offer the training.

- **Makerspace (3):** Create a tech makerspace || Offer a mini recording studio to produce podcasts, format changeovers (e.g., VHS to digital), etc. || Space to develop and scan photographs
- **Misc. (2):** Enhance the website. Present more valuable information on it. || Collaborate with Minuteman Tech to explore the different technology offerings

COMMENTS:

- The Library needs to help narrow the technology gap. Bridge the gap between those who have/understand tech and those who don't.
- Young people use mobile phones more than computers.
- The Library is way behind on the tech curve. We need to enhance technology accessibility.

UNRELATED IDEAS:

- Offer cultural presentations that cultivate community connections. Share experiences from different cultural backgrounds.
- Include musical instruments for people to play in the Library of Things (keyboard, guitar) and offer music lessons.

6. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE A GOOD LIBRARY IN OUR COMMUNITY?

LIBRARY'S IMPORTANCE:

- **Very Important (12):** Library is critical to the community. Where else can you find a place that's non-judgmental and welcoming (5) || It's critical to have a good library in the community (2) || It was one of the first things they looked for when they moved here (2) || It's an important part of the community || Our library is critical to our community for providing a safe, non-judgmental place to go and meet. The local history room is a favorite place for me, and there's no other place like it, with as many historic resources. Occasionally I walk through the book collection to see what's there. I'm always reading something and writing. || Would check out the library before moving to a new town.
- **Access to Education/Information/People (8):** Provides equity in access to quality information (2) || Accessible to all age groups, across generations (2) || The Library is an extension of people's education. It offers continuous learning. It's a vast resource. It helps people stay current and learn. || Offers free access to information. It's the only place like that. || Provides equal opportunity to access books and to learn. It connects people across the world via electronic access. || Is open to all
- They want kids to understand the Library is important. It's a safe space to study and focus. You can rely on the Library. (2)

- Having a good library is really important, but we need to help specific groups access it better. She currently works with Afghans and knows there will soon be a greater need for local ESL and adult learning opportunities.
- Library offers more than just encouragement for people to read.
- The quality of a library represents the community's commitment to learning and connection.
- It is the common space in town. People also connect at the town dump.

COMPARED TO OTHER TOWNS' LIBRARIES:

- Groton has huge library with multiple levels.
- Wayland and Harvard don't have much AV.
- Acton has a lot going on. There's a big children's room and private tutoring rooms.
- One person couldn't participate in an Acton library program because they were not a resident. Did not like that.
- We need to keep in perspective that we are the smallest community in Middlesex County, so we are limited by funding and space.
- If you have a large space, it's easier to diversify your offerings.

IDEAS:

- Create space that can be closed off or offers a flexible configuration to transition from one type of function to another. (3)
- Offer coffee space—someplace to eat and drink. (2)
- Compared SML to a library with 3 - 4 programs per week at night for kids. We need to expand our hours and programming.
- The Library can serve as the center for in-person and virtual activities in town.
- Build a playground.
- Create a dedicated conversation space (atrium).
- Have a room for special exhibits.

COMMENTS: Peishan (director) is REMARKABLE. We are very lucky we have her. Her HVAC presentation was great. Good job keeping in touch with the community and seeing what we need.

7. WHAT COMMUNITY NEEDS ARE THERE THAT AREN'T BEING MET? WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THE COMMUNITY CURRENTLY FACE THAT THE LIBRARY MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP ADDRESS OR SUPPORT?

COMMENTS:

Collections (1): Read books for non-native English speakers in your own language. Can Boxborough add more non-English books?

Marketing (7):

- **Target Groups for Outreach (3):** Non-native English speakers || People who live in houses vs. apartment dwellers on the other side of 495 || Asian population is very large.
- **Community Presence (2):** Participate at Freebies || Bring mobile library to apartments.
- **Misc. (2):** Determine how to communicate library information in different ways, including people who aren't online. || Library's size doesn't matter. The key is to improve communication with residents.

Programs (6): Topical talks delivered by people in the community (how to raise a chicken and chicken coop, vegetable gardening). || Host cultural celebrations || Presentations on socioeconomic issues || Learn about local businesses || Have a civil discourse facilitator || Offer a weekly movie, etc., to socially engage the YA group

Services (4): Offer social services resources (e.g., social worker) to respond to reported acts of hate et al. (2) || Provide a delivery service for the elderly those with mobility challenges. || Offer help for filing taxes and gaining citizenship.

Misc. (3): Create a makerspace to help bridge the equity gap || Have info about town hall available at the Library. Offer not just the information but also people you can talk to. || Designate a drop-in social space for YAs.

8. WHAT ISSUES NOW FACING THE TOWN DO YOU THINK MAY IMPACT THE LIBRARY?

- **Political Divide (4):** Polarizing political climate makes it difficult for libraries to remain neutral and welcoming to all groups (2) || Library should be a neutral place. It can enable civic and civil conversation in the community. || Offer programs and resources that can provide a common ground.
- **Environmental/Conservation/Climate Change:** Consider the long-term impacts. We have water problems. The Hager Well has good water, but the center of town is polluted. 1,000 people live west of 495, where there's poor water quality.
- **Funding:** Library's current budget is bare bones. It's an ongoing struggle for the town to support the Library financially.
- **Income Disparity:** For example, seniors with low incomes vs. million-dollar home purchases. Are there ways for the Library to be sensitive to that issue? Can the Library provide resources (ex., video streaming, technical support, education regarding how to access these tech resources)?
- **Mental Health:** Respond to the community's mental health challenges.
- **Personal/Social Connection Issues:** Help kids get back on track with post-pandemic social skills.

- **Population Changes:** Is the population growing or declining? Determine how this will impact the Library.
- **Misc.:** School and Education || Maintaining the town's rural character

COMMENTS: The domestic violence information “thing” in the women's bathroom is no longer there. A participant thinks it's bad that it was removed.

9. WHAT COULD THE LIBRARY DO TO BETTER SERVE THE COMMUNITY AND THE TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH? WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE?

- **Expand Access/Hours (4):** Provide access to materials outside of standard library hours (e.g., lockboxes) (2) || Offer more library hours (Friday, Sundays) || Offer Friday hours
- **Staff (3):** Encourage the children's librarian to talk to parents and kids about what they want and need || People working at the desk should have name tags so that I can greet them by name. || While helping a participant, a staff person was doing two things at once. The person didn't like that.
- **Increase Staff Pay (2):** Staff is underpaid || Pay staff well so they will stay.
- Offer café space.
- Maintain a regular community communication channel (suggestion box).
- Collaborate with the high/middle school to support a kids' art/work display.
- Get the Library on the school's bus route.

QUESTIONS:

- How can community members suggest books?
- Can a group get together to review materials for the collection?

COMMENTS:

- Library's flexibility during COVID was great. It was very important to everyone during COVID. The Library has talented staff.
- During COVID, the Library stayed open more than other organizations.
- Peishan (director) is exceptional at developing staff.
- Yosh has stuff ready and is friendly. Heather (Youth Services) is also friendly.
- The staff is key to the Library's success. They are very welcoming.
- Love the Library!