



BARABOO
PUBLIC LIBRARY

2019–2023 Strategic Plan



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❖ BACKGROUND

Baraboo Public Library is an integral part of our community. The library takes this role to heart and in turn, puts the community at the heart of this plan. Understanding the needs of the community is paramount to the mission, vision, and principles of the library and the goals of this strategic plan, from dedicated users to newcomers and those who do not yet frequent the library.

While the library already provides a wide array of services, there is more that we want to offer. With that in mind and to be the best stewards of our resources, we engaged in this strategic planning process to learn and listen in order to focus our efforts on what our community needs. This plan provides the library staff, trustees, and volunteers with a clear sense of purpose.

The Baraboo Public Library Board formed a Strategic Planning Committee composed of library staff, Library Board trustees, and community members. Under the direction and guidance of strategic planning consultants, the following sources of data and information were gathered and analyzed between September and November of 2018.

- Annual library operations and service data submitted to the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for the years 2008-2016.
- Results of a community survey conducted between October 1 and October 28 garnering a total of 1,266 responses.
- Information from seven Community Conversations:
 - November 8 – Local government and agencies, 8 attendees
 - November 13 – Reader’s Anonymous Book Club, 9 attendees
 - November 14 – Jack Young Middle School, 20 attendees
 - November 14 – Parents and caregivers, 19 attendees
 - November 16 – Boys and Girls Club teens, 9 attendees
 - November 16 – Baraboo Area Senior Citizen Organization, 8 attendees
 - November 20 – Baraboo High School, 13 attendees
 - November 28 – Community groups, local businesses, and nonprofits, 8 attendees
- Results of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis with a staff focus group.
- Results of an Issues and Needs Questionnaire, completed by members of the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Demographic and economic data from the American Community Survey and the U.S. Census.
- Assessment of the library related to the Department of Public Instruction’s Wisconsin Public Library Standards.

Acknowledgments

We want to thank the more than 1,300 community members who responded to our community survey or attended one of our community conversations. The focus of our strategic planning process has been to engage residents to ensure our services, programs, and resources align with the needs of those we serve. The information we gathered from the community has been invaluable.

The library staff played an essential role in our strategic planning process and we thankfully acknowledge their efforts. They enthusiastically encouraged people to take our survey, as well as shared their knowledge, experience, and ideas as part of the SWOT session.

The library director is grateful for the time and passion of the Strategic Planning Committee. Their commitment and thoughtfulness were instrumental in the development of this plan. The Strategic Planning Committee members extend their appreciation to the Library Board for supporting the strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Committee

Jessica Bergin, Library Director
Jill Ellinwood, Sauk County Human Services
John Gunnell, Library Board - School Representative
Carey Kipp, Library Staff
Tony Kujawa, Library Board
Beth Persche, Library Board
Robin Whyte, Greater Sauk Community Foundation
Michael Zolper, City Alderperson
John Ellington, Library Board President - ex officio committee member

Library Board of Trustees

John Ellington, President
John Gunnell, ex officio (representing the Baraboo School District)
Forrest Hartmann
Tony Kujawa
Beth Persche
Lacey Steffes
Bekah Stelling
Lori Von Asten
Jennifer Watts

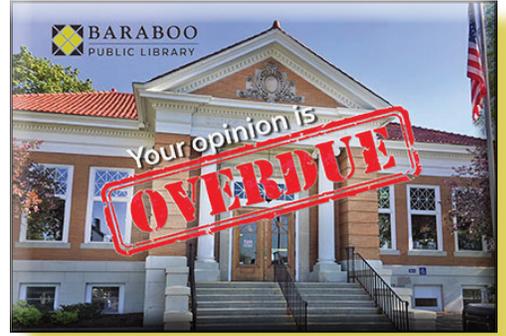
The library would also like to thank Melissa McLimans and Bruce Smith from WiLS (Wisconsin Library Services) for providing planning process management and facilitation services to develop our strategic plan.



❖ OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

“I love the Baraboo Library! It is an essential part of our community.”
Community survey comment

We learned from our community survey that the library is personally important to our patrons. It was also apparent that they viewed the library as important to Baraboo, whether they used it frequently or not. We asked survey takers whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “The library is important for the community.” Ninety percent of the 1,060 survey respondents said they highly agreed.



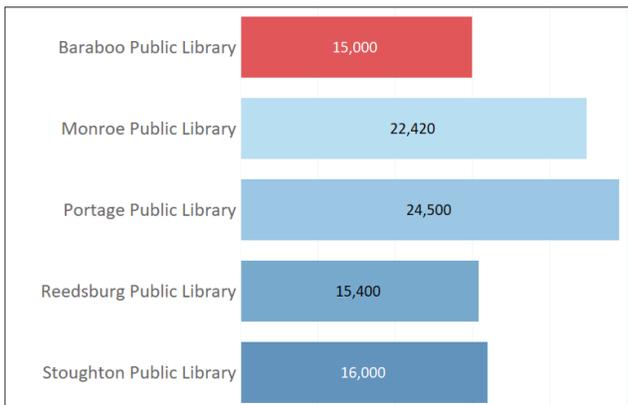
Survey postcard

This was clearly the main theme we heard from survey takers and the people we spoke with at the eight community conversations we held. We also heard that we can be better. We can improve library spaces, expand communications making people aware of all that is available to them at the library, and provide improved community support and partnerships. And we can better support our staff and assess our services. These areas of improvement serve as the foundations of the four strategic goals established in this plan, which are:

1. Invest in our library’s future
2. Communicate our value and principles
3. Support and strengthen our community
4. Build upon our strengths

Using data from the annual library service reports that Wisconsin public libraries submit to the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) each year, we selected four area libraries that are comparable to Baraboo Public Library. In comparison to those libraries, we learned our current capacity has diminished our ability to serve our community (continue reading through the goals for further supporting data.) The following two charts demonstrate our library size and service hours relative to those libraries.

Library square footage

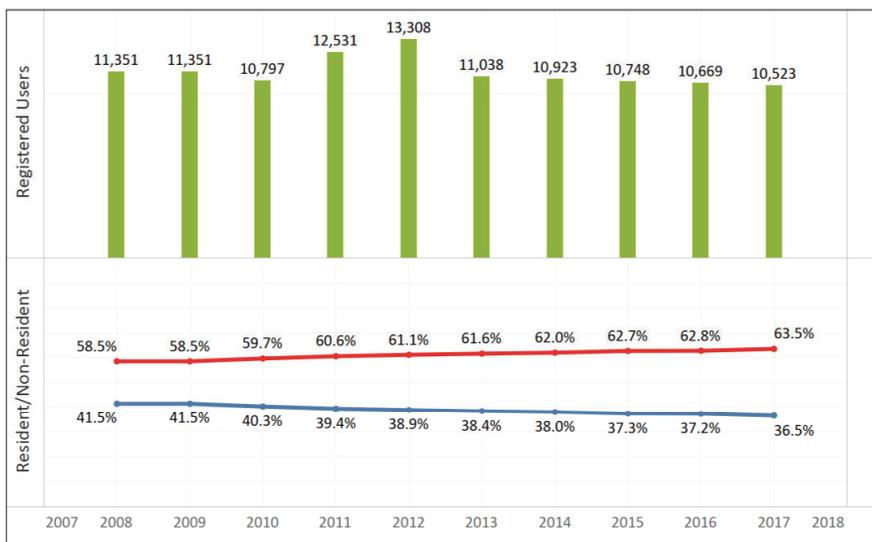


Annual hours open to the public



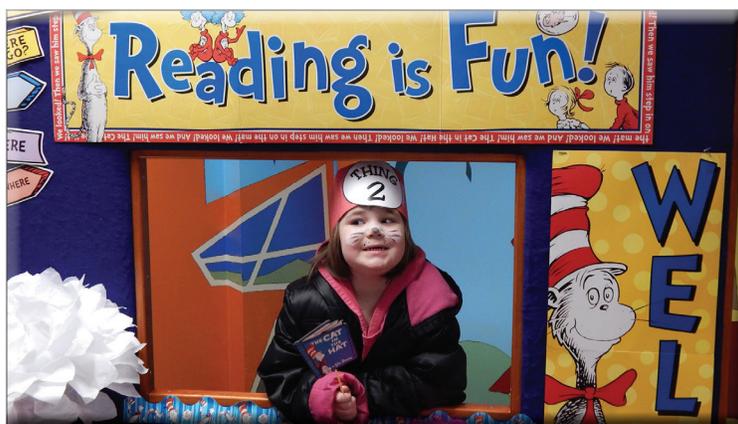
We can see in the data that our library provides 1.25 square feet per resident, while three of the other libraries provide 1.42, 1.66, and 2.09 square feet per resident. More space in a modern library can allow the community to access a greater number of resources and engage in more opportunities to learn.

When we consider the library's open hours, we can see that those we serve have more limited access to our library in relation to comparable libraries and that may impact the use of our library. Part of a library's funding is provided by the county based on use of our libraries by patrons without a library in their community. As non-Baraboo residents in the county select other libraries to use because of more space, resources, and access, our county funding can diminish, lessening what our library is able to provide for our community. The following chart shows a change in the makeup of registered users of the library with non-resident cardholders decreasing.



We know from the survey results that there is a strong desire and need among community members for more from the library. The survey takers were asked to indicate what would increase their use of the library. The top response among survey takers was more programs that interested them or their family members. In fact, 21% of those who responded that they never use the library indicated programming would increase their use and 23% of those who infrequently use the library (visit library 1-6 times per year) indicated the same. The next highest response was more convenient open hours, with nearly 20% of both frequent and infrequent users indicating this.

The hopes we heard from those we spoke with and those who shared their ideas in the survey go beyond just more space and hours. Our community has amazing assets, from its natural beauty to the variety of year-round activities. We heard clearly from all those who shared their thoughts with us during this strategic planning process that the library is among our city's top assets. Guided by our mission, vision, and principles, we see our current limitations coupled with the strong desires and needs of our community for high-quality library services as an opportunity to improve. We are excited to get started!



❖ OUR FOUNDATIONS ❖

Our Mission

*We are a community center for lifelong learning and literacy
bringing people, information, and ideas together.*

Our Vision

*We are an essential, collaborative community partner supporting and inspiring
an engaged, educated, and connected community of learners and creators.*

Our Pledge

The following values will guide our work to fulfill our mission and reach our vision.

We pledge to...

Provide a safe and welcoming environment

We take pride in our library and are helpful, courteous, and respectful to all.

Be responsive and adaptive

We learn about our community's needs and listen to their ideas.

Continuously improve and innovate

We strive to provide equitable access to expertly selected services and resources.

Value and pursue collaboration

We facilitate cooperation and seek partnerships to enhance community impact.

Celebrate diversity and embrace inclusion

We are understanding, compassionate, and inviting to all.

Be nonjudgmental and uphold integrity

We strive to be objective, impartial, trustworthy, and honest.

Ensure privacy and confidentiality

We champion everyone's right to explore information and ideas freely.

Respect intellectual freedom

We believe open inquiry and the freedom to read and learn are essential to our democracy.



❖ STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal I: Invest in our library's future

Ensure that the spaces and capacities of the library facility meet the needs of the community to enhance the learning, connection, and growth opportunities for all residents of the Baraboo area.

Objectives

1. Build on the momentum from the strategic planning process to quantify and qualify community support and desire for an expanded and upgraded library building.
2. Design an expanded and reimagined library building that integrates with the library service opportunities and possibilities that could exist for the community with a modernized library.
3. Develop and implement advocacy and funding strategies needed to realize a relevant and modern library for the community.
4. Create a building improvement and maintenance plan for the existing building.



Why?

In 1903, the Baraboo Public Library opened in its current location at 230 4th Avenue. The first major space change occurred in 1969 when the children's library was moved to the basement. A smaller remodeling project in 1975 was followed in 1982 by a more extensive remodeling and addition project, increasing the library's space from 6,000 sq. ft. to 15,000 sq. ft.

Since 1982, the infrastructure needs of the library, including technology and communications, have greatly changed. Also, our city's population has increased by 50% since 1980. The library requires quality technology and spaces to meet the service needs of the community. Not only is a building of this age expensive to maintain with its outdated systems and lack of flexibility, but it has a negative impact on the library staff's ability to efficiently, effectively, and economically serve the public.

Despite the current inadequacies and inefficiencies of the library building, there is a lot of love in the community for the old Carnegie library. A small minority of the community survey respondents indicated their preference that no changes be made to the current library. However, when asked "What do you love about the library spaces and building and/or what building or space changes, improvements or additions you would most like to see?" a large majority of the 660 comments note a need for improvements and updates to the building, including more overall space.

That said, a majority of these comments also indicated their preference that renovation maintain the character and look of the historic building. The following survey comment echoes many others in the survey and what was heard at community conversations:

"I love the historical 'look' of the library. There is definitely a need for more meeting spaces for groups! Overall it is time to expand all departments of this vital part of our community."



A list of possible improvements to the physical space of the library was provided in the survey and respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought each improvement might be by indicating the priority level. Of those who took the survey, 1,092 answered this question. The following are the space improvements that had more than 75% of respondents indicating a medium to high priority.

	High	Medium	Low
Remodel the children’s area	48%	38%	14%
Have more comfortable spaces for reading, working, and relaxing at the library	42%	43%	15%
Update restrooms	39%	39%	22%
Add more computers	38%	41%	21%
Add more private/quiet areas	34%	45%	21%
Improve accessibility to and display of library materials and space for new types of materials	33%	49%	18%
Provide dedicated collaborative work and creation spaces	26%	50%	24%
Create library space just for teens and tweens	26%	53%	21%

The current building also prevents the library from reaching a number of Wisconsin Public Library Standards as established by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The standards are based on current levels of service provided by libraries of similar size across Wisconsin. DPI defines three tiers of standards for public libraries in Wisconsin.

- **Tier One**—the minimum services that should be available to all residents of the state
- **Tier Two**—an expansion of services beyond the basic
- **Tier Three**—the highest level of service

As part of the planning process, the library has assessed the following as some of the standards not able to be met in the current facility:

- Adequate space to implement the services prioritized in the strategic plan (Tier One)
- Quantitative standard on number of computers per 1000 population (Tier One)
- Adequate and convenient parking available to patrons and staff (Tier Two)
- Adequate reader seating (Tier Two)
- Allocate age and inclusion appropriate spaces (Tier Three)



Goal II: Communicate our value and principles

Through our engagement with and communications to the community we strive to educate and inform all area residents about the library, its offerings, and its essential role as a cornerstone institution in our community.

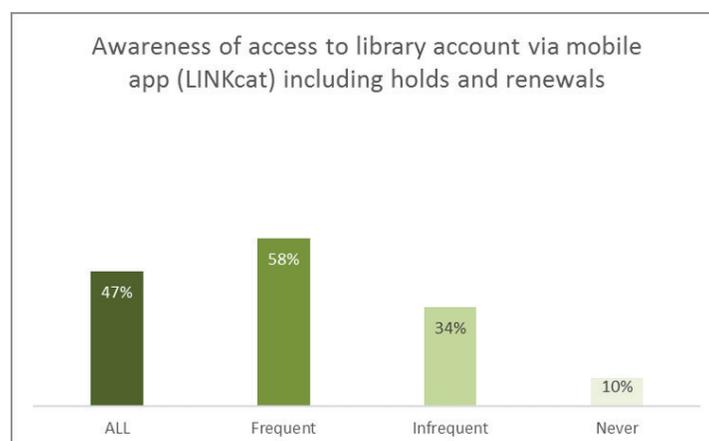
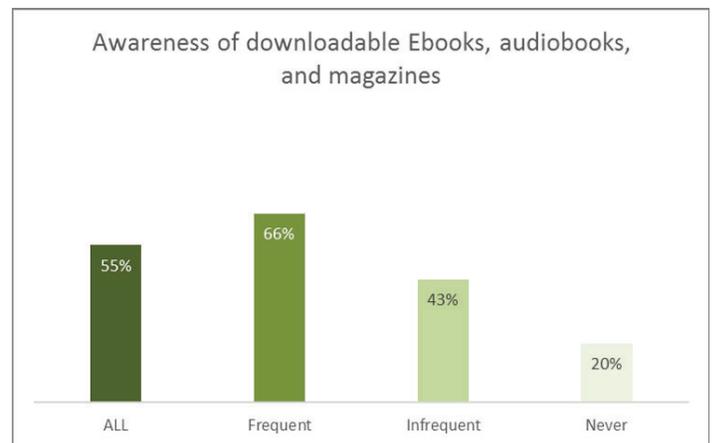
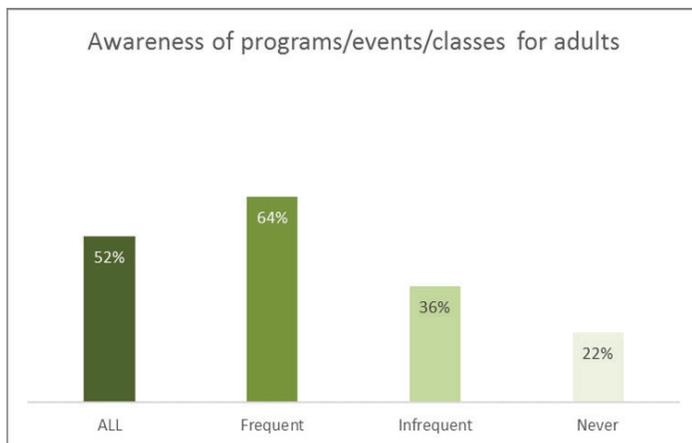
Objectives

1. Increase awareness in the community of what the library does and provides.
2. Identify and communicate both the common principles held by community members and the library and the value of the library to the community.
3. Enhance and improve existing communication the library provides regarding community services, events, and opportunities.

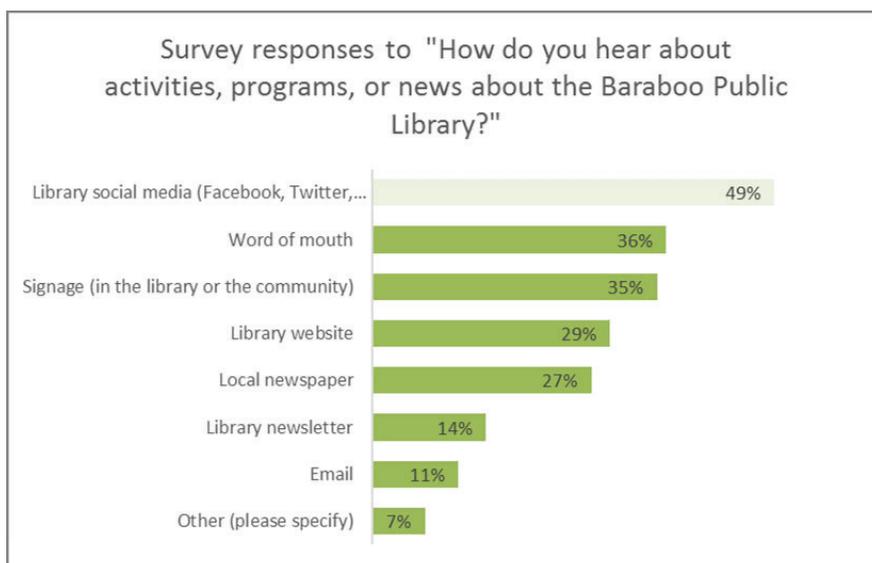
Why?

There are two important communication goals for the library. First is that we need to ensure our community is aware of all that is available to them from the library, from our traditional services to the technology and digital resources we have. The second is we also need to turn awareness into advocacy. In regards to the latter, we will work to develop library advocates through careful study of our community's principles and clearly communicate the value and principles of the Baraboo Public Library.

The survey demonstrated that even our most frequent users are not aware of all services and resources the library provides. We also learned that those who never or infrequently use the library would use the library more if there were more programs and resources that interested them. However, when survey takers were asked "Which of the following services are you aware the Baraboo Public Library offers?" we learned there is a large gap in the awareness of what the library offers based on the frequency someone uses the library, illustrated in the charts below. This indicates an opportunity for the library to improve its marketing and promotion. Frequent users are defined as those using the library at least once per month and infrequent users use the library 6 or fewer times per year.



As can be seen in the following chart, the community survey indicated that social media is a powerful tool to reach users and non-users of the library, with nearly half of the survey respondents, frequent and infrequent users alike, learning about the library through social media. Understanding this, along with recognizing which services are less known, will help the library increase awareness of our services and principles.



Goal III: Support and strengthen our community

As a trusted resource and place, the library will continually seek opportunities and evolve in its role as a key partner to increase the well-being, inclusiveness, and opportunities for all in our community.

Objectives

1. Engage in partnerships with area groups, organizations, and businesses to help address local needs.
2. Within the capacity of the staff, develop programming that can expand cultural understanding within our community and grow skills of individuals through utilizing the talents, expertise, experiences, and collective wisdom of area residents.



Why?

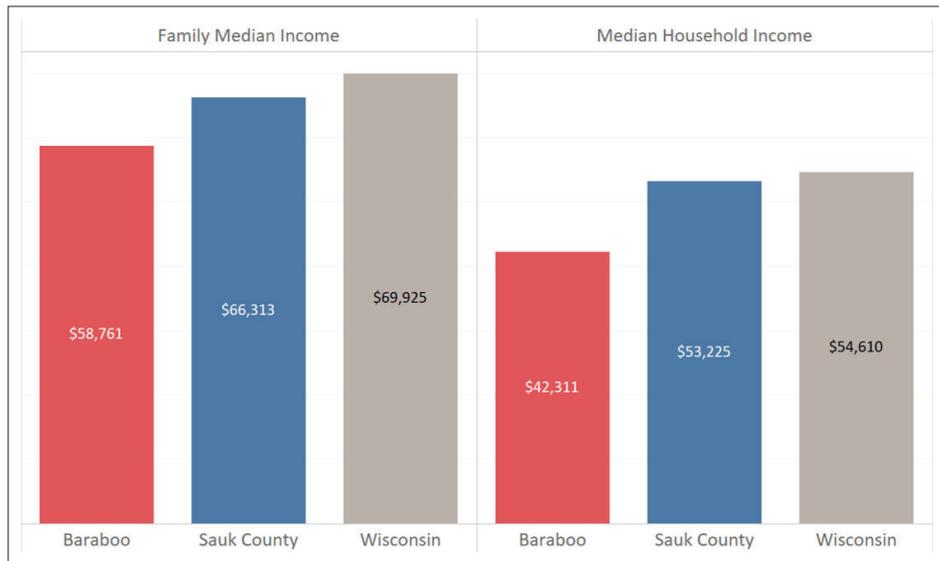
"I have enjoyed the services of the library for 51 years and am pleased and surprised by how it has evolved over the years."

"Keep innovating!!"

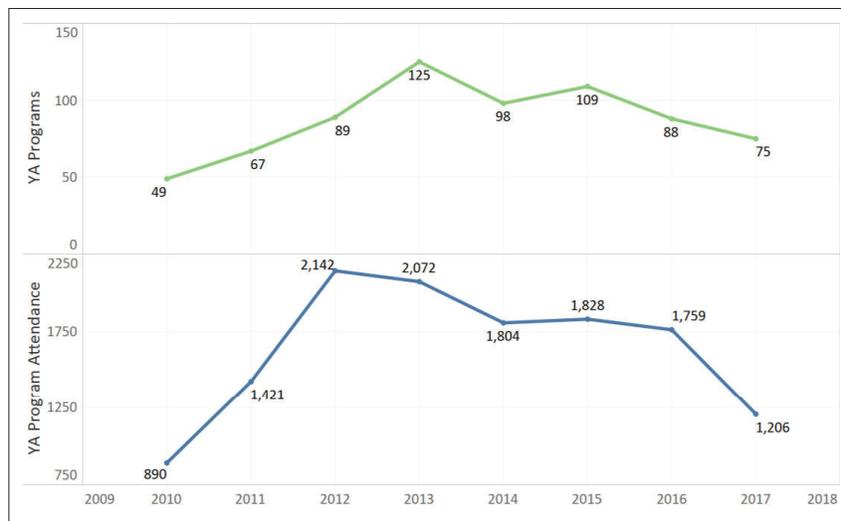
The above two survey comments demonstrate the importance of our library evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. More than ever, libraries provide services that help communities bridge technological, educational, and economic divides that exist among residents. Baraboo is no different.



While we've had success with providing our services and making our resources available, we know there is more we can do to meet our evolving community needs and desires. We need to ensure we are reaching out to all to understand their needs, especially those who are currently underserved. In addition, we need to develop and target community-specific programs, collections, and resources to attract new users. The following charts (2016 American Community Survey - U.S. Census) show that Baraboo has significantly lower incomes and higher poverty levels than the rest of Sauk County and the state.



Baraboo’s significantly lower income levels along with other demographic data and what we heard in our community conversations, tells us that there are needs in the community we are not meeting as well as we could. For example, we could be doing more for teens. Modern libraries offer many options for teens to spend their time learning new skills and socializing with peers in positive environments. The following chart shows how our Young Adult (YA) programming and programming attendance has lessened in recent years.



Our ability to support and strengthen our community is not only dependent on having adequate resources, spaces, and capacities, but relies on us enhancing current and seeking new strategic partnerships that allow us to reach further than we can on our own. We know our community’s aspirations can only be reached and our challenges met by working together. As we near our 125th anniversary as a library, we are excited to build on our foundation of being a strong community partner.



Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast

Goal IV: Build upon our strengths

Continually improve our foundation of excellent staff, services, programs, and resources through evaluation and learning from others with a focus on supporting, developing, and positioning our staff for growth and success.

Objectives

1. Establish a multi-year plan to achieve optimal staffing capacity levels and skills needed to meet community interest for increased services and programming, as well as increased access to the library, its resources, and its services.
2. Create a method for regularly evaluating library programs, services, and resources and our investment in these areas.
3. Identify enhanced or new programming ideas we can provide.

Library Staff



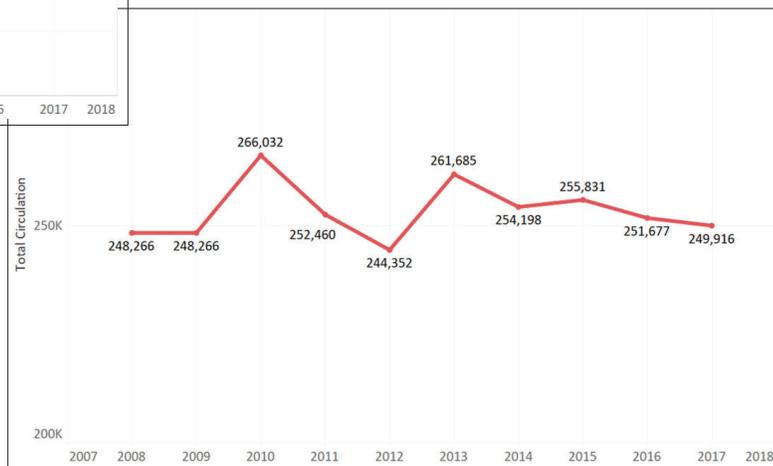
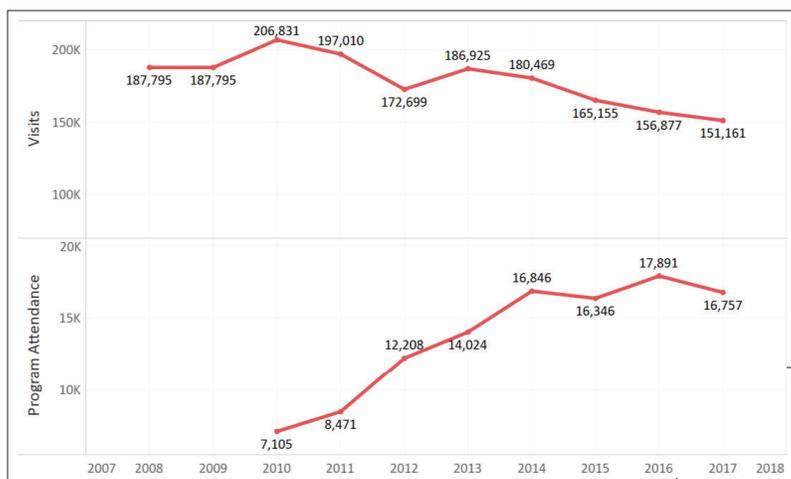
Why?

While lack of space, flexibility, and amenities has constrained our services, our staff has been the engine that has allowed us to be responsive to and meet community needs as best we can.

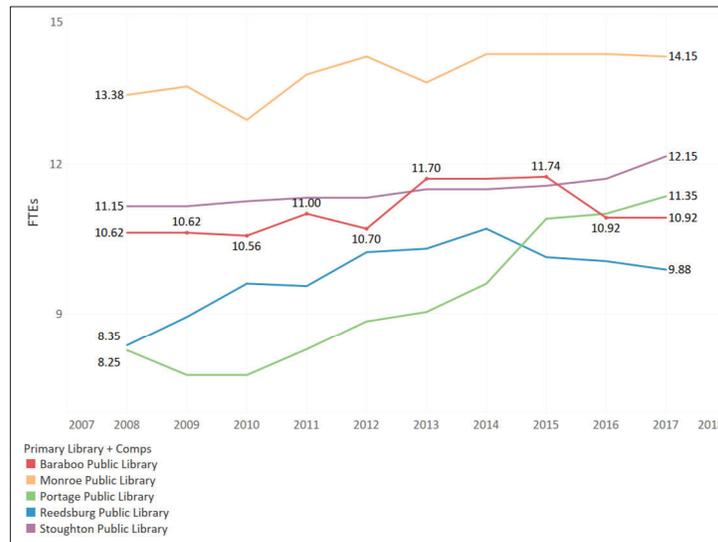
“The staff is extremely friendly at the library. They are very kind and willing to help, making the library a very pleasant place to visit.” Survey comment

The data we’ve gathered for the planning process has shown some reductions in our service data, mostly related to the number of visits and non-resident users. The following two charts demonstrate how the work of our staff has buoyed our other service results (such more program attendees, increased e-book circulation, and expert customer service) to lessen the impact of those reductions.

While visits have been trending down, our staff have done an amazing job increasing the programs offered with the result being a significant increase in the number of people that attend the programs. This draw to our library has also helped us maintain relatively consistent circulation of our materials, while the national trend in circulation has gone down during this time period.



This impressive increase in library programming been done with a staffing level less than many area libraries that are comparable to Baraboo. Additionally, three of the area libraries have increased staffing levels in this time period, while Baraboo has reduced staff.



The result is a staff that is stretched thin. Our aim with this goal of building on the strength of our staff is to evaluate what we do to ensure we are providing the most impact for the investment, while seeking ways to enhance our staff capacity to reach all the goals of this strategic plan.

❖ IMPLEMENTATION, ASSESSMENT, AND COMMUNICATION

The Baraboo Public Library director and staff will work in conjunction with the Library Board of Trustees to prioritize, identify service goals, and coordinate activities from this plan. The library will consider available resources, including funding and staff time; changing conditions locally, regionally and statewide; and opportunities that arise to innovate during the implementation of the plan.

The ongoing planning process for the library will include project management, assessment, communication, and re-prioritization activities to ensure the goals of the plan are realized with flexibility to adapt as needed. The library will adhere to the following annual process and schedule to implement the strategic plan.

March and September – The library director, in consultation with staff, provides a report to the Library Board’s Planning & Policy Committee, assessing the progress implementing plan activities.

June – The library director, in consultation with staff, provides a report to the Library Board’s Planning & Policy Committee, assessing progress implementing plan activities. The committee, working with the director, will determine if adjustments to the plan are needed based on changing conditions or new challenges and opportunities, and will identify activities that will be the focus of the library’s efforts in the following year. The decisions of this committee will be reflected in the library’s budget planning process and reported to the board as the budget is developed.

December – The library director, with input from staff, prepares a written update for the board, summarizing the prior year’s work and identifying activities slated for the upcoming year.



