



MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN FY24-28 INPUT

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS - SUMMARY REPORT 2022

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS = 27

- **Focus Group #1** (1/22/22 10:00-11:30 am) = 9
- **Focus Group #2** (1/26/22 6:30-8:00 pm) = 9
- **Focus Group #3** (2/1/22 2:00-3:30 pm) = 9

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

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amazing (2) • Books (4) • Comfortable (2) • Community (4) • Competent • Comprehensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Gift (2) • Inventory • Knowledge • Reference • Resource (3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive • Staffing • Stairs • Treasure • Welcoming • Wonderful (2) |
|--|---|--|

2. ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS TO SERVICE—THINGS THAT IMPEDE YOUR ABILITY TO RECEIVE THE SERVICE YOU WANT OR NEED FROM THE LIBRARY?

COLLECTIONS (1): The library of non-traditional items should include snowshoes.

FACILITY (19):

- **Reduce Noise (9):** The library is noisy because of its open design (5) || You can hear everyone on the stairs. Talking is allowed. There isn't any really quiet/silent space. || People doing tutoring should have designated space because listening to them is annoying. || Noise is my number one barrier to using the library. I need silence. The loudest voices are sometimes the employees working there. It might be good to have a silent room where the door is closed. || There was a quiet space at the library years ago, but now you can't find a quiet area. When I needed one, I went to the Merrimack College library.
- **Improve Parking (8):** Parking is a barrier to service (4) || The parking kiosk eats your coins. It would be great to be able to purchase prepaid parking and have a card you put in the front of your car. (2) || Not enough free spaces for a quick visit. Going to a meter is a hassle when you just want to run in and out. || Handicap parking spots are in places that are major traffic streams making it difficult for elderly patrons to back out of spaces.
- **Misc. (2):** I know there is handicap access in the back but adding a curb cut at the bottom of the steps is critical for a person with a cane. I'd prefer to go up the

stairs, but I can't get up that high curb. I have to go all the way around to the curb cut at the end. || It can be a long walk for some to the library or from the parking lot. It would be nice to have benches near entrances so patrons can rest if necessary.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS (2): Expand Hours (2): During the summer, the hours are restrictive. It would be better if the library was open on Sundays all year. || There should be more hours for the makerspace.

PROGRAMS (4): Offer More by Age Group (4): Add teen programs (2) || We need more programs for school-age children || The library should offer programs of interest to more diverse age groups. Sometimes I've gone to other towns' libraries because they offer more appealing programs to families.

SERVICES (3):

- **Improve Copying Service (2):** The xerox machine on the first floor is not user-friendly. It's challenging to figure out how to put the original down, and paying is complicated. || It would be good to make the copier free or give five free copies, even 1-2 copies.
- **Misc. (1):** It would be great if we could do curbside pick-up even when the building is closed (e.g., an outdoor pick-up spot).

TECHNOLOGY (3): I would like MHL to be easier to access on a mobile device. || eBooks, the NYT subscription online, and some other online subscriptions are "designed to punish people." Sometimes it's cheaper and easier to buy books. The portal is difficult. eBooks have to be returned even though there are really unlimited copies. || More Kanopy access.

IDEA: Mass transit to the library and then south of town is terrible. The library should use its leverage to lobby for better transit south, beyond Phillips, and into North Reading.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- Hours are generous
- I echo everyone's positive statements. It's good the library is becoming more digital. The evening hours are good because I work.
- The library is very accessible and convenient.
- I was locked out of Kanopy once, but you can use the BPL's account for Kanopy and eBooks.
- I am amazed by how responsive the staff is. Support and help are given quickly. It is extraordinary. These are amazing people.
- I always feel heard. It is a well-run organization. It is a fluid and amazingly effective institution.

- The chat available 24/7 is great.
- This is pandemic related, but some things are not being loaned out, and some programs aren't happening, specifically for kids.

3. HOW CAN THE LIBRARY'S PHYSICAL SPACE BE IMPROVED?

EXTERIOR (5):

- **Improve Parking (3):** The parking and one-way road are not conducive to visiting, although it was nice with the Grab & Go. || There should be a couple of additional free spaces in the parking lot. I'm usually doing a quick in and out visit. It's an inconvenience. || Parking should be easier. Add more 15-minute spots. I usually run in and out.
- **Misc. (2):** It would be great if a power source was available on the roof deck. || There should be a bike rack in the front of the building.

INTERIOR (31):

- **Improve Signage (7):** It's daunting to walk in and see all those stairs. There should be better signage for the elevator. (4) || I like the new signs by the circulation desk, but I'm not sure if there are enough of them. For example, one should indicate the reference desk is straight ahead. || I'm not sure what kind of directory is downstairs. There should be a "You are here" sign. The assumption when you enter is that you know where to go. || The big electronic sign by the reference desk doesn't make sense regarding the orientation when you are standing in front of it (how the building is laid out). It needs to be clear what's on the first floor, 2nd floor, etc., and I don't understand the logic of how the floors are named.
- **Enhance Appearance/Atmosphere (6):** The old oak cabinets were taken out and replaced with more modern green stuff. It's not warm and inviting. It's sterile and cold. The Methuen Library is nice. Our physical space could be better. (2) || It's not an inviting or welcoming entrance. || Bring more of the outside into the building. Add more plants and more light. Parts of the building are dark. Add more natural elements like a fish tank in the children's room. || There should be more attractive, decorative things on the walls and more Andover-related art, perhaps related to Andover's history. || There is more art and history the higher up you go in the building. Can that get downstairs? Maybe a case of historical artifacts downstairs?
- **Add Furniture (4):** Add more comfortable seating areas/cozy chairs for reading (2) || There should be more spaces with study cubbies or carrels like a college library. Many tutors use the space, so carrels would help people concentrate and minimize hearing conversations in the area. || The 3rd floor has a minimal number of desks & chairs.
- **Increase Meeting Rooms/Spaces (4):** We need a small group work space. (2) || We should have small rooms for recording or private Zoom meetings or serve as quiet spaces for people who need them || There should be more spaces to meet in groups (community meeting spaces).

- **Reduce Noise (4):** Designated space for anyone who wants to use their phone or conduct business in the library. We should allow patrons to do this in one area so that people are not doing it throughout the library. || Need designated quiet versus talking areas. || The space for teens seems to work well to contain them. They don't seem to be making noise but enhance the isolated area to be even more effective. || There needs to be more space for quiet time.
- **Add/Improve Makerspace (2):** Put in a Makerspace. It could bring in a younger crowd. Add things like VR headsets, drones, etc.. || The makerspace should be enhanced and/or expanded.
- **Misc. (4):** Add a public bathroom on the second floor. || The only handicap entrance is in the back. There should be one in the front too. || There should be a better use for the lower level where you come in through the back door where there's a table and bulletin boards. Enhance the functionality of the space down by the elevator. || In Osterville, the Friends group has a "for sale" room with secondhand books and some new stuffed animals. The Friends might benefit from having a room if there is space in the library; Some libraries have Friends' bookstores next to them.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- Library is convenient.
- Like It the way it is.
- Love the roof deck!
- The patio and roof deck are nice spaces.
- The library needs a little tweaking, but It Is great how it is. No need to spend a lot of money.
- The restrooms are much better now!
- The signs on the stairs for the first floor, etc., are helpful.
- The front and back entrance look like two different buildings.
- There was a time when the library got people from the community to display their collections. That was great.

UNRELATED IDEAS:

- The library should allow cooking and/or food tasting programs in the library (not during Covid). Other libraries have active cooking groups that share recipes. They add a lot to the library.
- There are problems with the Wi-Fi. Although I appreciate the librarians trying to help, the Wi-Fi should be expanded/improved/strengthened.
- Staff struggle with the technology In Memorial Hall. It would be better if technology was more user-friendly so that all staff can use it without issues.

4. WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENTICE YOU AND OTHERS TO VISIT THE LIBRARY AND SPEND TIME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY? GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF SOMETHING THE

LIBRARY COULD OFFER TO GET PEOPLE TO COME OR SPEND MORE TIME IN THE LIBRARY.

COLLECTIONS (3): The makerspace is good, but a tool library would be great. (2) || Tool lending library is an awesome idea!

FACILITY (8):

- **Offer Community Meeting Rooms (5):** Meeting spaces would be helpful. For instance, rooms for six people and rooms for 15-18 people could be available to reserve online 2-3 weeks ahead of time. (2) || Having a space for community groups that could be reserved for low or no cost. Examples: books clubs and scout meetings. || Groups and community meetings have helped me feel at home in Andover. It would be great to attend them at the library. || Publicly available meeting space for outside groups.
- **Misc. (3):** Comfort is important. Sometimes the building is too busy, and you can't find a quiet spot to read. || The Teen Room where the computers are is an extremely small space. It should be bigger. Food is allowed there. || It would be nice to have a place to get a beverage. It would encourage people to meet and sit and talk. The kids in the Teen Room would be happy, but it poses problems too.

MARKETING (2): A Library is different from a community space and should not be about meeting every need in the community. It would be better to do more outreach to get people to come in and use the library. || Have the library operate like the history center. There was a meeting about the Shawsheen River Project. It would have been neat to have access to library resources on the subject. Do more collaborative things. For example, if something is happening like a meeting or program, the library can support it with resources, including a staff person in attendance. Staff could be available to participate in projects like the Shawsheen River Project. Someone from the library would be assigned to be there/be the go-to person. I realize there are staffing issues.

PROGRAMS (20):

- **Family/Intergenerational Programs (5):** Offer programs for kids and hold something for parents at the same time. || Have more family-friendly events and intergenerational programming. || There should be multi-generational programs in the makerspace. || The makerspace should lend snowshoes which could tie into some multi-generational programming to encourage family snowshoeing or hiking. || There should be more community-based events like spoken word programs where people could participate if they wish, as well as events for more diverse groups/audiences.
- **Concerts/Music Events (3):** I'd like more music-related activities like the concerts upstairs. (2) || The Sunday concerts are very good. They are monthly events and are typically free. Are they run by the library? Maybe they should expand that program. The room has been packed.

- **Makerspace Programs (3):** Offer more programs for adults, like a fiber arts club. || Opportunities for kids/adults to make/learn things—knitting, crochet, quilting—not just technology. || Have artists and tech people come in to teach patrons how to do these things.
- **Movie Nights (3):** Movie nights were so much fun when they used to have them. They primarily showed old movies, and that was lovely. (2) || It might be nice to have movies on the roof deck on a summer night.
- **Children’s Programs (4):** Need more wiggle words sessions (2) || There should be more programming for young kids. || Have more programs for kids. Many places like the NE Aquarium and the MOS hold sleepovers for kids. The library could do that.
- **Misc. (2):** Don Robb’s history talks turned into social community gatherings after the lecture. || Hold a poets’ workshop or writers’ workshop; I know there are book discussion groups.

SERVICES (1): There could be a drop-by tutoring program. I’m a retired teacher and would volunteer. It could be in a community room. There could also be volunteer-led book discussions for kids. The library should look in the community to use people’s skills.

TECHNOLOGY (2): It would be good if the library website had a place to suggest speakers that people may want to see. || There should be short courses on using things like the 3D printer.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- A makerspace belongs in a community space, not in the library.
- I love the space outside the YA room (roof deck).

5. WHAT TWO WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE THE LIBRARIANS WHO ASSIST YOU?

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| • Accessible | • Engaged | • Patient (20) |
| • Approachable | • Friendly (8) | • Personable |
| • Authentic | • Helpful (13) | • Responsive (2) |
| • Available | • Intuitive | • Thoughtful |
| • Competent | • Kind (4) | • Understanding |
| • Dedicated | • Knowledgeable (5) | • Wonderful |
| • Encouraging | • Nice | |

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- **Stephani T Retirement (3):** The worst news is that Stefani T. is retiring in May! I specifically want to compliment Stefani for the work she has done. || It will be a challenge to find somebody to replace Stefani T. They need to find someone with

imagination, organizational skills, etc., and who is approachable. She's exceptional. || I am another big Stefani fan. She knows what everyone is interested in and how people connect to one another in town. She is an honest, decent person with a strong moral framework.

- Competent and friendly, especially in the chat service. (2)
- The staff is very helpful. I didn't always feel that way, but the last ten years have been much better.
- Big changes in the past 20 years. The staff is much more helpful.
- They're amazing. They always go the extra mile.
- I love the podcast. It makes me feel more connected to the librarians.
- I admire their professionalism in helping people of all ages and tech skills and their patience with patrons with physical and mental challenges. I see this all the time.
- Grateful for the care they give to these patrons.
- Absolutely wonderful!
- The reference desk staff doesn't give up on you. They go beyond their job description.
- You're never left hanging. You never hear an "I don't know."
- The online chat is simple and effective. I've used it a dozen or so times.
- The 20 things to do is a gift every week.
- Librarians in the same position as Stefani in other libraries have also done a wonderful job with the Zoom programs they run together.
- I'm impressed that librarians often walk people to find items on the shelves. It is above and beyond service.
- Susan B is so friendly and has an exceptional level of wisdom about children, grandchildren, and the library. Other staff also know our interests and keep an eye out for us.

6. WHAT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES DO YOU IMAGINE THE IDEAL LIBRARY WOULD OFFER?

COLLECTIONS (7):

- **Add More Books (3):** Have a larger selection of the audiobooks || More art books || If a book or an author gets a lot of requests, we should get more copies.
- **Audiobook Improvements (2):** I'm an audiobook user. There are books here, but I would like to see "staff recommends" these audiobooks or new science books on tape. || Have a larger display for the audiobooks. Sometimes I read and listen to the book at the same time. Have both and let people know you have them.
- **Enhance Digital Offerings (2):** I've used the interlibrary loan service with MVLC and the state, but the library can't get technical journals. It would be great to be able to access them myself or get things without having to wait three weeks or wait to get them in the mail (if they had enough money). || The library has

newspapers for free (NYT, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post), but I would also like The Globe and The Tribune.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS (3):

- **Use Local Volunteers (2):** Tap into people in the community. Many know how to fix things. || I would also be happy to participate. I could get the Rotarians to do a reading program like we do in the schools or something with math or science. Adults would be happy to work with kids in a volunteer capacity. The library should allow/enable people to contribute to the town. They don't have to just rely on staff because there is lots of talent and interest from residents.
- **Misc. (1):** Andover doesn't have a community center. I wonder if there is some way the library would function in that guise, as a hub of what goes on in the town—a repository for information as well as a location/place.

MARKETING (2): Have our checkout slips say how much you saved by using the library. || Market programs better, so people know all we offer.

PROGRAMS (21):

- **Adults (10):** There should be more wellness programs (3) || Book-for-Lunch program. Get together to talk about books you have read and get new ideas for books to read. (2) || I would love to have an annual adults-only special event. Sell tickets to raise money to support the library, and it would be a great chance to socialize. || It would be fun to have a Great Courses Group where we choose one of the courses and work through it as a group. || I would attend talks on things that Don Robb used to do or talks on the rivers, climate change, etc. || A discussion group, like a salon, to discuss topics, express opinions, and exchange ideas. || There are already so many programs for children. Offer more adult programming.
- **Children's (6):** More programs for 4-5th graders || Maybe offer a book club for 3rd graders || Girls Who Code has halted, probably due to the pandemic. There should be a math club for kids and/or help from tutors (could be science, history, or other clubs). There should be more of those programs for children and teens. || Hold a Comicon || There used to be music programs with Peter Sheridan. They should have those and other music programs for kids. || I want story hours to return.
- **Utilize Local Volunteer Presenters (2):** They should tap into people in town to offer programs. || Tap people in town to run programs. I have experience with orthopedic problems, and I could do a workshop.
- **Misc. (3):** Andover reads should be an annual event. It's sporadic, but I like the speakers, activities, etc., that make you feel part of the community. || The Zoom lectures have been great, but I would love to go back to live programs. || There are great program offerings, but sometimes times are not good. If the program is recorded, you must pay to watch it if you can't attend when it's scheduled. It would be good if it could be free for at least a few days after the program.

SERVICES (1): I would love to work with or mentor kids/teens (retirees would like to. Have a mentoring program like a “library of people.” It gives people the opportunity to learn about different cultures, experiences, jobs, etc.

TECHNOLOGY (1): The library needs new computers.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- The concerts were amazing. I have wondered why that room isn't more heavily utilized.
- Third graders think the children's room is too babyish.
- Why is it so difficult to be selected to become a presenter at the library?

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

FOCUS ON:

- **Devices (9):** Have new technology people can try before they purchase it. Example: iPad with a pen. (2) || Library learning center for green technology. Introduce people to green technology before they buy it. Library of Things is a good avenue for this. || Gaming and computer consoles. || I'd like to try VR. || The library should budget to replace technology on a corporate cycle which is every 18-20 months. || the computers need to be updated || A library of tech tools (maybe on the staircase when you come in) would be great. || There are so many high-tech companies here. I don't know the library's relationship with them, but maybe the companies could donate equipment
- **Improve Website (7):** Revamp the website to be more user-friendly (4) || I use CreativeBug and have to search for it on the site. If I search it as one word, I must click a couple of times to access it, but if I search for it as two words, I'll never find it; there is new tech that makes it easier to search; the summer reading program isn't very easy to use; I am in the tech world and know this could be better. I want an easier, more intuitive website that adapts to different devices, etc. || I agree with tutoring certain generations with technology, but the website, particularly the search function, needs improvement. It is very difficult to find things online. You should be able to search by typing in a question. The search function should be more intuitive and user-friendly. || The website needs enhancement. The online catalog is better than it was, but it's hard to browse. I love to look at a section of the shelf. It would be great if somebody could invent a catalog that would show the items on the shelf near the one you look up.
- **Classes/Instruction (7):** Offer lessons/classes on how to access/use the library's digital offerings (audiobooks, eBooks) || Tech classes offered at night for people that work. || Helping us get through ongoing technological changes is an important job for the library. Paul McKay organized some training for seniors on computers. That is a good idea - to help us through transitions with technology and unexpected crises. || I agree with tutoring certain generations with technology || Showcase technology that can assist with physical impairments || Maybe local

high-tech companies could donate equipment or come and talk about the latest tech or what they're doing || I like the "library of experts" idea, specifically to have an expert on Photoshop or stuff like that. I would volunteer to teach physics.

- **Applications/Software (5):** Put Photoshop on the computers. It might make people want to sit there forever, so maybe have a 3-hour limit. (2) || MHL should have an App to be able to get audiobooks on my cellphone. || Library-based cloud storage and possibly creative cloud licenses to continue working at home || Photoshop/illustrator
- **Community Disaster Support Services (2):** After the Halloween storm, the library became a hub with light, power, and Wi-Fi. People were everywhere. It was wonderful. I am wondering if there is a plan in conjunction with other facilities like the Senior Center to be ready when something else happens in this technological world. || I ran my business from the library for three days in the aftermath of the Halloween storm. The library's response was great. It was completely ad hoc, and it worked, but would it work again? Are they prepared? It shouldn't be a challenge to provide Wi-Fi. It could be easily addressed and should be done immediately.
- **Enhance Charging Accessibility (2):** Add more power hubs around the building; I should not have to use an extension cord. || Current furniture layout isn't conducive to access power. For example, cords extend across areas where people walk.
- **Misc. (4):** There will be more and more things with digital subscriptions, which brings up the question of digital equity. The library might be able to throw their weight around for municipal broadband. || Wait is too long for popular e-books. I have cards at other libraries so I can access their e-books too. We should be able to borrow from all the consortiums. || Highlight what we already offer. Improve our marketing || If you no longer use your iPad, you could donate it and have someone wipe it clean, then send it where it's needed.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- There will be more and more things with digital subscriptions, which brings up the question of digital equity. The library might be able to throw their weight around for municipal broadband.
- I used to have cable tv and now have a streaming service and can't get town government meetings. The library should manage it so you can log in like a Zoom meeting.

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

LIBRARY'S IMPORTANCE:

- **Very Important (17):** On a scale of 1 to 10, it's 10 out of 10 important. Maybe even an 11. (3) || I would not live anywhere without a robust library (2) || Hugely important || Invaluable || It is the bedrock of the town. Along with the schools, it builds our education system. || The library is extremely important to me now because I am retired, but 20 years ago, not so much. It's critical that it's there, open and functioning. It's important for kids, and that's why the excellent staff is so

important. Renata was recognized in the Globe for contributing book reviews for young adults. The order of community importance is police, fire, schools, then the library. || The library was a luxury where I grew up, and it actually shut down for a time. This led to the realization of how important a library is. || It's extremely important, even though there are people who wouldn't think about visiting it. It is important as an institution to open your horizons and for getting resources. Reading for kids is about opening opportunities. It's an important institution. || The library is vital. It's an essential part of a community—the center of the community. There are so many different resources and services they can provide to connect the community. || The library is incredibly important to me || The library is the core of the community || It's the anchor of the community. I've had unique experiences on two separate occasions that I've been without power. || Without the library, it's not a community. || Throughout the pandemic, the library kept me sane. It's the best resource in town.

- **“Magnet” Library (3):** I know people who live in other communities who come to Andover, mostly senior citizens, because it's a welcoming place and has knowledgeable staff, so it is important in a regional sense and expands the definition of community. || Many of my friends from other towns use MHL. || New neighbors of mine said one of the things they checked out first in Andover before they bought was the library because they wouldn't have moved here if there wasn't an excellent library. It's why they decided to come.
- **Power Outage Refuge (3):** A haven when we lost power (2) || The library was a warm and welcoming space and offered coffee and maybe something else. It was such a supportive space and left me feeling good about it until this day.
- **Mission/Purpose (2):** The library is a retainer of history that is free. It protects us by providing access to these important resources. || It's always good to spend time in a public library, no matter where it is. All libraries serve that purpose.
- The only town Institution I go to on a regular basis.
- The library is the last sort of classic institution that will be left standing. It will outlast the town hall and the school system.
- I moved to a different house in Andover, so I could walk to the library. I use the library every single day.
- I read *The Library* recently by Susan Orleans. She talks about her relationships with libraries. A lot of libraries are homeless shelters, good in times of disaster, and a treasure trove of books, etc. They make it welcoming for everyone, even those in lower socioeconomic levels.
- It's a rich resource. Everything is so easily available to request online and pick up. You can utilize what's in other libraries. The library has put together great tools, and it is appreciated.
- We don't want to find out what we're missing until it's gone. I joke/hope that a lot of my tax dollars go to the library because of all the services and resources that are offered.

COMPARED TO OTHER TOWNS' LIBRARIES: I moved from Quincy, which had a bigger library with branches. Feels MHL is better in many ways.

IDEAS:

- **Attract More Users (2):** The library is incredibly important to me, but a lot of people miss out; they miss out on browsing. But how do we get people in the doors? In Lawrence, the school had field trips to the library to get kids' cards. Maybe we should do it in schools here. We shouldn't assume kids have library cards because they live in Andover. || It is vital to get people into libraries. Everyone can have access to all the knowledge and professional help.
- Collaborate with school libraries so people who live far from downtown can access the library materials closer to where they live. (2)

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- As an older person, I don't buy books. I prefer borrowing, and I use the Library of Things for the projector and other things.
- The number of people with Alzheimer's and dementia has grown, and the library has created bags of resources for helping them. They see a need and try to serve.
- I can't wait for live programs. They were well-attended before the pandemic.
- They've done a wonderful job for every age. We attended the Mommy and Me and Dads and Donuts programs. My children love going to the library, especially to play D&D. They are excited to go to the library. They feel safe and comfortable there. I love running into people I haven't seen in a long time there. It's the hub of our town.
- I'm disappointed about the demographic of this call and hope other groups skew younger.
- I remember being sick as a kid, and the library had boxes specifically for kids who were sick that contained books, games, etc.
- Sister and mom belong to other MA libraries and felt like they would be closing their doors in the coming years. I told them, "NOT MHL!"
- The way MHL is managed inspires surrounding libraries to be better. We are the standard-bearer.

9. COMMUNITY: WHAT ISSUES NOW FACING THE TOWN DO YOU THINK MAY IMPACT THE LIBRARY?

ISSUES:

- **Censorship (4):** Very concerned about people trying to rewrite history and tell others what they can read. Open access to information. (2) || Censorship challenges (2)
- **Population Growth/Demographic Changes (3):** Continue to adapt to a changing demographic || Enhance representation and diversity in programming, staff, materials, etc. || There has been a lot of growth in Andover, and what are the

ramifications? Is the library also going to have to grow? Where and how? There are conflicting demands for funds.

- **Partisanship/Uncivil Discourse (2):** A library is a good place for discussing controversial topics. || Bridging the partisan divide and bringing people together is important
- **Safety/Security Concerns (2):** Need a readiness plan for disasters, evacuation, and intruders. || Confidentiality and privacy matters greatly
- **Misc. (4):** There is a gender divide between men and women readers. We should try to engage boys in reading at a young age. The library can help bridge this divide. || The library plays an important role in being a trusted source of information. The volume of information can be overwhelming. Libraries can teach people how to discern good information from bad information. || The library has adapted marvelously well to the digital era. That will have to increase and change. || There is a systemic threat. Look at the organization called strongtowns.org. There are many who are willing to destroy forests to put up a mansion where I live. The town will have budget problems if this continues. It will be really easy for the town to hit the library budget

IDEAS:

- It would be nice to see the library work with small businesses. Small businesses are what give us a small-town feel. They should bring in some of the business owners to share their expertise; It would be mutually beneficial.
- The Shawsheen River Project may give the library some new opportunities.
- Investigate and share Andover's history. Some of it is not pretty, but we should examine it so it doesn't happen again.
- The library should be an example of sustainable practices and teach people about sustainability through programming.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- The library is a buffet with a selection of books. I was a big Books on Tape person and started to use Libby. I have a bunch of books on my phone. The librarians were helpful in setting it up.
- MHL is part of the basic fabric of this town.

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

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS (4):

- Focus on getting children excited about reading and libraries (2)
- I have ideas about raising money. The library owns paintings, prints, etc., and maybe the library could make copies of them and sell them (like the children's prints that ran along the wall on the first floor).

- The library has some core values and shouldn't try to meet everyone's demands. Consider how the library can be enhanced while remembering its core value.

MARKETING (3):

- Do more targeted outreach to groups to get more feedback about the library.
- Continue to make it known what we offer. Many people don't know what MHL offers.
- Is there still a branch in Ballardvale? There used to be. This is a large community, so maybe we have to think about branches or a bookmobile or some way to reach the people who live on the periphery of town. Expand the library's presence and get out into the community. Bring the library to the people.

PROGRAMS (2):

- Offer programs for children with dyslexia and for children of all abilities.
- It would be good (and should be straightforward) to live-stream presentations in the upstairs room. It wouldn't be too expensive. Enhance accessibility.

SERVICES (2):

- The library staff is very responsive. I used a chat line that Andover had on a Sunday morning, but perhaps Andover or some other library (like in California) would team up to have 24/7 access. It could be the wave of the future.
- Offer free copies tied to your library card# (e.g., 100 pages per year or something). That tends to be how universities handle this.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:

- I don't know if people understand that the Friends of the Library finance a lot of the programs, and because of the pandemic, the book sales have stopped, so money isn't coming in.
- I hope. It comes through loud and clear how proud we are of our library and librarians. A+!