Avon Free
Public Library

Strategic and

Three Year Plan

2014-2017

Avon Free Public Library
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Adopted by the Avon Free Public Library
Board of Directors, June 17, 2014

Introduction

The roots of the Avon Free Public Library can be traced back to 1798. The first librarian, Samuel Bishop, offered the 1,750 town residents their choice of borrowing from a collection of 111 books.

The Library has since grown dramatically. Today, we greatly value our role as one of the community's leading cultural and educational institutions, and we are privileged to serve a vibrant, intellectually curious population. We are proud of our wide-ranging collections and enriching programs and are honored to provide excellent service and a place of lifelong learning for all patrons.

With the generous support of our community and patrons, in 2012 we completed a 22,000 square foot building expansion project. The new facility enabled us to expand our print and media collections; create new children and teen rooms; provide additional meeting rooms for public use; create a new gallery space for exhibits; enlarge the computer center; and expand our space for special programming.

Even with this tradition of excellence, we recognize that we can never be complacent. We need to plan for the future, keep pace with technological and cultural trends, and maintain broad relevancy to the needs of the population that we serve. Advances in technology are continually changing how people access and interact with information. Changing demographics and economics have affected the services people need from the Library, challenging us to do more with existing resources and to make targeted, smart investments.

In late 2013, the Library Board of Directors commissioned a strategic planning committee to chart a course that meets these challenges. Our focus shifts from the expansion of our physical space to broadening the community experience, developing strong partnerships, and increasing utilization of the Library's resources. The strategic planning process explored and responds to key issues facing the Avon Free Public Library today. We started by identifying our strengths and we've noted these throughout the Plan. The ultimate measure of our success will be whether we have positioned the organization to better meet the continually changing needs and interests of the Avon community, both now and in the future.

Guiding Statements
Our Vision, Mission, and Values

▶ **Vision**
- To excel as the community's link to ideas, information and resources

▶ **Mission**
- To serve as the center of enrichment for the Avon community providing free and convenient access to information, literature, culture, and the arts through a variety of programs, media, and technology

▶ **Values**
- **Personal Growth:** Promote the joy of reading and lifelong learning. Connect people with the world of ideas and information by developing and presenting programs that provide opportunities for learning and entertainment.
- **Excellence:** Deliver superior library services. Cultivate staff who are knowledgeable, passionate and engaged about the role libraries play in individual lives and the community.
- **Innovation:** Incorporate technology and emerging media in a mindful and responsive way.
- **Access for All:** Ensure free and convenient access to information and services.
- **Respect:** Maintain collections and programs that provide the community with a window to the past and a view to the future.
- **Responsibility:** Use our resources and facilities to better our town and its institutions, businesses, civic, and cultural groups. Protect the confidentiality of patron information requests, borrowings, and online site access.

Overview
of Strategic Initiatives

▶ **Collections**

1. Curate, expand, and provide easy access to collections.
2. Integrate and support emerging media.

▶ **Technology**

1. Ensure access to established and emerging technologies.
2. Provide opportunity to achieve technological literacy and explore emerging trends.
3. Equip staff with tools and training to take full advantage of technology and to transfer knowledge to the public.

▶ **Lifelong Learning**

1. Meet Avon residents' needs and interests through targeted, innovative programs.
2. Support Avon children's academic and life success by promoting early literacy and love of reading.
3. Support adult continuing education and learning.
4. Raise patron awareness of Library resources and programs through media and targeted messages.

▶ **Service and Community Space**

1. Strengthen patron satisfaction through focus on their questions, needs and preferences.
2. Leverage public spaces to incorporate new technology and support patron needs.

▶ **Partnerships**

1. Reinforce our community of readers by expanding patron connections to one another and to our collections.
2. Expand and focus our external partnerships for the collective benefit of the Avon community.
3. Strengthen our volunteer experience.

Collections

Strategies

1 Curate, expand, and provide easy access to our collections.

- ▶ Ensure collections are deep in areas of interest to patrons and in formats they desire.
- ▶ Increase ease of access
  - Organize, display and promote collection materials to encourage easy discovery.
  - Provide clear, distinctive, flexible signage.
- ▶ Improve discovery and access to online resources via Library website, catalog, and mobile devices.
  - Expand remote access for content.
  - Offer online tools to empower patrons to access and use Library collections.
  - Integrate digital and print materials in the online catalog in formats easy to identify and select.
  - Digitize and integrate local content for easy public access.

2 Integrate and support emerging media into our collections.

- ▶ Grow digital collections of e-books, audiobooks, digital magazines, and streaming audio and video.
- ▶ Advocate for equal access to digital content for libraries and library users by working with publishers, wholesalers, and library organizations.
- ▶ Create local digital content in conjunction with Library programs and projects.

Three-Year Project Plan

- ▶ **Expand downloadable and streaming content including e-books, digital magazines, audio books, and movies.**
- ▶ **Digitize Avon History Room collections and make available on the Internet through the Library website and catalog.**
- ▶ **Participate in industry advocacy groups supporting equal access to digital content for libraries.**
- ▶ **Conduct borrower surveys and focus groups and react to reader responses.**
- ▶ **Emphasize and enhance displays of new additions to collections and highlight and promote specific segments of the collection.**

Technology

Our Strengths

- An up-to-date computer network and platform ensuring all patrons have access to productive tools, internet resources, and emerging media formats
- Technology training offerings in a variety of topics and tools

Strategies

1 **Ensure patrons and staff have access to established and emerging technologies.**
- Maintain a secure and stable network of hardware and software resources.
- Provide public computers that meet essential technology needs of our patrons.
- Manage technology infrastructure and assets to maintain up-to-date technology capabilities.

2 **Provide the public with opportunities to achieve technological literacy and the ability to explore emerging trends in technology.**
- Provide opportunities to explore and gain exposure to and comfort with emerging technologies.
- Expand technology training opportunities for patrons of all ages and experience.

3 **Equip staff with the tools and training necessary to take full advantage of our technology and to transfer that knowledge to the public.**
- Serve as a trusted guide to reliable information.
- Improve patron information literacy and self sufficiency in evaluating information sources.
- Recruit technologically savvy staff for any open position.
- Encourage and support professional development and technology training of staff.

Three-Year Project Plan

- **Establish part-time Technology Support position to improve services and expand technology training programs.**
- **Prepare a formal Technology Plan.**
- **Expand support and training for emerging media formats and electronic delivery methods.**
- **Upgrade library phone and voicemail systems.**
- **Develop a new website with improved structure, navigation and visual appeal.**
- **Implement RFID technology for circulation and materials management.**
- **Budget for hardware and software updates necessary to keep pace with technology trends.**
- **Provide additional adaptive technology for users with vision, hearing or mobility disabilities.**

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Lifelong Learning

Our Strengths

- A community enrichment resource center for training, cultural programs, and civic engagement that informs, educates, trains, and entertains our patrons.
- Presentations and discussions that enhance learning in literature and the arts
- A structured, safe after school environment for students that provides opportunity for social, educational and artistic pursuits
- Storytime programs supporting *Every Child Ready to Read* parent education, introducing and teaching early literacy development of children

Strategies

1 **Meet Avon residents' needs and interests through targeted, innovative programs.**
- ▶ Focus program content for greatest impact.
  - • Cultivate community love of literature and the arts by engaging patrons with our collections through community reads, story hours, book clubs, concerts, films, and author talks.
  - • Keep programs topical and relevant by responding to the cultural and intellectual interests of Avon residents.
  - • Feature the expertise and passions of Avon residents, businesses, and community members in our Gallery area.
  - • Focus on improving digital literacy for Avon residents.
- ▶ Deliver programs in ways that maximize limited programming resources.
  - • Leverage displays of library resources both in the Library itself and throughout the community.
  - • Pursue theme-based programs or series of related programs.
  - • Partner with other libraries to develop and share programs.
  - • Coordinate programs with other community partners including schools, libraries, institutions, associations, and businesses.
  - • Learn about patron program preferences through questionnaires, surveys, and patron discussions.

2 **Support Avon children's academic and life success by promoting early literacy and love of reading.**
- ▶ Build on established programs to expand early childhood literacy and craft programs.
- ▶ Expand after school support for students, coordinating programs with school leaders to serve as extension of the school community.

3 **Support Avon adults' continuing education and learning.**
- ▶ Offer an increased number of technology classes, both instructor led and online, on a wide variety of topics.
- ▶ Expand programming on the arts, including literature, theater, fine arts and music.
- ▶ Continue to create thematic tie-ins with local groups who serve similar missions.
- ▶ Increase support to underserved populations including new immigrants and those where English is a second language.

Lifelong Learning (continued)

Strategies (continued)

4 **Raise Avon patrons' awareness of Library resources and programs through media and targeted messages**
- Build segmented strategies and tools to connect with all patrons.
  - Expand use of social media to reach tech-savvy target audiences.
  - Employ non-technical media for engaging low-tech oriented patrons.
  - Ensure that newcomers to Avon are aware of Library and its offerings.
- Ensure that the Avon community is aware of Library programs and services.
  - Build a strong library brand.
  - Use a variety of messaging channels to reach a wide audience.

Three-Year Project Plan

- **Explore programming for underserved groups, such as home-schooled children, special needs families and new immigrants.**
- **Leverage technology to take full advantage of online learning and collaboration opportunities.**
- **Offer programs and classes at a variety of times of day and week to reach the broadest possible audience.**
- **Develop and implement public relations and outreach programs to promote awareness and participation in Library programs and resources.**

Service and Community Space

Strategies

1 **Strengthen patron satisfaction through focus on their questions, needs and preferences**
- ▶ Staff the Library to ensure patron needs are addressed as fully and quickly as possible, placing staff where they are conveniently available to patrons.
- ▶ Foster a Library culture focused on learning, continuous improvement, and innovation adaptable to the community's evolving preferences.
- ▶ Empower patron independence by providing more self-directed choices and opportunities for self-service.

2 **Leverage public spaces to incorporate new technology and support how people want to use the Library.**
- ▶ Use Library spaces to accommodate a broad range of needs.
- ▶ Serve as a gathering and meeting space for Avon residents.

Three-Year Project Plan
- ▶ Recruit and develop staff with skills required to support emerging electronic media and formats, and the evolving role of the Library as a provider of programs.
- ▶ Increase hours that the Library is open to the public.
- ▶ Hire an additional part-time reference librarian to focus on direct patron service.

Partnerships

Our Strengths

- Avon community-based collaborations with partners bringing people together for social and educational interactions.

- Established relationships with Avon town and community institutions and businesses.

- Interaction with a network of professional librarians via Library Connection consortium.

- A large pool of dedicated, talented volunteers eager to help the Library.

Strategies

1 **Reinforce our community of readers by expanding patron connections to one another and to our collections.**
- ▶ Continue bringing people together around literature, information, and idea exchanges, leveraging our collections, programs, and partnerships.
- ▶ Expand opportunities for patrons to share reviews and comments on our collections, and then collect and circulate patron-generated content.
- ▶ Capture history as it happens by collecting content of local significance and integrating it into our collections.
- ▶ Digitize content to make collections and cultural records of Avon accessible on our website.

2 **Expand and focus external partnerships for the collective benefit of the Avon community.**
- ▶ Expand our relationships with government, community-based, and private sector partners.
- ▶ Magnify our impact by coordinating Library efforts, increasing information sharing and coordinating services with our partners.
- ▶ Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our efforts to meet emerging needs or gaps in services.
- ▶ Leverage volunteers to enhance the library's personal outreach.

3 **Strengthen our volunteer experience.**
- ▶ Develop and maintain a volunteer management plan, including job descriptions, application process, and expectations.
- ▶ Create a volunteer orientation, including overview of library operations, safety and security procedures.
- ▶ Maintain our close working relationship with the Friends of the Avon Library.

Three-Year Project Plan
- ▶ **Outreach to community and home daycares and nursery schools.**
- ▶ **Expand cooperative programming with Avon Public Schools.**
- ▶ **Participate in more community events to build partnerships with local private and non-profit groups to promote common goals.**
- ▶ **Develop and maintain online connections via social media to promote Library services.**

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Keys to success

- **Critical Success Factors**
  - Staff and volunteers who are knowledgeable and committed to the Library vision, mission, and values
  - Annual financial support from the Town of Avon supplemented by additional longer term funding strategies to support the Library's goals and priorities
  - Ongoing assessment of cultural and technological trends and constituent priorities
  - Effective relationships built on shared goals with external partners

- **Measures of Success**
  - Patron satisfaction
  - Engagement at the Library (number of cardholders, program attendance, door count, materials circulation)
  - Technology usage (computer use, wifi)
  - Access to electronic info (e-book circulation, database queries, website visits)
  - Recognition of our success (awards, honors, and traditional media coverage)
  - Number of hours the Library is open to the public

Committee Members

Board of Directors

- Mary Suter   President
- Carin Salonia   Vice President
- Tom Iezzi   Treasurer
- Jennifer Shufro   Secretary
- Peter Anderson
- Elizabeth Bougere
- Anne Fitzgerald
- Eric Gauvin
- Thirza Hyatt
- Jerry O'Brien
- Paula Schwartz
- Linda Jordano   Friends of Avon Library

Strategic Planning Committee

- Glenn Grube   Director, Avon Free Public Library
- Elizabeth Bougere   Board Member
- Anne Fitzgerald   Board Member
- Carin Salonia   Board Member
- Paula Schwartz   Board Member
- Roy Schwartz   Consultant

Appendix - Introduction

Strategic planning is the process of organizing and prioritizing resources in such a way as to best achieve a specific outcome. The outcome aimed for in this plan is to provide convenient access to excellent programs, quality services, and relevant collections for the Avon community and all users of the Avon Free Public Library. While the plan focused on our current strengths and future direction, this appendix looks at the specific standards, both objective and subjective, by which we can measure progress toward our goal.

Current library metrics are largely objective. How many items we loan, how many people visit our library, and how long they spend using our computers are the traditional ways in which a library would be evaluated. These are valuable measures of how the library is being used, but not as helpful at showing how that usage benefits the user. During the course of this plan we will transition to using more outcome based measurements. Outcome based metrics will gauge not just use, but the value and impact that the library provides to users.

This change will come through increased use of surveys to gather data on the specific results of individual programs or services as well as the overall library experience. Survey results will be combined with anecdotal evidence and objective statistics to try to draw a picture of the library's progress as a whole. While all our strategic initiatives will benefit from outcome analysis, it will be particularly helpful in the areas of lifelong learning and partnerships.
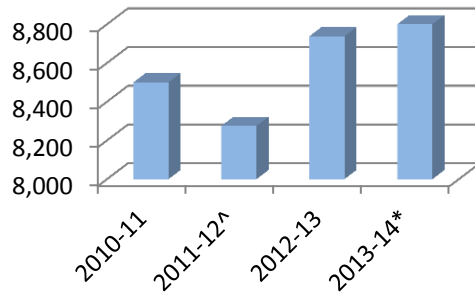
The following pages show historical and projected usage statistics under the headings of *Library Engagement* and *Technology Use & Access to Electronic Information*. The *Library Engagement* section relates largely to how people interact physically with the library: visiting the building, borrowing materials, and attending programs. The section on *Technology Use & Access to Electronic Information* includes both in person activities, such as using a library computer, as well as off-site access including remote database searches and e-content downloads. Retrospective comparisons were limited by access to historical data in some categories. Also note that the Library was undergoing renovations from December 2010 through March of 2012, including 9 weeks where the building was closed during fiscal year 2011-12. Statistical measures were understandably lower during this period.

During the three year course of this plan, the Library Director will report quarterly to the Board of Directors and the Town Manager on progress made in the specific strategic initiatives identified in the plan. The charts and graphs will be updated and augmented annually and published in this appendix, which will be available on the Library's website.
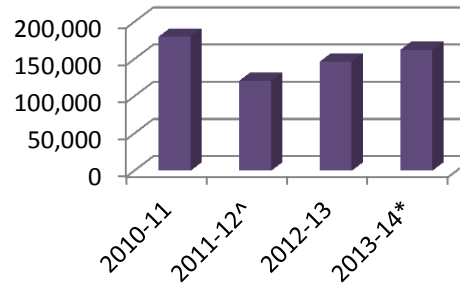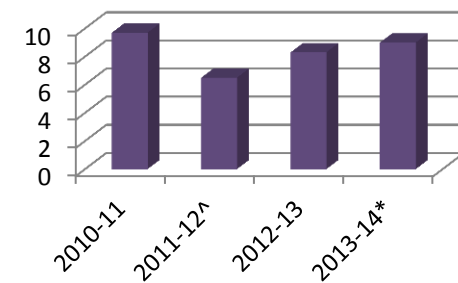
Appendix − Library Engagement

Cardholders

Year	Cardholders
2010-11	
2011-12^	
2012-13	
2013-14*	

Y-axis: 8,000 / 8,200 / 8,400 / 8,600 / 8,800

Library visits

Y-axis: 0 / 50,000 / 100,000 / 150,000 / 200,000

X-axis: 2010-11, 2011-12^, 2012-13, 2013-14*

Visits per capita

Y-axis: 0 / 2 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 10

X-axis: 2010-11, 2011-12^, 2012-13, 2013-14*

The number of registered cardholders is approximately 50% of Avon residents. While those without a card can take advantage of some library services, cardholders can borrow materials, download e-books and other content, and access our subscription services remotely. Most cardholders are on our email list and receive periodic updates about Library programs and services.

Library visits and visits per capita indicate use of the physical library -- to borrow materials, ask a question, attend a program, or use our facilities. While neither measure has rebounded to our pre-renovation numbers, they indicate the changing way users access the library, with many choosing to download e-books, place holds and renew materials remotely over the internet instead of in person. Our visits per capita still exceed the state average of 6.3 for public libraries in 2012-13.
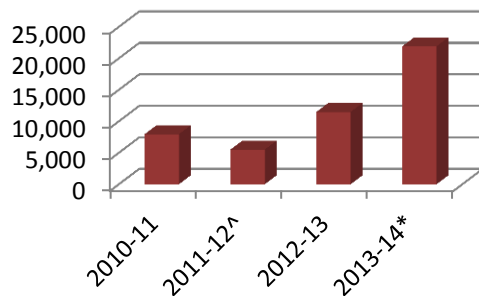
^Library renovation project affected usage during 2011-12   *2013-14 estimates based on three quarters of data

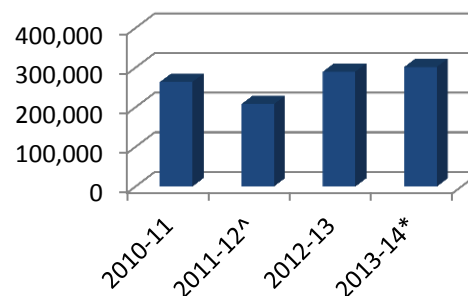# Appendix – Library Engagement (Continued)

Program attendance
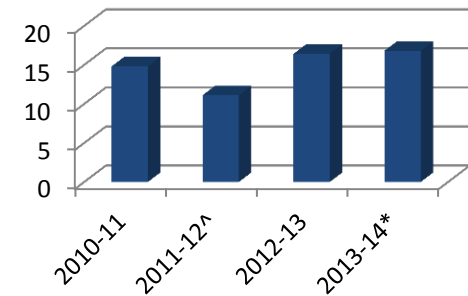

Total Circulation

Loans per capita

Quality programming for adults, children and teens has been our focus for the past year and it shows! Program attendance has almost tripled since 2010-11. Programs get people into the Library and provide the opportunity to learn about other library services.

Total circulation numbers include both physical materials borrowed from the library as well as e-books, e-audio and digital magazines downloaded to patrons' devices. While the way people read is changing, their appetite for content is not diminishing. Avon's per capita circulation of 16.4 for 2012-13 was almost double the state average of 8.6 for the same time period.

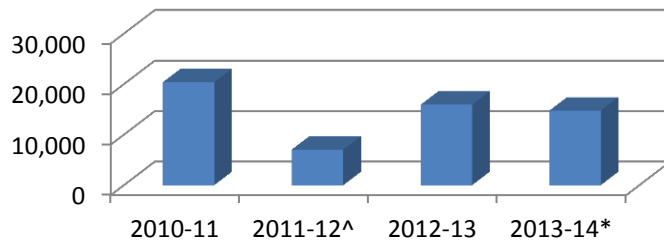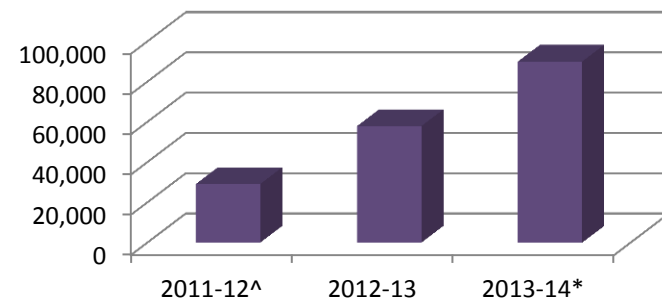^Library renovation project affected usage during 2011-12   *2013-14 estimates based on three quarters of data

Computer use (number of logins)

Database searches

Computer use is still a large portion of user activity in the Library, but the number of logins to our computers is dropping. Drastic increases in the number of users bringing their own laptop, tablet or other device indicate a change from using the Library's computers to using the Library's internet connection. We average over 1,000 logins to our wireless network each month, and going forward will be tracking that number as well as logins to our desktop computers.

Avon Library cardholders have access to over 20 subscription databases on topics such as business & finance, consumer information, current issues, geography & travel, history & genealogy, jobs & career, language learning, literary criticism, and science & technology. Searches executed from within the library and remotely via the internet are tracked and subscriptions are adjusted annually based on use.
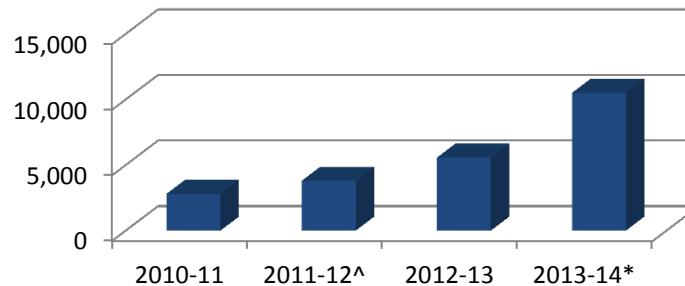
^Library renovation project affected usage during 2011-12

*2013-14 estimates based on three quarters of data

Appendix – Technology Use & Access to Electronic Information (Continued)

E-book/ audio/ magazine downloads

Over 10,000 books are available for download in e-book and e-audio format along with dozens of magazine titles. Despite publisher imposed limitations on purchasing and loaning e-content, loans have increased from less than 1% of our total circulation in 2010-11 to over 3% for 2013-14. We expect this number to continue to grow at a rapid pace over the next several years, and will adjust collection budgets accordingly.

^Library renovation project affected usage during 2011-12   *2013-14 estimates based on three quarters of data