

Peabody Institute Library

Long Range Plan FY20-24



Supporting Your Story

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Vision

Supporting Your Story

Values

Service

Community

Stories

Lifelong Learning

Inclusivity

Mission

The Peabody Institute Library provides innovative services, resources, programs, and spaces to meet the educational, informational, cultural and creative needs of the community while offering opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

Methodology

The Peabody Institute Library began the Long Range Planning process in May of 2018. As part of the process, the library conducted thirteen focus groups with staff, stakeholders, community partners and library patrons. One focus group was for library Department Heads and was facilitated by Giselle Stevens of the Newburyport Public Library. Additional focus groups were facilitated by the Library Director or Department Heads. One focus group took place off-site at the Torigian Community Life Center. At least one focus group was held at each library location and all were on different days and times. An additional teen-specific focus group took place at the Main Library.

In each focus group, participants brainstormed answers to the following questions:

- Think of the library of the future. If money were no object, describe your ideal library system.
- Based on your knowledge of the Peabody library and its current services, what do you think the library does especially well?
- What are our community's greatest needs? How can the library help address these needs?
- What improvements to the library would you like to see in the next five years?
- What services and programs do you see the library needing to focus on for the next five years?

General public opinion was solicited using two short survey forms from June-mid-August of 2018. One form was available for users and one for non-users. The surveys were distributed at the three libraries, City Hall, and the Torigian Community Life Center. The public could also take the survey online and participation was promoted through the library and City websites and Facebook pages, and through the library's programming e-newsletter. 363 user surveys and 26 non-user surveys were received and tallied.

The Library Director, Assistant Director and Department Heads reviewed focus group and survey responses and additional input from staff regarding the library's core values. Using this data, Administrators and Department Heads then identified the library's values, wrote the library's vision statement and identified the goals and objectives presented in this long-range plan document.

Library Profile

The Peabody Institute Library is the public library for the City of Peabody, Massachusetts. It was established in 1852 through the vision and generosity of George Peabody, for whom the city was named.

An elected board of twelve library trustees is responsible for setting policy and overall administration of the Peabody Institute Library. The Board of the Peabody Institute Library meets monthly.

The Peabody Institute Library has a main location and two branch libraries that provide service to the Peabody community. The library's collection provides materials in many formats: books and e-books, magazines and e-magazines, audio books (CDs and e-audio), music (CD and downloadable) and movies, documentaries and TV shows (DVDs and downloadable) and online databases. The current collection totals approximately 166,000 items. In 2014, the library's branches, children's department and teen department converted their nonfiction collections to a new organization scheme that closely mirrors the one used in bookstores. This change has made these smaller nonfiction collections more browsable and easier for patrons to navigate. Circulation is approximately 195,000 items per year from its 33,020 registered borrowers. Approximately 650 people sign up for Internet access on a typical week and the library provides almost 50,000 wireless sessions to users annually. On any given day, the library averages about 800 visitors among the three buildings.

Community meeting rooms are available in all library locations for city and local non-profit group use. The community room at the West Branch Library is also used as an early voting polling location for national or statewide elections.

The library sponsors a wide array of programs which include book discussion groups; story hours; craft activities; fine arts programs for children; after school events; lectures and performances; art exhibits; professional storytellers and entertainers for children. From July 2017-June 2018, the library ran 871 adult programs with an attendance of 6,252; 445 teen programs with an attendance of 6,747; and 425 children's programs with an attendance of 6,410. For the past five years, the library has coordinated volunteer run English Conversation Circles to assist residents with their English speaking skills. In 2014, the library opened a 1,500 square foot makerspace called the Creativity Lab, which offers tools and instruction in digital and physical creation, including 3D printing, sewing, laser cutting, sound recording, coding and graphic design.

The Peabody Institute Library houses numerous objects of historical and artistic significance. These include a gold-framed miniature enamel portrait of Queen Victoria, and a US Congressional Medal presented to George Peabody for his work in support of public education. The Library also possesses a set of world-

renowned *Birds of America* elephant folios of John James Audubon and other artifacts of local or national historical interest.

Library staff participates in civic organizations and initiatives including the Rotary Club of Peabody, Peabody Area Chamber of Commerce, Peabody Cultural Collaborative, the Peabody Homelessness Task Force, Peabody Main Streets, the North Shore Adult Education Partnership, the Peabody Education Foundation, and a variety of additional committees. The library collaborates with a wide array of governmental, business and non-profit groups to serve the needs of the community. These partners include Citizens Inn, Northeast Arc, NSCAP, the Peabody Public Schools, Coordinated Family and Child Engagement and others. These valuable partnerships bring new ideas, resources and audiences to the library.

The Peabody Institute Library is fortunate to have a committed Friends group that raises approximately \$15,000 per year to support library programs and services. In 2007, the Trustees established the Peabody Institute Library Foundation, Inc. to support major initiatives and encourage planned giving and larger gifts to the Peabody Institute Library. The Foundation assists in purchasing furniture, restoring art, and supporting large-scale programming such as literary lectures and concerts. Both organizations will continue to be the major source of programming funds.

Assessment of User Needs

Results of community focus groups and surveys show that community members generally approve of the service, collections and programs currently offered by the library. 95% of survey respondents rate overall library service as excellent or good. Still, they have clear ideas for how the library can continue to expand and adapt its services to meet the ever-changing needs and aspirations of the community.

Focus groups and surveys identified the library's strengths as being: staff, programs, collections and culture. The most often cited strength of the library in both focus groups and surveys was library staff. 94% of those surveyed rated customer service at the library as excellent or good. Staff were described as "dedicated," "knowledgeable," "friendly," "well-educated," "diverse" and "welcoming."

On a related note, focus group respondents spoke at length about the culture of the Peabody Institute Library. They describe the library as "progressive" and "always improving." They approve of the library's continual efforts to balance its history and long tradition in the community with a spirit of innovation. They see the library as a "unifying institution" within the community that has a "good vibe" and is a "judgement free zone." Community members place a premium on the library as a welcoming space for all.

88% of survey respondents rated the library's collections as excellent or good. Community members clearly still value the traditional role the library plays in connecting them to books and content. Surveys and focus groups frequently expressed appreciation for the efficiency of resource sharing and the content available through the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE) and for digital content. They particularly like the model offered by Hoopla, where digital content is always available.

Another area in which community members felt the library excels is in programming. The overall impression is that library programs are "broad based." Many focus group participants and survey respondents pointed out programs they especially enjoy including concerts, technology classes, literature lectures, the library's comic book convention, the summer food program, conversation circles and more. There is a clear acknowledgement that the library's programs are an important way in which the library fulfills its mission to facilitate lifelong learning.

When asked about the needs of the community at large, focus group participants gave answers that generally fell into one of four categories: social services, education, youth and transportation. They see a clear role for the library in each area of concern, especially given the library's existing services and programs.

Community members recognize and express concern over a number of challenging social issues, including poverty, affordable housing, substance abuse, unemployment, and homelessness. They also see a need for more services for individuals facing these issues, as well as a need for more support for immigrants. In terms of education, community members wish to see more career training available and programming that supports literacy for all ages. There was also a broad-based desire for classes devoted to local history and more opportunity to discover and learn about the local treasures owned by the library. Perhaps most striking was the often-repeated belief that there is a lack of opportunities for individuals to learn and engage civically in the community. Regarding youth, community members see a need for a youth center, more affordable childcare, including afterschool and summer programs. They also see a need for additional services for youth with special needs. Transportation barriers were another common concern. Focus group participants mentioned seniors, youth and low-income individuals as those most likely to have trouble accessing community services and resources (including the library) due to transportation problems.

In addition to the desire for the library to expand its already active role in addressing community needs and to focus on its literacy and lifelong learning based mission, focus group participants and survey respondents wish to see improvements in the library's physical space and more outreach. The most pressing spatial need is expanded space for children at the Main Library. This includes more and more welcoming space for collections, technology, and service, interactive learning and programming. Additional space needs include more flexible and modular configurations, balancing quiet and active spaces, more comfortable seating for reading, better study areas, and accessibility improvements to all three buildings. Both branch libraries have additional functional and aesthetic needs to keep those buildings comfortable and desirable places to visit. Finally, building security upgrades need to be addressed, particularly for the Main Library.

A common refrain even amongst focus group participants, many of whom are library "power users" is that they do not know all that the library has to offer. Among the small number of non-users who responded to the survey, the number one reason they do not use the library is that they receive little information about the library's offerings. When taken in conjunction with the emphasis placed in focus groups and surveys on providing service to those who cannot physically access the library, this points to a community need for library services to expand beyond the physical walls of the three library locations.

Goals and Objectives

1. The Peabody Institute Library's services, collections and programs will celebrate reading and literacy.

- a. The library will develop and implement strategies to promote the personal, wellness and educational benefits of reading for all.
- b. The library will enable community members from infants to adults to set and meet individual literacy and reading goals.
- c. Library staff will evaluate existing collections to ensure that they are connecting community members with materials that reflect community reading interests and diverse perspectives.
- d. The library will offer activities that extend the reading experience and create communities of readers.

2. The Peabody Institute Library will provide opportunities for learning.

- a. Library programs and collections will engage community members who have different learning styles and interests.
- b. The library will design community spaces that facilitate and engage individuals and groups in learning experiences.
- c. The library will provide community members with access and opportunities to discover and explore local history and locally owned art and artifacts.
- d. The library will curate opportunities and resources for community members to express creativity as well as create and share content.

3. The Peabody Institute Library's services, collections, spaces and programs will serve, reflect and celebrate the diversity of the community.

- a. Library staff will increase efforts to serve community members who do not currently use the library.

- b. Library spaces, collections and services will be accessible, safe and welcoming to all people.
- c. Library programs and collections will celebrate diversity and promote cultural awareness.
- d. Library programs, collections and services will meet the needs of immigrants and English language learners.

4. The Peabody Institute Library will build strong communities.

- a. The library will develop new opportunities for community members to find information about local resources and services.
- b. Library programs and collections will provide resources and opportunities for community members to be civically engaged and participate in activities that benefit the community.
- c. Library staff will work collaboratively with community partners to enrich program offerings and increase the visibility, credibility and reach of the library's efforts.
- d. Library services, programs and collections will be available beyond the walls of the library in order to reach as many people as possible.

5. Library staff will have the training, support and resources they need to fulfill the library's goals and provide exceptional service to the community.

- a. Library administration will hire staff with the skills and passion necessary to provide the highest level of public service.
- b. Library staff will have access to training and continuing education that allows them to meet the lifelong learning needs of all community members.
- c. Library staff will be fully trained and aware of developments in technology needed to provide excellent public service.
- d. Library staff will be trained and comfortable providing appropriate levels of reference and reader's advisory services to the public.

Service Responses

To assist public libraries with defining and achieving standards of excellence, the Public Library Association has identified eighteen service responses that can be adapted by local libraries to fit the needs of their communities. In order to fulfill its vision and mission, live out its values and achieve the above-mentioned goals and objectives over the next five years, the Peabody Institute Library will prioritize the following service responses.

Stimulate Imaginations: Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Know Your Community: Community Resources and Services

Residents will have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.

Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with other or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Express Creativity: Create and Share Content

Residents will have the services and support they need to express themselves by creating original print, video, audio, or visual content in a real-world or online environment.

Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness

Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

Create Young Readers: Early Literacy

Children from birth to five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write and listen.

Be an informed Citizen: Local, National and World Affairs

Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state and national levels and to fully participate in community decision making.

Welcome to the United States: Services for New Immigrants

New immigrants and refugees will have information on citizenship, English Language Learning, employment, public schooling, health and safety, available social services, and any other topics that they need to participate successfully in American life.

Learn to Read and Write: Adult, Teen and Family Literacy

Adults and teens will have the support they need to improve their literacy skills in order to meet their personal goals and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, citizens and workers.

Discover Your Roots: Genealogy and Local History

Residents and visitors will have the resources they need to connect the past with the present through their family histories and to understand the history and traditions of the community.

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees, September 12, 2018.

