

Richmond Free Library 2012–2017 Strategic Plan



Richmond, VT
September 6, 2012

Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan—What is it? Why was it needed? How was it developed?

The product of a 13-month, participatory, community-wide, information-gathering process, this 2012–2017 Strategic Plan is a roadmap (i) for the RFL Board of Trustees to develop relevant policy and (ii) for the library staff to plan and carry out on-going and new library operations.

A committee of library trustees, engaged patrons, and staff agreed on the need to articulate a comprehensive framework that both encompasses the library’s current services and provides future direction for rapidly evolving changes in accessing and using information.

In brief, the Strategic Plan comprises four major goals:

1. Space—easy access and relevance of all spaces—both physical and virtual.
2. Recreational resources—easy access for patrons of all ages in a variety of formats.
3. Youth literacy—literary development for children from birth through high school.
4. Lifelong learning—easy access on line.

Overview

A vibrant community like Richmond, Vermont deserves a great library, but what defines a great library in the 21st century is a shifting concept. While people still want books and a place to gather, libraries are in an age of transformation. Changes in how people access and use information, interact with one another, and in the tools and capabilities needed to operate effectively in today's society require an evolving approach to the services and resources that the Library provides. The Richmond Free Library's 2012–2017 Strategic Plan has been developed to guide the Library over the next five years as it strives to honor this change while also preserving those traditional services and qualities that the Richmond and Bolton communities appreciate.

This Strategic Plan for RFL is the outcome of a 13-month planning process designed to capture a wide range of community input and prioritize which Richmond Free Library services would receive primary focus in the immediate future.

Four service goals rose to the top and these make up the core of the new Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: RFL will provide comfortable and welcoming spaces that are easy to navigate and conducive to community interactions.

Goal 2: RFL patrons of all ages will have access to recreational resources in a variety of formats.

Goal 3: Youth, from birth through high school, will have access to a range of literacy building opportunities.

Goal 4: RFL patrons will have easy access to lifelong learning online.

These goals, discussed in more detail below, represent a strategic framework for RFL, providing the Library with a clear, realistic direction and designed to build on its strengths. Moving forward, the Plan will be used to guide the Board of Trustees in developing library policy and by the Library Staff to inform their planning and work activities.

The RFL Board of Trustees would like to thank the committee members who helped organize the process and all of the townspeople who shared their thoughts on how to keep the Library strong and relevant into the future.

More information about the mechanics of the planning process can be found in the Addendum.

The Role of Libraries

By Rebecca Mueller, Library Director

Public libraries were originally formed to make information available to all citizens, a core democratic ideal. The early libraries housed books, newspapers, and limited reference materials. At first, no materials were loaned, but individuals could read materials on site. The goal of libraries was to improve literacy and thus advance each person's knowledge for their self-improvement and for opportunities of advancement. It is believed that increasing the knowledge of our citizens is good for them, good for our community, and good for our country. Just as roads and highways were built to facilitate transportation and commerce, so libraries were built to facilitate the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural growth of citizens in the community.

The scope of libraries' services and the avenues these services have taken have expanded considerably since their inception. Libraries now provide free services to all ages, from babies to seniors. Libraries offer preschool story times to encourage early literacy, quiet study and work areas for students and professionals, and book clubs to encourage appreciation of literature in adults. While books and journals are still the mainstay of libraries, content is now available via DVDs, music CDs, audio books, online encyclopedias, online classes, and eBooks. Nearly as important as the collection and programs, for many communities like Richmond and Bolton, the library is the only place that provides free internet and computer access. Individuals use computers to file taxes, search for jobs, connect with their grandchildren, apply for social welfare benefits, view a map, or write a resume. In addition to electronic content, libraries offer programs such as their space allows including concerts, programs, lectures, movement classes, and so on. Most of all, libraries provide a safe space for meeting other community members or enjoying some quiet time on one's own.

With this 2012–2017 Richmond Free Library Strategic Plan, Richmond focuses on the future of our own library, while embracing the historical roles that libraries have played in an open society and in small town life.

Mission Statement

The Richmond Free Library Trustees have noted the changes that have taken place in libraries through the years and have recently revised the mission statement of the library:

The Richmond Free Library provides resources and experiences that inspire, inform, entertain, and connect members of the community throughout their lives.

The mission statement is the beacon that guides the services of the library and the long range plan incorporates goals, objectives, and activities that have been identified to be of greatest importance to the community as it relates to the library mission.

RFL Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Goal 1: RFL will provide comfortable and welcoming spaces that are easy to navigate and conducive to community interactions.

A: Physical spaces

Objective 1: To increase activity in underutilized library spaces by 15% by 2017.

Activities

1. Categorize library spaces, type of use, and level of use in each area of the library.
2. Staff and Trustees work with space planner to develop better use for existing library spaces. Seek patron input and use survey results.
3. Trustees and Friends of Library work to bring in resources for space renovations and upgrades.
4. New space uses are promoted to patrons/community.
5. All publicly visible library spaces are organized and tidy.
6. Library furnishings are comfortable and inviting for a range of age groups.

Objective 2: A plan will be developed by the Trustees to maximize the Community Room as a town resource.

Activities

1. RFL Trustees will develop criteria to prioritize use of Community Room space.
2. Set a Community Room fee structure.
3. Update scheduling system for the Community Room.
4. Branding and marketing of Community Room

B: Virtual spaces

Objective 1: Use of online library resources increases by 30% over the next five years.

Objective 2: Library patrons will increase utilization of their KOHA accounts by 5% each year.

Activities:

1. Update website
2. Continue to promote online resources via Facebook, Times Ink!, RFL website, and sandwich board, etc.
3. Offer patrons workshops to educate them regarding online resources.
4. Offer patrons tutorial brochures regarding online resources
5. Offer rotating examples of positive outcomes when using online resources.

Goal 2: RFL patrons of all ages will have access to recreational resources in a variety of formats.

Objective 1: Use of the library's recreational resources will increase by 20% by 2017.

Activities:

1. Library Director and staff will complete an inventory analysis of physical materials and assess strengths and weaknesses of the collection and services by June 30th 2013.
2. Friends of the Library will continue to be an active volunteer organization raising library funds and creating community awareness of library services.
3. RFL will offer:
 - Recreational reading in all formats (print, audio, digital).
 - A variety of visual and aural media.
 - Educational opportunities such as classes, lectures, and workshops.
 - Artistic experiences such as concerts, movement classes, exhibits.
4. RFL will pursue collaboration opportunities for providing recreational resources.
5. Encourage partners and volunteers to offer programming.

Goal 3: Youth from birth through high school will have access to a range of literacy building opportunities.

A. Birth to pre-school: Young children and their caregivers will have resources and programs to support early literacy skills needed to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Objective 1: Track results of pre-school outreach and new baby teas.

Objective 2: Attendance at story times and other programs will increase by 20% by 2017.

Objective 3: Circulation of early childhood materials will increase by 20%.

Activities:

1. Continue to provide comprehensive collections of books, magazines, and other media formats for birth through age five.
2. Continue to provide infant, toddler, and preschool story times throughout the year.

B. Ages 6–13: Children will have resources and programs to support literacy skills and provide opportunities for socialization and recreation.

Objective 1: By 2017, the number of children with library cards will increase by 20%.

Objective 2: RFL will offer a minimum of one activity a month geared towards latency aged youth.

Activities:

1. Continue to provide comprehensive collections of books, magazines, and media for ages five and up.
2. Continue providing summer activities and reading programs.
3. Provide regularly scheduled out-of-school-time programs for children and teens. Build tie-in to existing afterschool programs.
4. Actively promote online resources for kids such as Mango Languages, ListenUp Vermont, and Vermont Online Library.
5. Offer some form of materials access to children unable to reach the library during the summer months with or without online access.

C. Teens: Teens will have access to safe and constructive environments with diverse programming and collections that promote literacy, creativity, and encourage teens to view the library as a welcoming place they will continue to use as they grow into adults.

Objective 1: By 2017, circulation of Young Adult materials will have increased 30%.

Objective 2: By 2017, RFL will host a minimum of one young adult activity/event a month.

Objective 3: By 2017, there will be a comfortable seating area for young adults.

Objective 4: RFL will have a Teen Advisory Group.

Objective 5: RFL will provide life skills opportunities for youth.

Activities:

1. Provide comprehensive collections of books, audio-books, graphic novels, magazines, and media for teens.
2. Offer teen specific programs such as gaming, crafts, and movies that lead to use of the library's resources and collections.
3. Collaborate to provide out-of-school-time reading programs, reading clubs, and incentives that challenge and encourage teens to read during the summer.
4. Offer volunteer opportunities for teens.
5. Partner with teen serving organizations such as the R.A.T.C's Nest by offering location and services.
6. Organize out-of-school learning opportunities for teens such as: hunter education, driver's education, financial planning, etc.

Goal 4: RFL patrons will have easy access to lifelong learning online.

Objective 1: RFL will provide a minimum of three sources of technology access for patrons by 2017, including but not limited to: library desk tops, online access, portable devices, etc.

Objective 2: 100% of library staff members are able to guide patrons with RFL's online resources.

Objective 3: During library hours there will be at least one staff person available to assist patrons with technology resources and online services.

Objective 4: Enrollment in online services will increase 5% each year.

Activities:

1. Provide tutorial brochures in each online resource.
2. Provide orientation evenings in these resources.
3. Staff members receive necessary training and incentives.
4. Collaborate with organizations that offer technical skill building.



Addendum: The Planning Process

Our thanks to the Richmond Free Library 2012–2017 Strategic Planning Committee:

- Mark Andrews
- Patty Bliss
- Scott Cole
- Sherry Daniels
- Wendy DeForest
- Kristen Hayden-West
- Joan Lajoie
- Rebecca Mueller
- Cammy Richelli
- Carol Shallow
- Dave Sobel
- Polly Sobel
- Karen Tufano
- Karen Yaggy

Special Appreciation to Christine Friese, Vermont Assistant State Librarian and Strategic Planning Advisor.

Planning Activities:

1. Richmond Free Library Board of Trustees begins planning for the strategic planning process using the Public Library Association’s “The New Planning for Results” as a guide.
2. A Planning Committee is formed with a goal towards diversity.
3. Two community forums are organized for January and February 2012 to solicit citizen input on the future of RFL. Christine Friese moderates.
4. Survey is developed and passed out at Town Meeting Day and in the Library.
5. Staff meeting is held to solicit their input.
6. Committee members, Trustees, and Staff are invited to choose priority Service Responses on the basis of the range of community input.
7. Plan is written in Summer 2012.
8. Plan is approved by Board of Trustees in September 2012.

RFL Strategic Plan Input Summary – June 2012

Below is a summation of the community input process for the strategic plan.

Services people use or might use in order of popularity:

- Borrowing fiction and non-fiction books
- Attending a meeting
- Music CD's, DVD's, and audio books
- Magazines
- Getting information/doing research
- Audio book downloads
- eBook downloads
- Children's area
- Young Adult area
- Attending a class
- Online research through Vermont Online Library
- Finding a quiet place to work
- Using my RFL card at other libraries
- Wifi spot
- Copier and fax
- Computer workstations
- Attending a class
- Online classes
- Using music practice rooms
- Meeting friends/business associates

Space:

- Space is generally comfortable and welcoming
- People want more comfortable seating.
- People want a space to sit and relax, perhaps with friends.
- Entry way is often jumbled – not inviting.
- Should overall use of library's interior space be rethought? Think outside the box.
- What about use of mezzanine? Practice rooms get little use. Use it as sitting area? Young adult section?
- Community Room is important, unique resource. Could Community Room be reconfigured for better use?

Who is being served/needs:

- More services for youth. Doing OK for pre-schoolers, lose the older kids. How to get them to be regular library patrons?
- Youth services year round.
- More services for seniors, especially technology support.
- Encourage/inform Bolton residents about the library and its services.
- Serving people who can't get to the library building.

Technology and computers:

- RFL is the only place in town with public access to computers and technology. Important that we support that service for the community.
- Links on library website to other services offered in town and community.
- Survey showed that many people were not familiar with RFL's online services and would be interested in knowing more.
- Workshops and introductory sessions to show patrons technology that is available.
- Steady technology upgrades are important. Consider e-books and other technology advances.
- Need for patron tech support is high as libraries become more technical.

Programming:

- Survey shows that people appreciate existing services.
- More art programs/hands-on activities for adults and kids.
- Technology workshops, especially regarding RFL services.
- Engaging older kids and teens. Out of school time opportunities coordinated or hosted by library?
- Outside groups ensure that Community Room offers a range of services. Do some users dominate the space?

Staff:

- Lots of compliments for library staff. People appreciate their willingness to help and general friendly atmosphere.
- Do we need someone to focus on programming community activities/events?
- Do we make the best use of volunteer staff?

Marketing/communicating to the community:

- Continue to use traditional forms such as sign board, Times Ink!, plus Front Porch Forum, Facebook, RFL events calendar.
- Partner with other groups, technology sources to provide community outreach.