

## Library Strategic Plan

2019-2024

Avon Public Library

[www.avon-ma.gov/avon-public-library](http://www.avon-ma.gov/avon-public-library)

### Message from the Library Director

Libraries are transformative places. When you come into our library you should feel welcome, comfortable, engaged and empowered. The Library should reflect the community that we serve – the Town of Avon.

The Avon Public Library wants to make sure that we continue to be a destination and a core community institution as we move forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To help us identify what the community wants and needs, we launched this strategic planning effort in the fall of 2018. With the help of the Strategic Planning Committee, and led through the SOAR experience, by Michelle Eberle, the community talked about the world, the town and how the Library can make a difference to help us ensure that the library and the community move forward together.

The following document outlines the new direction for the Avon Public Library for the next five years. This plan, based on the ALA's SOAR model will be an ongoing process, allowing us to engage the community in conversations about what the library does and what the community needs. We will review our plan and our direction regularly, as we move forward.

I would like to thank the library staff and the members of the public that helped us craft this plan and have helped “chart” our direction for the next few years.

Chuck Comeau

Chairman, Board of Trustees

Ann Fogg

Avon Library Director

# AVON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## Strategic Plan 2019-2024

### HISTORY

Avon became a town in 1888.

Avon has both the smallest land area and population of any community in the region. It has a compact population density of over 1,000 persons per square mile. It is 17 miles south of Boston; 27 miles northeast of Providence, Rhode Island. It is bordered by Brockton on the south, Stoughton on the west, Randolph on the northeast, and Holbrook on the east. Population continues to drop from a high of 5,295 in 1970. The total population is 4,468 from 2017 American Community Survey population estimate.



The Avon Public Library opened its doors to the public from one room on the second floor of an old fire station, in November 1892. After relocating several times, the current building was erected in 1948 and expanded in 1971. Both expansions were done with funds from the H. Lawton Blanchard Trust. Since 1992 the library has expanded its hours and services. Staff include six full time staff, and four part-time staff. The latest addition to the staff was a Children's Assistant.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

There are 2,051 registered borrowers, 1,410 are Avon residents.

There are 1,745 households in the town of Avon

- 22% of the Avon population is 62 years of age or older
- 24.5% of the Avon population is under 19 years
- The median age of the town is 40 years
- The median household income is \$32,690
- 87% of Avon residents have completed high-school or higher

Voters at the Special Town Meeting approved funding for a new furnace and HVAC system for the original building, which was completed this spring.

At the Annual Town Meeting, voters approved funding for a lobby renovation that includes adding a handicap accessible family bathroom on the main floor, replacing the ramp with a chairlift and modernizing the circulation area to create a lobby.

Other recently completed projects that addressed immediate needs include:

- Hiring a Part-time Children's Assistant
- New cut in for drop offs
- Replacement of furnace and new HVAC in Community Room
- Close one hour later the two nights Library is open
- New walkway from parking lot
- Outside deck updated adding privacy screening, an awning, and seating
- New signs for front of building and back parking lot entrance
- Extensive weeding of collection to clear out outdated and unused books
- Non-Fiction re-configured for better patron experience, with signs for better patron browsability
- Adult Fiction books moved to one area allowing for all the media, DVD's Adult audio and music to be in its own space
- Public computers moved for better visual sight line
- Book processing and covering now out of the public areas in its own space in Tech room
- Began a "Food for Fines" program to pay fines with food for the local food pantry
- New signs for outside the library turning onto West Main Street, and Bartlett Street

## MISSION

The Avon Public Library provides current, popular materials, and an extensive circulating collection covering a wide variety of topics, in print, non-print, and electronic formats, in sufficient number to meet demand. The collection is accessible and organized to encourage public browsing in an environment that is conducive to both formal and independent learning. Special programs and materials support and promote basic literacy, curriculum objectives, general information, and lifelong learning needs. They are enhanced by computers with reference databases and Internet access (available in house and remotely) giving patrons further access for their informational, educational, cultural and recreational pursuits. The Board of Library Trustees supports and endorses "The Library Bill of Rights" of the American Library Association, and its "Freedom to Read" and "Freedom to View" statements.

## VISION

The vision of the Avon Public Library is to provide citizens of all ages with the most current popular materials, information, technology and training; with the ability to achieve basic literacy, receive general information and formal learning support; and to have lifelong learning opportunities presented by trained and knowledgeable staff in an environment that is comfortable and easily accessible. The specific and unique needs of various populations including preschoolers, young adults, adults, senior citizens and the disabled, will be taken into account so that each may achieve their full potential and improve their quality of life personally, educationally, culturally and recreationally.

## LIBRARY AT A GLANCE



All Statistics current through June 2019

- The Library has a Friends group that fund many adult and children's programs each year, as well as funding for some of the museum passes
- The library building is 7,450 square feet, with the building addition constructed in 1970's. There are 50 dedicated parking spaces available for library patrons
- The seating capacity of the library is 66 people. There are 5 tables for users, and 66 chairs. The YA area has a large and a small table with twelve matching chairs.
- There is one quiet study table area in the library that is available for reservations by the general public.
- There are 5 public-use Internet computers available in the library, and wireless access is available for any library user on the premises. Wireless access also extends to the exterior of the building. On an average week during FY 2019, 52 users accessed the Internet through a public-use library computer.
- The library has an acceptable-use policy for Internet access and use but does not use filtering software on any of its computers.

### OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

- The Library is open six days per week from September to mid-June. It is closed on Saturdays during July and August. The public can access the building 43 hours a week, including Saturdays and two evenings.
- The library was open for a total of 10,008 hours during FY 2019. The library was open for 164 hours on Saturdays throughout the year. The library was open for 301.5 hours after 5 pm throughout FY 2019.
- Total attendance was 39,355 for FY 2019.

### OUR COLLECTION

- There are over 73,099 items in the library's collection as of the end of FY 2019. The collection is 55% print books, and 45% AV materials. The library has increased its digital book collection to 30%, to reflect the growing desire of the community to read books in both print and electronic formats. The library has 46,822 items in the Adult collection, 4,907 items in the Young Adult collection and 21,370 items in the Children's collection.
- The library has purchased three subscription databases in addition to the ones offered via the OCLN network, MBLC and MLS.
- Total circulation at the library during FY2018 was 37,766. The Children's collection was 34% of the library's annual circulation that year. DVDS accounted for 15.59% of the library's circulation.

## PLANNING METHOD

We began with a consultant visit held with community members. Michelle Eberle led those attending in a S.O.A.R. exercise to see what the community liked and wanted to change.

The next step was a library survey to get feedback in the greater community of the library and how it fits into the town of Avon. The survey was online, accessible the website and the Library Facebook page. There were handouts in items that were checked out that included the online address. There were paper copies of the survey at the Library, Town Hall, and Council on Aging.

## COMMUNITY FORUM

Michelle Eberle, Massachusetts Library System Consultant, facilitated the Avon Public Library's first community forum. There were approximately 20 people in attendance. Michelle conducted a SOAR Activity. The SOAR activity is an inquiry approach that emphasizes the positive aspects of the library. SOAR is an acronym for Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results.

## STRENGTHS

When asked, the community stated that the strengths of the Avon Public Library include:

- **Staff** received high praise for their professionalism, helpfulness and availability. They also create an inviting and welcoming atmosphere.
- **Outreach/Resources**-Community Outreach includes visits to local schools and the Council on Aging. Programming, which has included a Summer Reading Program and visiting speakers, has increased and been diverse to attract patrons of all ages and interests.
- **Communication**-Increased and more visible signage, a well- designed newsletter with calendar of upcoming events, flyers and social media are a strength.
- **Building**-The physical building is a strength due to its central location to schools, Town Hall, bus lines and major roads. The building also has unique architecture, well maintained landscaping, improved access with the new path from the parking lot and the curbside cut-in.

The community stated that the two greatest assets of the library were the staff and community support and the location of the building.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Michelle presented several questions to help the community voice their ideas on which opportunities the library should focus their efforts. The top three opportunities were: creating more physical accessibility to and within the building, becoming a community information center, and continuing to find ways to reach all audiences and all ages through programing.

When the community was asked how the library can best meet the needs of the population the library served, the top three answers were: continue to ask what patrons want (suggestions of how this could be done included surveys with newsletters, book drops, raffles with prizes or food), focus on major life events (offer programs that would attract early childhood development, college, young adult social events, family programs, and retirement), accessibility (for seniors, ADA compliance, ramps).

Some of the new skills or resources we would need to move forward with these opportunities would include:

- Money, funding
- Staff coordination of programing and increased programing
- IT person on staff or designated to the library
- Space for teens, group meetings and staff, possibly including a kitchen
- ADA accessible restroom and entrance

## ASPIRATIONS

During the workshop Michelle asked, “If you could wave a magic wand to accomplish three things to strengthen the health and vitality of the community, what would they be?” In reviewing the answers, the responses can be broken into three categories: Space, Community Involvement, and Town Planning.

- **Space:** The community is asking for accessible-to-all spaces, which include the library, a rec center, and green spaces/park/picnic areas/walking trails, as well as a large common area for community events.
- **Community Involvement:** The community is asking for town wide communication of events which would get the community involved. Community participation, spirit, inclusiveness and interaction between different age groups within the town are important to be a community.



## RESULTS

The members of the community believe that the library has already achieved some key results: increased usage and participation; signage, some building modifications for better accessibility; the library is the “go-to-place”.

The library currently measures its success through circulation and technology statistics, as well as daily patron visit counts and program participation numbers. In the future, the library will continue to use these measures, as well as measure success in the ownership people have towards the library, noise from all the activity taking place, beautiful local artwork found throughout the library, and grants to help make all of this possible.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

A Community Survey was conducted for six weeks. Ten basic questions were asked to get a baseline of what people were interested or used, in the library. Included were parking and amenities. We attempted to engage as many age groups as we could

The Survey was put online on the Website and Facebook. Hard copies and boxes to collect answers were put at the Avon Town Hall, the Council on Ageing, as well as the Library.

The team looked at the Community Forum and the Survey with special attention to the comments. It then came up with an Action Plan, consisting of three Goals with Objectives for each.

The Survey Questions and the Summary of answers are Attachment 1.

## ACTION PLAN

### GOAL 1

Patrons will be able to use the Avon Public Library as a community information center.

#### Objectives

1. Purchase LED board for new lobby to provide town-wide information
2. Create a designated area for informational materials to clear the circulation desk area
3. Increase community groups usage of library for meetings and events

### GOAL 2

Patrons will be able to use technology to discover and access events, programs and information within the library as well as at home

#### Objectives

1. Make the Avon Public Library website more user friendly and 508 compliant
2. Provide educational opportunities in use of library technology through group and one-to-one classes
3. Provide educational opportunities in use of personal devices through one-to-one classes

### GOAL 3

Patrons will be able to participate in a diverse offering of programs by creating community partnerships

#### Objectives

1. Increase offerings and variety of programs for all ages
2. Offer patrons the opportunity to attend classes in library data bases, Universal Class, and Ancestry for Library
3. Partner with other town departments to plan and hold events for the whole town

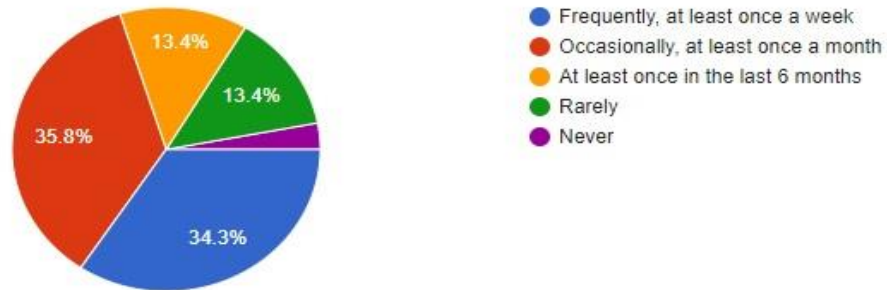
## IN CONCLUSION

The goals and objectives are the start of growth in new directions that will continue in our library each year. Engaging and education the community about all that is available, now and in the future will help us become the community space we envision.

## ATTACHMENT 1 COMMUNITY SURVEY AND ANSWERS

On average how often do you visit the library? Check one

67 responses



If you selected rarely or never, what are your reasons? (Comments are copied the way they were written on the survey)

Kids running around

Too cluttered

No reason to do so

I get home from work too late

No desire

Every two weeks

I get my books online. I love my kindle and the library options!

I just use the computer copy and fax machines

No needed

I buy a lot of books usually through Amazon

Don't always have transportation

Busy life-no need at the moment

When I'm home from college

Visit every other week

I don't like the Avon Library. I go to Stoughton. Avon is too noisy. The patrons and the workers are loud.

Not enough computers

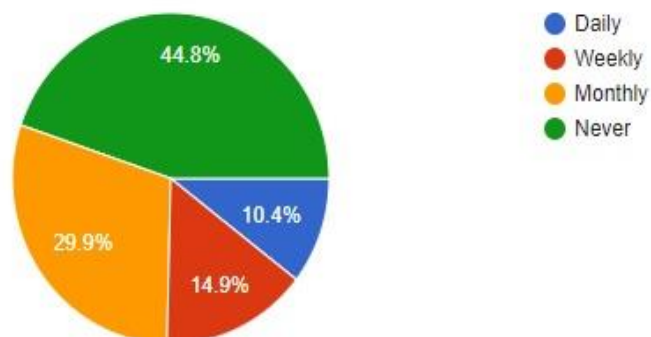
Do you have a library card

68 responses



On average how often do you visit the Library's website? Check one.

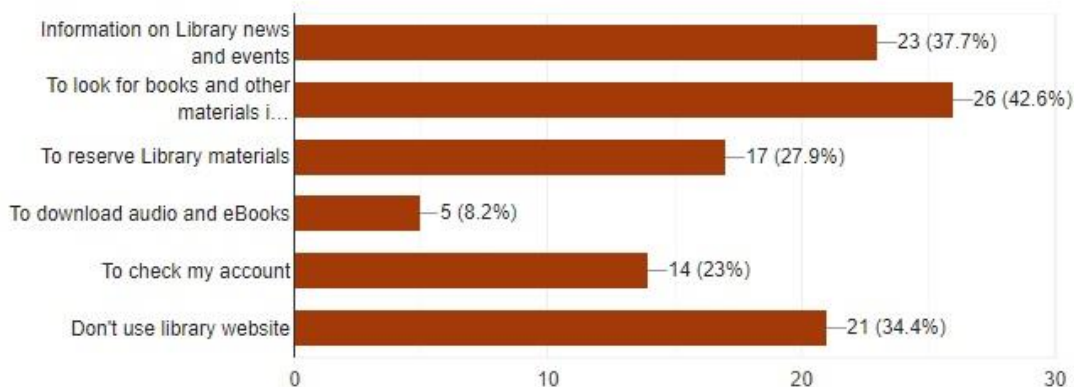
67 responses



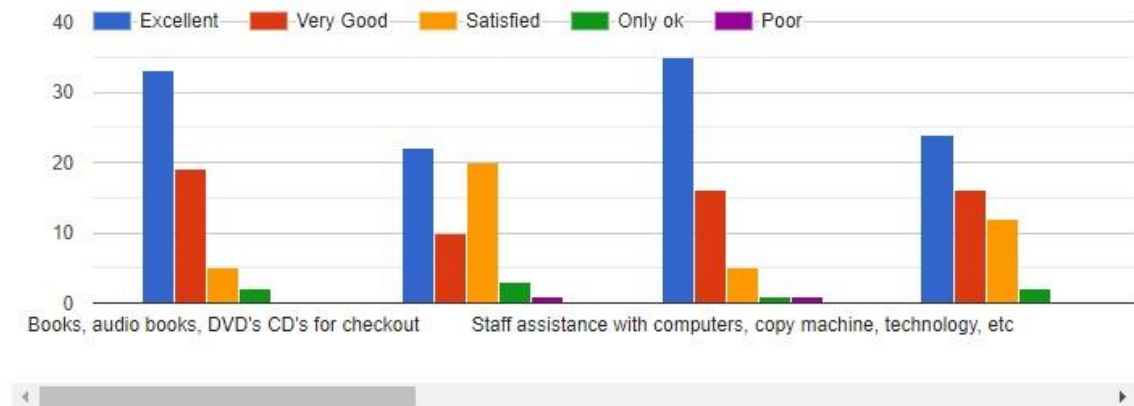
Why do you visit the Library's website? Check all that apply.



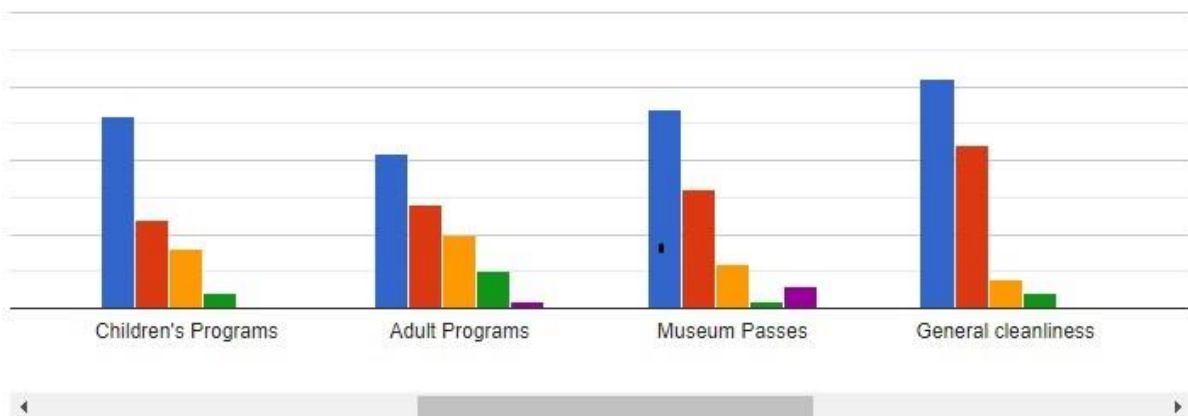
61 responses



Please rate the following library services.



Please rate the following library services.

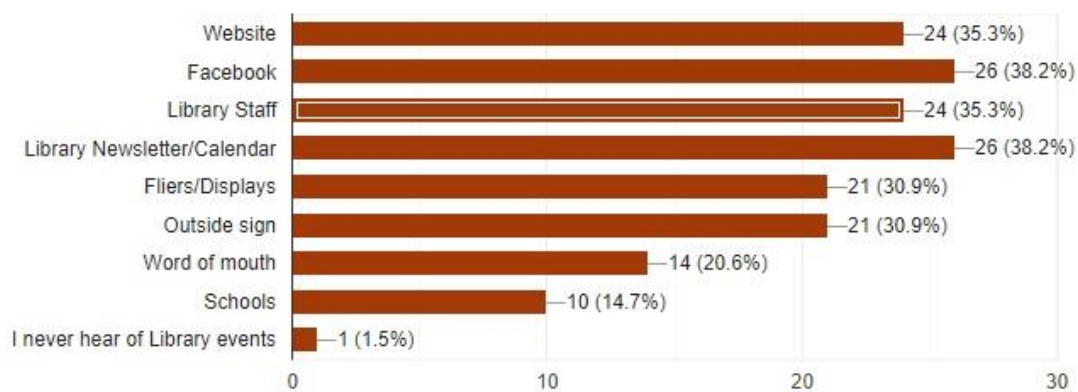




## How do you find out about Library services and events? Check all that apply



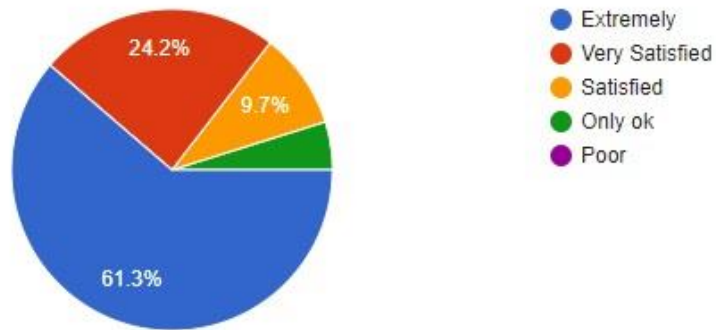
68 responses



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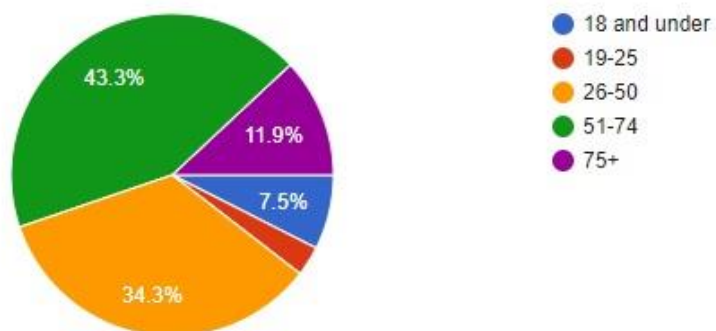
How satisfied are you with the customer service offered by the Library?  
Check one.

62 responses



What is your age?

67 responses





Please share your comments or suggestions on how the Library can improve services to you. (Comments are copied the way they were written on the survey)

More adult programming

Workshops on how to use computers

Create more activities for the kids

I have a hard time getting around the website

More computers and books

Continue doing what you are doing. Updating

Choices unchecked I don't use. Keep Smiling – you're a great bunch!

Always had good service would like ore updated books

We always have a happy cheerful, helpful experience. Thank you!

A shade installed near Fiction, non-fiction to block strong late afternoon sun Too difficult to browse

It it's not broken, don't fix it' \_ '

This library is a family friendly safe space I love having my play group here my families always feel welcome. They often check out books and materials after group.

Keep doing what you are doing! Great Place – Thank you.

Better bathroom space

I don't know

Nicer librarians

The staff are so helpful and cheerful

Excellent

You offer great services. I just get the info I need through Amazon.com or edx.edu

They can tell the loud teenagers to be quiet! I think their afraid to do it. I yelled it but once and I was the bad guy.

We love the Avon Library!

Just keep smiling – Very pleasant crew