



Performance by Grooversity at the East Branch Library, October 2018

Somerville Public Library

Strategic Plan 2019-2025

Approved by Somerville Public Library Board of Trustees, September 11, 2019

SPL: Trusted Community Connector

Note from Library Director

“The Somerville Library is wonderful. I like the fact that it is continually growing & meeting community needs.” -survey response

“Libraries are incredibly important common spaces and resources.” - survey response

In April 2019 we began the process of developing a vision for public library services in Somerville; a city proud of its working-class roots, diversity, growth, and innovation. We asked residents and stakeholders what our libraries mean to them and their community, and what we need to do - or keep doing - to continue meeting their needs.

Through focus groups, surveys, and conversations, many common themes emerged that compliment the Somerville I know and love: the continuation of traditional programs and services that promote and instill a love of reading; the concept of librarians as trusted resources in the community; the expectation for our libraries to be innovative in our endeavors to meet residents where they are; and the need to provide welcoming and inviting spaces to meet, learn, and grow.

Somerville’s public libraries are an integral part of the *social infrastructure* of our city; what sociologist Eric Klinenberg described as, “the physical spaces and organizations that shape the way people interact,” in an op-ed about the value of public libraries for the New York Times in 2018:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/08/opinion/sunday/civil-society-library.html>.

Whether you are a longtime library user or someone who keeps meaning to check us out, we will do our very best to provide just the thing you’re looking for: evening storytimes for working parents, a haven for teens and tweens, resources for job seekers and entrepreneurs, and opportunities for meeting new people and trying new things. We look forward to working with you to enhance these services and cultivate a Somerville Public Library that is responsive to your needs and future wishes.

Cathy Piantigini

Director of Libraries



Child reading to a therapy dog at the East Branch Library

Major Themes

“You have done a great job of creating a third space for the community to learn, relax, and explore.” -survey response

“Please add weekend programs for children (storytimes, music etc) for parents that work during the week. Please allow museum pass pick up more than a week out.” -survey response

“I wish there were adult language classes or groups at the library like Spanish and ASL for people who speak English but want to learn or improve their fluency.” -survey response

“Increased funding towards library expansion, remodeling costs, and technology and equipment upgrades would be welcomed.” -survey response

When we asked focus group attendees what they wanted to see from their Library over the next five years, the response was *more of everything!* More updates to our physical spaces; more electronic resources; more books and audiovisual materials; more non-traditional lending; more community engagement; and more programs that are timely, engaging, diverse, and suit a variety of schedules.

The Planning Committee identified five major themes from the community engagement process:

- Free and equal access for all
- Stimulating collections and programs
- Librarians as trusted resources
- Libraries as community connectors
- Libraries being in tune with the needs of the community

These themes served as the inspiration in developing the following *Values Statement*, *Mission Statement*, and *Strategic Priorities*, which will guide library programs and services through 2025. Each year an action plan will be developed that will lead us to achieving the higher level concepts outlined in this plan.

Values Statement

We are committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment; courteous and respectful library staff; and free and equal access to library materials, programs, and services. We affirm the values set forth in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*; serve as a trusted community resource; and hold dear the principles of Intellectual Freedom and a patron's right to privacy. We offer enrichment through educational and cultural experiences, and instill a love of reading and learning driven by the ever-changing needs and interests of our patrons.

Mission Statement

The Somerville Public Library enhances the Somerville experience by acting as a trusted community connector, providing cultural and learning opportunities to all.



Summer Jam on the front lawn of the Central Library, 2017



Our Strategic Priorities

- Provide open doors for all through free access to library spaces, resources, and programs
 - We will continue to be your free public library, with facilities that are comfortable and welcoming; staff who are friendly and knowledgeable; and collections, programs, and services that respond to both the traditional and progressive expectations of our community.
- Serve as community connector
 - We will support and cultivate opportunities for Somerville residents of all ages to come together, to share experiences, to learn from each other, and to enjoy Somerville life and each other's company. You will continue to see us out in the community, whether initiating special library programs and events, or participating in all of the vibrant, engaging programming taking place throughout Somerville.
- Respond to ever-changing needs of our community
 - Like Somerville, we will be forward moving: following library trends and best practices, and aligning our services in response to the changing needs of our community. Library policies and procedures will be reviewed; Library staff will be trained and supported in the deployment of new initiatives and technologies; and library facilities will be evaluated for renewal, renovation, and expansion.



Storytime at the Union Square Farmers Market

Our Public Libraries

The Somerville Public Library consists of a Main Library, centrally located at 79 Highland Ave, and two branch libraries: the East Branch, located at 115 Broadway in East Somerville; and the West Branch, located at 40 College Ave in West Somerville. The Somerville Public Library is a member of the Minuteman Library Network, a consortium of 41 public and academic libraries sharing resources throughout southern Middlesex County and Metrowest areas.

In FY19, our total materials holdings was 221,390, which included print, audiovisual, non-traditional, and e-resource materials; our total circulation of library materials was 394,531. We lent 36,220 items and borrowed 65,833 through Minuteman's interlibrary loan service. 981 library programs were offered in FY19, with a total program attendance of 22,663.

Between FY17 and FY19 program participation increased 12% from 19,588 to 21,952; eresource circulation increased 93% from 61,033 to 117,597; and overall circulation increased 15%, from 344,181 to 394,531.

A restoration and expansion of the West Branch Library began in the spring of 2019 and is slated for completion in late-spring of 2020.

Somerville

Somerville is located in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, just two miles north of Boston. Occupying slightly over 4 square miles, its population of 78,901 (as of the 2014 census) and a myriad of immigrants from all over the world make Somerville the most densely populated community in New England and one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the nation. Rich in both history and culture, the city houses numerous intriguing sites, businesses, and restaurants for every style.

Somerville was first settled in 1630 as a part of Charlestown, and was established as a town in 1842, when it was separated from the urbanizing Charlestown because it was still largely rural. Somerville was officially incorporated as a city in 1872 due to its growing population and increasing industrialization. By the early 1900s, Somerville itself had become a densely packed urban area, featuring immigrants from across Europe.

As a part of Charlestown, areas existing in modern-day Somerville were critical military positions in the American Revolution. The historic Powder House - now considered one of the most distinct ancient ruins in Massachusetts - housed gunpowder for Revolutionary soldiers during the war. During British invasion, Somerville (Charlestown) was part of the route ridden by Paul Revere on his famous "Midnight Ride." Finally, and most notably, Prospect Hill was the site of the raising of the first Grand Union Flag, under the orders of General George Washington, on January 1, 1776. (Visit the Somerville Historic Preservation site for more information.)

Today, Somerville is an eclectic mix of blue-collar families, young professionals, college students and recent immigrants from countries as diverse as El Salvador, Haiti, and Brazil. More than 50 languages are represented in Somerville's schools. With a large immigrant population, Somerville celebrates its diversity through numerous ceremonies celebrating cultural traditions and holidays.

Somerville is defined by its city squares, which helps mark neighborhood boundaries while also featuring bustling businesses and entertainment centers. Among the most active today are Davis Square, Union Square, Ball Square, Teele Square, and Magoun Square. In 2014, the City opened its latest center of art and industry: Assembly Row, a beautiful urban environment along the Mystic River with vast opportunities to eat, work, live, play, and create.

Adapted from the City of Somerville website



Library staff setting up pop-up library at Bow Market, August 2018

How We Planned

Nearly 400 community members and key stakeholders were engaged through focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

- **Planning Committee**

- Cathy Piantigini - Director of Libraries
- Lilly Sundell-Thomas - Deputy Director of Libraries
- Marita Coombs - East Branch Librarian
- Alison Mitchell - West Branch Librarian
- Tim Devin - Technology Librarian
- Melinda Carr - Librarian, Marketing & Publicity
- Kate Van Sleet - President, Board of Library Trustees
- Ruth Kowal - Library Consultant



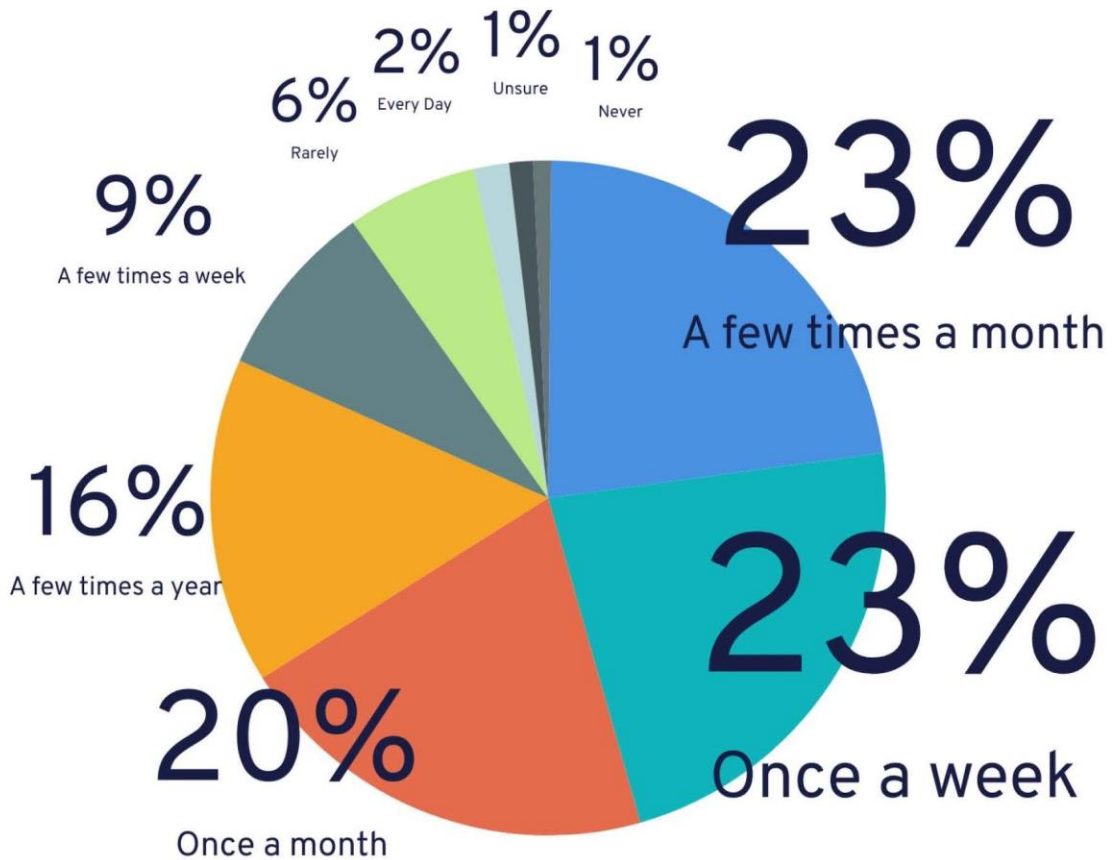
● Timeline

- April
 - Project Launch
 - Meeting of Planning Committee
 - Surveyed Library Staff
- May-June
 - Conducted Community Engagement Process
 - Focus group with Library Trustees
 - Focus group sessions held at all library locations
 - One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders in community
 - On-the-street surveys
 - Online and print surveys
 - Planning Committee met to identify major themes from community engagement process for development of Strategic Priorities; began drafting value and mission statements
 - Final draft of Strategic Plan presented to Planning Committee for review
- July-September
 - Draft presented to Board of Library Trustees for review and approval
 - 2020-2025 Strategic Plan submitted to MBLC by September 30th
- November
 - Completion of FY21 Annual Action Plan by Library Staff

Survey Results

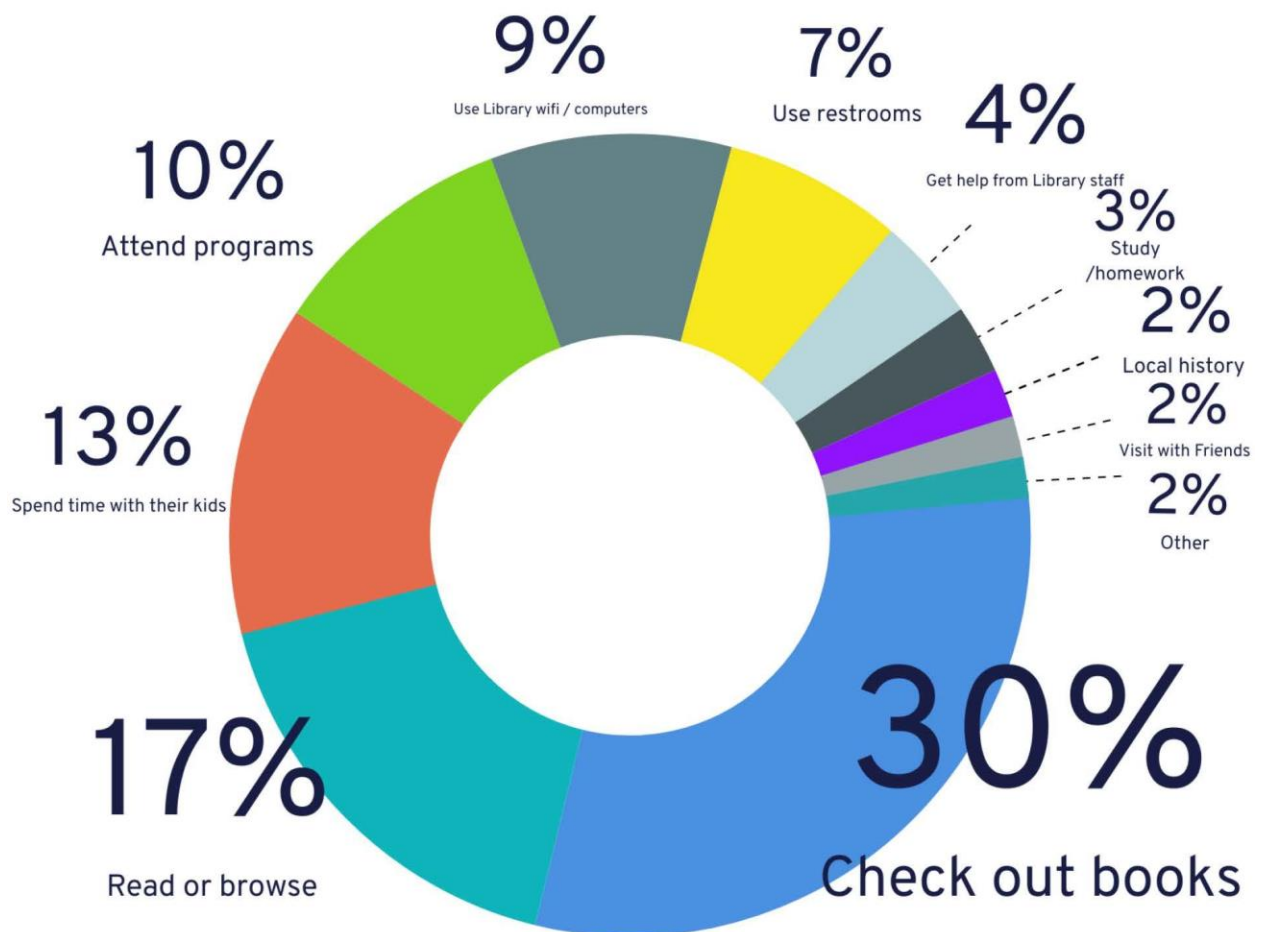
Frequency of Visits

367 respondents were asked how frequently they visit the Library. Here are the results:



Activities

367 respondents were asked what activities they took part in while visiting the Library. Here are the results:



Services

367 respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following services on a scale from 1-5. Here are the results, listed from most to least important :

#1



**Books,
audiobooks, CDs,
DVDs, etc.**

#2



**Children's
Programs**

#3



**E-books,
audiobooks and
other online
resources**

#4



**Help from
Librarians**

#5



**Cultural
Passes**

#6



**Teen
Programs**

#7



**Computers, wifi,
printing and other
technology**

#8



**Study rooms,
meeting rooms,
event spaces**

#9



**Adult
Programs**

#10



**Services for individuals
with visual, auditory,
physical impairments**