Leominster Public Library

Strategic Plan
FY19-FY23

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Leominster Public Library
Strategic Plan FY19-FY23

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Leominster Public Library:

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for devoting their time during this strategic planning process:

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Letter from the Library Director

Dear Leominster Community,

It is my pleasure to present the Leominster Public Library's FY19-FY23 Strategic Plan. The last strategic plan, which was done over 15 years ago, positioned the library to undertake a major expansion and renovation project. This project enabled the library to build its collections, programs, and services to better serve the community. The new strategic plan outlines the library's service priorities for the next five years. It is a culmination of over 18 months of information gathering from the community and staff. The Leominster Public Library's mission and vision is to continue to improve and expand its core services and programs, to embrace innovative trends, and to become the community's primary gateway for information.

Ten years ago, the beautiful new library facility opened, and it has been extremely well received by the community. It is critical that the library continue to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of the community in order to remain a vibrant and vital resource. This new strategic plan incorporates both traditional services and emerging trends in libraries. The library's guiding principles remain steadfast in advancing literacy, inspiring a love of reading, embracing diversity, ensuring free and equal access to all programs and services, facilitating the free exchange of ideas and information, and providing excellent customer service.

Throughout the planning process, six themes emerged. These are the strategic priorities the library will focus on, and they have been incorporated in the goals, objectives, and activities outlined in the plan. These six themes are:

1. *Diversity & Inclusion*
2. *Innovation & Creativity*
3. *Learning Opportunities*
4. *Library Awareness & Advocacy*
5. *Community Connections & Engagement*
6. *Sustainability & Growth*

As many of you may know, I will be retiring at the end of July 2017, after having worked at the Leominster Public Library for nearly four decades, and serving as its Director for 34 of those years. It has been both an honor and a privilege to work at this library, and to serve the residents of Leominster and the surrounding communities. I believe this library is such a vital and vibrant part of the community because of the unwavering commitment and hard work of the Trustees, staff, Friends, and volunteers, and the continued support of our elected officials.

This new Strategic Plan is an important document that will help guide the new library director and a changing Board of Trustees as the library moves forward into the future.

Thank you,

Susan Shelton
Library Director

Library Information

The Leominster Public Library serves the 41,000 residents of Leominster, as well as many non-residents from the surrounding communities of North Central Massachusetts. Located in the downtown area of one of Massachusetts' Gateway Cities, the library is housed in a 1910 Carnegie library building that was renovated and expanded to a 44,500 square foot facility in 2007.

The library is a municipal department overseen by a six member Board of Trustees, appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

The City of Leominster allocated $1,330,782 for library services in FY16. Municipal funding accounts for approximately 95% of the library's funding. The Friends of the Leominster Library organization gives the library about $30,000 annually, which is used primarily to support library programming. Other funding for the library comes from state aid, trust funds, private donations, and grants.

The library is open 68 hours per week over seven days, including 4 evenings until 9:00 p.m., and Sunday afternoons. The library is a member of the C/WMARS automated resource-sharing network, which along with the Commonwealth Catalog connects the library with the resources of public and academic libraries throughout the state. Materials available at these other libraries may be requested by library patrons and are delivered free of charge to the Leominster Public Library via a statewide distribution system.

The library's collection of 344,037 items has grown to include non-print materials such as DVDs, books-on-CD, Playaway MP3 players, and video games. Additionally, the library offers downloadable e-books, e-audio, and e-video, and online resources such as Ancestry.com, the Boston Globe, Morningstar Investments, Consumer Reports, Learning Express Library (GED, SAT AP, and GRE testing) and Auto Repair Reference Center. Patrons may access many of these online resources remotely at any time by logging in with their library card.

The library provides small private meeting and group study rooms, community meeting space, numerous public computers, Wi-Fi with high-speed Internet access, and a Grant Resource Center.

The library operates with staff of 19 FTE, and a core of dedicated volunteers who shelve library material, work Friends' book sales, and help with special projects. Staff is available at a number of service points throughout the facility to assist patrons to utilize library services and programs.

Library staff plans, promotes, and carries out almost 500 programs each year, bringing thousands of people into the library. There are programs offered for all ages, and for a variety of interests including children's story times, book discussion groups, film and game nights for adults, a teen video game night, art programs, and a Sunday concert and lecture series.

The library has developed partnerships with a number of organizations, including Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, the AARP, and area credit unions. The sharing of the partners' talents and resources has enabled the library to offer programs such as the IRS VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), AARP Tax –Aide, and Fitchburg State University ALFA (Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area) classes, which have resulted in an increase in the library's visibility in the community.

Statistics at a glance (Taken from the FY16 Annual Report of the Leominster Public Library):

- Offered 3,291 hours of service
- Loaned 316,624 books, audio-books, eBooks, DVDs, compact discs, downloadable audio and video, museum passes and discovery kits
- Answered 36,773 information/ reference questions in-person, by telephone, and via the Internet
- Presented 499 programs attended by 15,542 patrons of all ages
- Processed 30,819 network transfers & interlibrary loans for Leominster Library patrons
- Provided 40,820 sessions of public computer use
- Provided full library service to 24,301 registered Leominster residents
- Utilized 2,802 hours of volunteer assistance
- Added 10,069 new items to the library's collection
- Provided library meeting and group study room space 4,286 times for community groups, non-profit organizations, and individuals
- Registered 631 Friends of the Leominster Library members

Planning Process

In October 2015, key members of the community were asked to participate in two meetings of the library's Strategic Planning Committee. Owen Shuman, consultant and retired Director of the Groton Public Library, facilitated these meetings. The first meeting was held on October 14th with twelve participants. Participants were given an overview of the planning process, information about the library and then were led through a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) exercise. This exercise helped individuals analyze current and future conditions affecting the library and its ability to provide services in the future.

The second meeting was held on November 18th. Participants were asked to create a vision for the Leominster Public Library by answering the following questions: When is the library at its best? What are people doing here? What does the library look like now? What will the library look like in the future? They also created a draft vision statement and suggested goals for the plan.

In October and November 2015, Library Director Susan Shelton facilitated two staff meetings and one Trustee meeting, leading participants through the SOAR exercise. After these meetings, there was a short hiatus of information gathering until May 2016.

From May through August 2016 three focus groups were convened. These groups represented adults age 40+, millennials/new adults, and teens. Various library staff members and a community volunteer facilitated these focus groups. Library staff also attended an end-of-summer event at the Leominster Spanish American Center in order to survey members of the Latino community. In total, approximately 80 community members participated in these events. The goal of the focus groups and one-on-one surveys was to gather information about what participants valued about the library, and ideas for changes or improvements.

In February 2017, consultant Deb Hoadley was hired to review the information gathered over the last sixteen months. She created a community survey, led a staff steering committee, and assisted in writing the final strategic plan. The community survey was available through a website link, posts on social media, and in paper form. A total of 532 responses were collected. There were 340 from the web link, 127 paper responses, and 65 from the Facebook post. (See Appendix for full survey results). The steering committee reviewed all the information, worked to create new mission and vision statements, and developed draft goals, objectives, and activities.

The draft strategic plan was presented to the staff for review. A final draft of the plan was reviewed and modified by the library's Director and Assistant Director in consultation with Deb Hoadley, in preparation for submission to the Library Board of Trustees.

Assessment of User Needs

There were some key findings throughout the planning process, which led to the identification of six strategic initiatives. These initiatives arose from the SOAR exercises, with the ultimate goal of positioning the library as a community center and information gateway. Community members appreciate everything the library has to offer. As one person commented on the survey, *"I find Leominster a standout for the quality of services, for everything from resources to programs."*

It was evident throughout the planning process that the library is well respected and is considered a vital community asset. From the community survey, the library learned that over 75% of users visit the library at least monthly, with 43% using the library at least weekly. Participants rated their satisfaction at 93% or above for all but two services. The two areas rated lower than 93% were parking and the downloadable collection. One person said, *"Lack of parking has often deterred my visit."* A few areas of improvement were also identified, including offering a greater variety of adult programs, hosting community forums, providing more materials, and increasing partnerships.

One of the library's greatest strengths is its customer service. One person wrote in the comment section, *"I believe the service, materials, space, and programs are outstanding and provide a good educational and creative outlet for community members of all ages -- you are a great free resource."* Two other key areas of strength are the library's central location, and the building itself. Almost 50% of the people surveyed said the library should be a community place where people can meet and gather. Over the next five years, the library will need to evaluate the use of its existing space to ensure it continues to meet the needs of its patrons and their expressed desire to connect with each other. One particular area needing assessment is the Cormier Center for Young Adults.

Due to the changing demographics of Leominster, there is a growing need to serve diverse populations and to make certain the library is available and accessible for everyone. Expanding outreach services, and finding opportunities to increase partnerships with community organizations serving these populations will be part of expanding the core services of the library.

Technology continues to be a large part of library services, and it is important the library continues to maintain and update existing technology for both staff and patrons. Library staff also needs to have sufficient and ongoing technology training to be able to respond to the emerging and innovation trends in this area. Programs and services supporting technology are critical to the success of community members. There are also intergenerational opportunities to bring teens and older adults together as they explore and learn more about technology.

One of the Library's core missions is to provide opportunities for learning at all ages. Currently the library has some strong partnerships with educational institutions to provide programming. This is especially evident through the ongoing ALFA program. Exploring opportunities to partner with other institutions for all ages is necessary to build stronger adult programs, and also to meet the educational needs of students K-12.

As previously mentioned, supporting the needs of teens are a priority in the community. Seeking additional opportunities for teens to support their homework needs, college preparation, and job skills will be an important initiative for the library over the next five years. Expanding access to the Cormier Center for Young Adults is critical, and will provide the infrastructure to build on existing programs and services that are already successful.

One of the common threads identified through the SOAR exercise was the need for increased community partnerships. This was identified in the opportunities, as well as the aspirations. Almost 40% of the people surveyed also felt this should be a priority. Fostering community engagement by increasing efforts to collaborate with other cultural and civic organizations will build on the strength of the library as a community center and connector.

The 21st century library must remain flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of its community. Communication and promotion of library services will remain strong priorities for the library. A new marketing and branding campaign will be part of its communication efforts. The increased presence of staff at community events, and their participation on community-wide committees, will further enable the library to be a critical part of the fabric of the community.

The Leominster Public Library continues to be a worthwhile investment for its citizens. The library maintains a strong commitment to provide the best collections, services, and programs to meet the needs of its community. New ways of resource sharing, and seeking additional revenue streams is needed in order for the library to be sustainable.

The Leominster Public Library strives to be the community's information gateway, supporting learning and discovery for all ages in a warm, welcoming, and accessible environment. Over the next five years, the library is committed to making the six strategic initiatives a top priority.

Strategic Plan FY19-FY23

MISSION:

The Leominster Public Library serves as a gateway providing free and equal access to materials, information and technology. The Library delivers programs, services and resources to enhance the quality of life for the community.

VISION:

The Leominster Public Library will be a welcoming place that reflects the diverse needs of the community.

The Leominster Public Library will be a place that inspires innovation and creativity, supports lifelong learning, and fosters civic engagement.

The Leominster Public Library will bring people together to explore and share ideas.

Strategic initiatives to achieve the mission and vision of the library in the next five years:

1. *Diversity & Inclusion*
2. *Innovation & Creativity*
3. *Learning Opportunities*
4. *Library Awareness & Advocacy*
5. *Community Connections & Engagement*
6. *Sustainability & Growth*

Culture of Diversity and Inclusion

Goal 1: Build upon existing strengths to support changing community needs.

Objective A: Create a welcoming, inspiring and accessible environment for all patrons, staff, and volunteers.

Activity 1. Evaluate current layout, and use creative space planning to respond to the need for flexibility and multi-use areas.
Activity 2: Implement procedures to ensure the library is a safe place.
Activity 3: Seek solutions to provide additional parking.
Activity 4: Design an environment providing equal and unrestricted access for people with differing native languages, genders, racial and ethnic backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities.
Activity 5: Improve way finders and navigation tools.
Activity 6: Investigate ways to improve use of outdoor library spaces.

Objective B: Optimize core services and programs.

Activity 1: Establish and implement an ongoing evaluation system enabling the library to prioritize programs and services.
Activity 2: Offer new services and programs reflecting changing needs of the community.
Activity 3: Develop multilingual and multigenerational programs.
Activity 4: Improve public access to local historical and genealogical materials, services and resources.

Objective C: Continue to build and offer vibrant, current and relevant collections.

Activity 1: Innovate new ways for people to connect with library materials related to reading.
Activity 2: Use statistics and patron feedback to ensure the collection remains relevant and meets the needs of the community.
Activity 3: Research alternatives for systems that combine collection security and inventory control.
Activity 4: Continue to offer content in multiple print and digital formats.
Activity 5: Investigate circulation of non-traditional materials.
Activity 6: Provide materials in various languages to reflect the diversity of the community.

Innovation & Learning

Goal 2: Embrace innovation, technology and creativity.

Objective A: Develop new spaces, programs and services fostering innovation and creativity.

Activity 1: Seek partnerships to provide funding or in-kind donations to establish a creativity center.
Activity 2: Explore, evaluate and purchase tools to support creativity, art, technology, and science.
Activity 3: Provide programming to enhance the learning of new skills and to share community interests.
Activity 4: Identify sources of funding to encourage the implementation of innovative ideas on an annual basis.
Activity 5: Create staff roles and responsibilities to support growing technology needs.

Objective B: Maintain and update technology infrastructure.

Activity 1: Update audit of existing technology infrastructure, including hardware and software.
Activity 2: Evaluate and purchase emerging technology options to improve patron and staff digital experiences.
Activity 3: Continue C/W MARS membership providing access to the library catalog, resource sharing and digital resources.

Objective C: Implement new technologies.

Activity 1: Create new library website that is mobile and user friendly.
Activity 2: Evaluate creating a mobile app for the library.
Activity 3: Increase awareness of current and emerging technologies provided by C/W MARS.
Activity 4: Provide opportunities for staff to attend workshops and conferences to learn about new technologies.
Activity 5: Develop a communication channel for staff to share information.
Activity 6: Implement an online eCard for instant access to digital resources.

Goal 3: Promote learning at all ages and stages of life.

Objective A: Support informal learning opportunities for everyone.

Activity 1: Seek community experts to lead programs.
Activity 2: Collaborate with schools and other higher educational institutions to provide quality programming.
Activity 3: Support social and interest group activities.
Activity 4: Investigate new programs related to digital literacy, reading, arts and culture, life skills, and civic issues.
Activity 5: Create programs based on continual feedback from adults.

Objective B: Support formal learning for students of all ages.

Activity 1: Provide summer reading programs.
Activity 2: Collaborate with educational institutions to provide resources, services and materials to support educational needs.

Objective C: Engage, serve and empower teens.

Activity 1: Collaborate with middle and high schools on programs to support teens with homework and school projects.
Activity 2: Develop plan to expand hours for the Cormier Center for Young Adults.
Activity 3: Seek partnerships to provide teen volunteer opportunities.
Activity 4: Create programs based on continual feedback from teens.

Community Awareness & Engagement

Goal 4: Increase Library's presence in the community.

Objective A: Extend the delivery of services and programs beyond the physical walls of the library.

Activity 1: Partner with organizations to develop a delivery service for library materials.
Activity 2: Seek alternative spaces within the community to hold library programs.
Activity 3: Create staff roles and responsibilities to provide community outreach.

Objective B: Increase participation in community events.

Activity 1: Participate in annual community events, and compensate staff for hours worked in addition to regular workweek.

Activity 2: Assist organizations in publicizing events which support the library's initiatives.
Activity 3: Consider a volunteer program to assist library staff at community events.

Objective C: Raise community awareness of what the library has to offer.
Activity 1: Develop a comprehensive marketing and promotional campaign.
Activity 2: Create a new brand and logo based on the library's mission and vision.
Activity 3: Increase number of library advocates and supporters.

Goal 5: Foster community engagement.

Objective A: Formalize partnerships with new and existing organizations.
Activity 1: Evaluate benefits of existing partnerships.
Activity 2: Identify potential partnerships with local businesses and area non-profit organizations.
Activity 3: Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for each partnership.

Objective B: Support community conversations.
Activity 1: Promote and publicize use of library spaces for community use.
Activity 2: Provide leadership within the community.
Activity 3: Host forums to discuss community issues.
Activity 4: Use the library's social media to engage community conversations, and share community information.

*Objective C: Increase volunteer opportunitie*s.
Activity 1: Formalize the volunteer program and create relevant job descriptions.
Activity 2: Develop an annual volunteer recognition program.

Sustainability & Growth of Library Operations

Goal 6: Implement initiatives keeping the library relevant and vibrant.

Objective A: Provide exceptional customer service.
Activity 1: Eliminate barriers to service.
Activity 2: Evaluate new technology products to implement self-service options.
Activity 3: Create basic competencies and provide opportunities for cross-department training for all staff to ensure equity of service.
Activity 4: Provide continuous training opportunities for staff on customer service.
Activity 5: Enhance services and programs by utilizing staff strengths.

Objective B: Investigate innovative staffing models and job descriptions.
Activity 1: Review and revise current organizational structure.
Activity 2: Review and update all job descriptions.
Activity 3: Offer opportunities for professional development.
Activity 4: Develop a succession plan encouraging leadership opportunities.

Objective C: Secure the library's financial sustainability.

Activity 1: Work with city leaders to ensure appropriate level of municipal funding for the library.

Activity 2: Improve communication with stakeholders about financial needs to support the library's mission and vision.

Activity 3: Help the Friends of the Library fulfill their mission to support the Library.

Activity 4: Evaluate current funding sources.

Activity 5: Explore options for growing the community of givers.

Objective D: Formalize assessment of Library's Strategic Plan.

Activity 1: Discuss and assess progress of the plan with the Board of Trustees throughout the year.

Activity 2: Develop an annual action plan based on a formal review of the strategic plan.

Activity 3: Review policies and procedures on a regular basis.

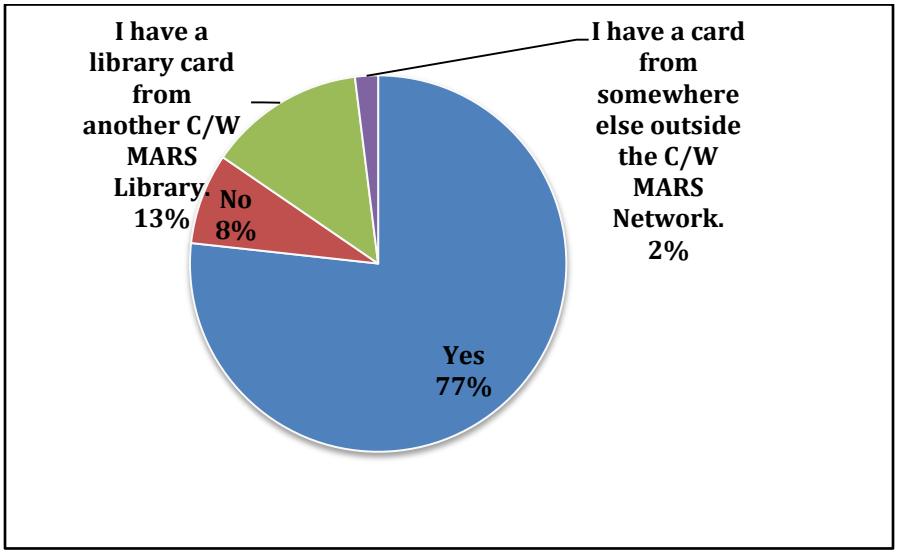
Appendix

Survey Results

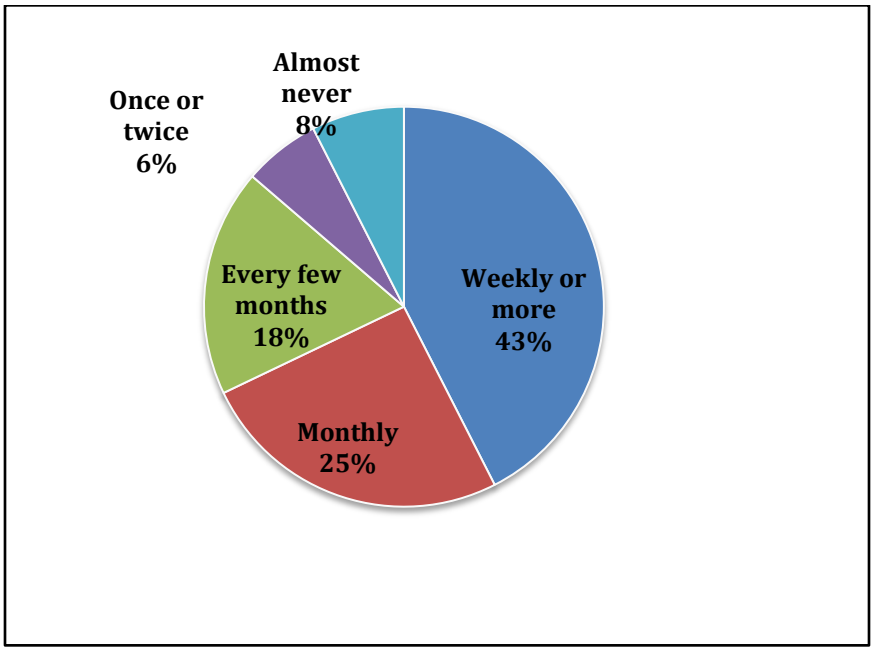
February 2017

A total of 532 responses were collected. There were 340 from the web link, 127 paper responses, and 65 from the Facebook post. The number of responses received is considered statistically significant.

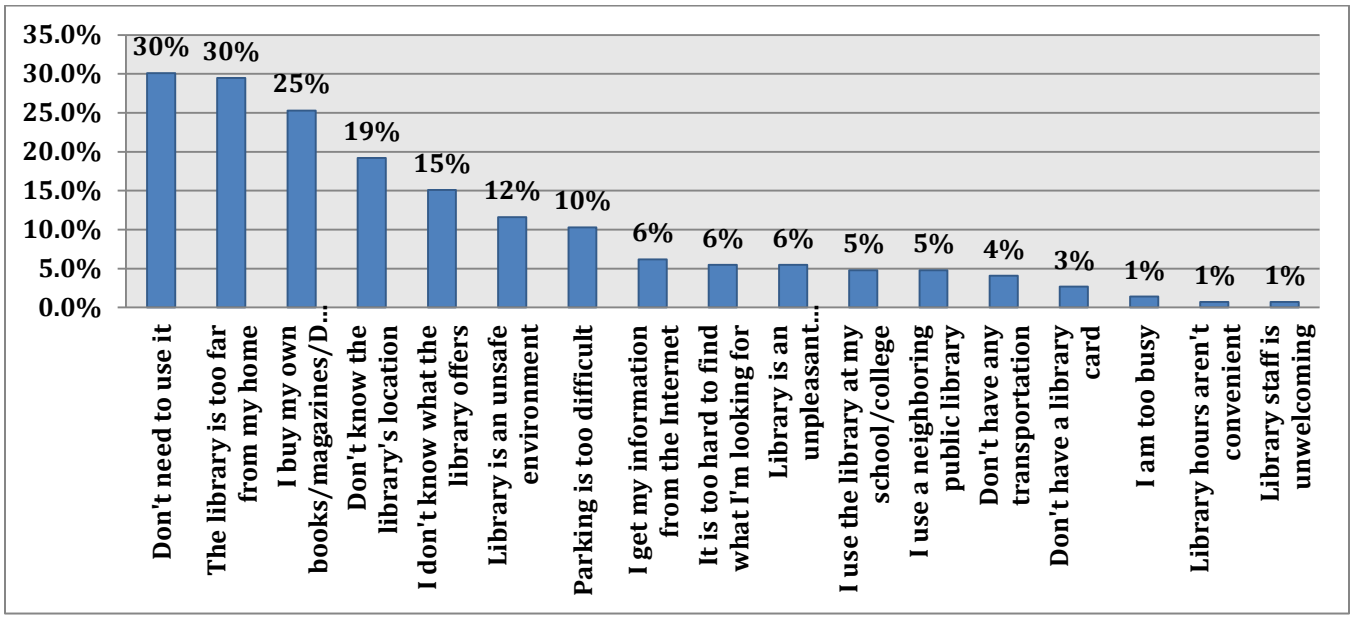
Q 1. Do you currently have a Leominster Public Library Card? (Check all that apply.)



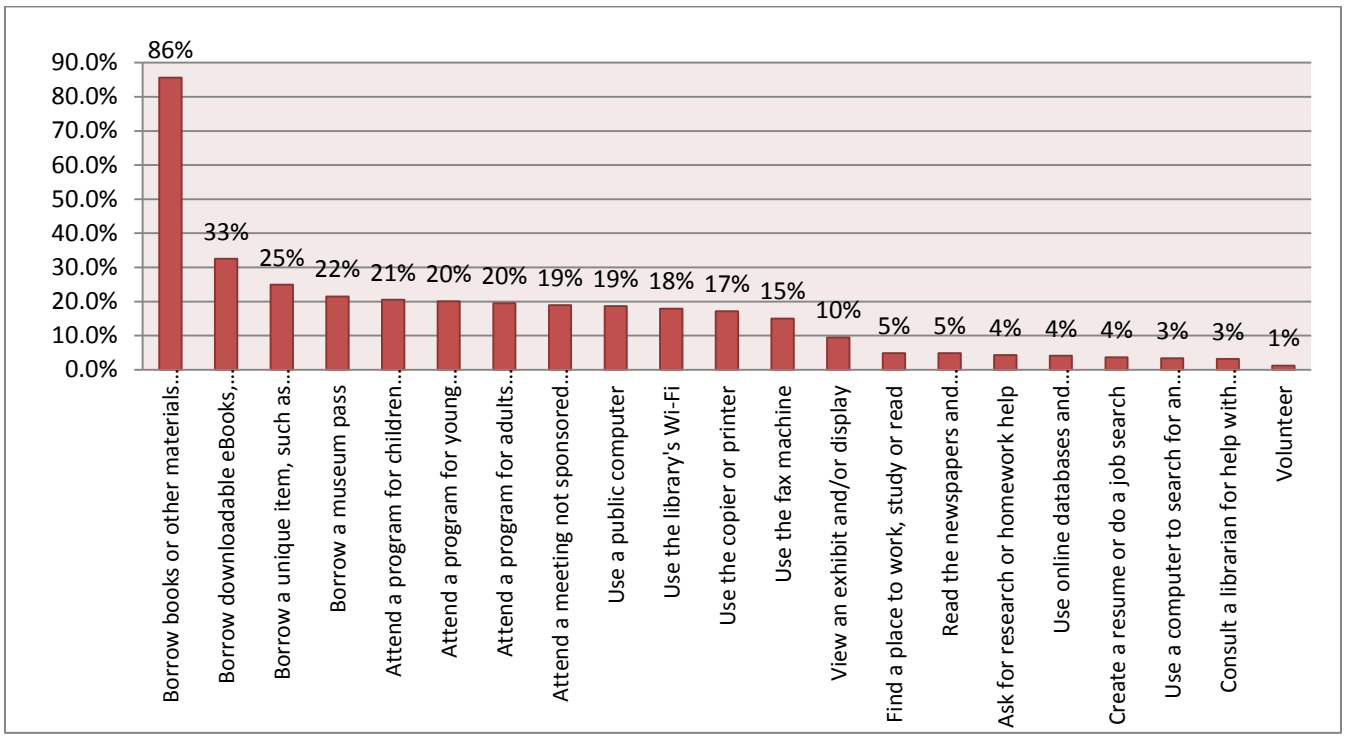
Q2. In the last 12 months, how often did you visit the Leominster Public Library?



Q3. If you do not use the Leominster Public Library regularly, why not? (Check all that apply.)

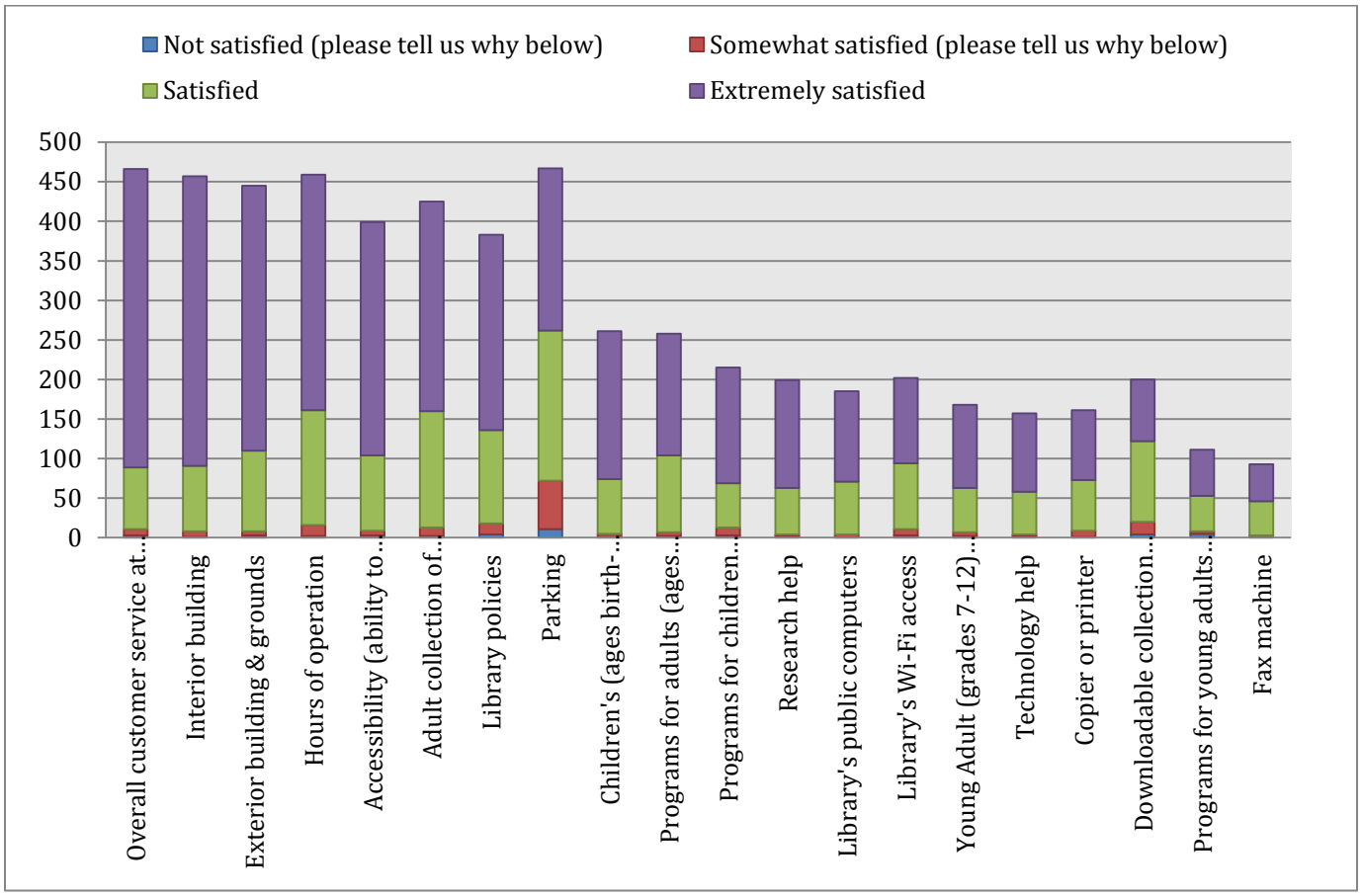


Q4. If you used the Leominster Public Library in the past 12 months, what did you or your family do? (Check all that apply)

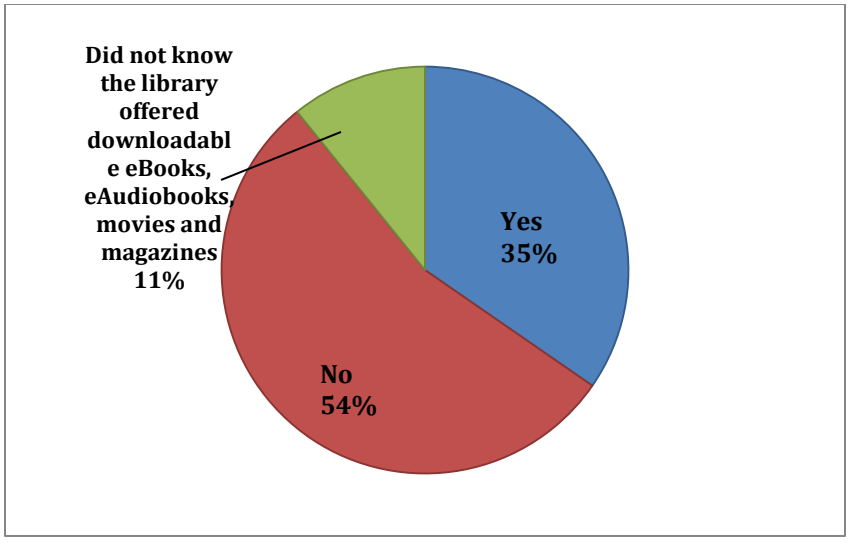


Other reasons: Movies, tax info & forms, book sale, and visit Children's room

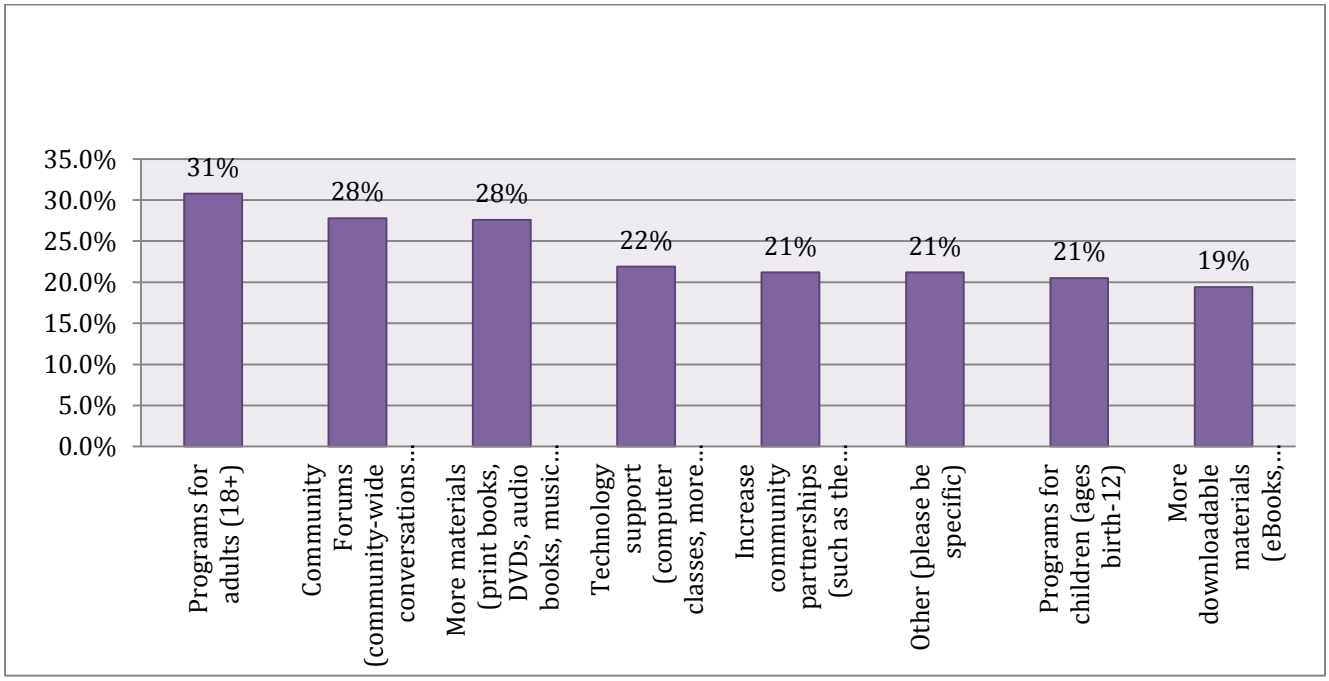
Q5. How would you rate the following? If you are not familiar or used a service, please leave that rating box blank.



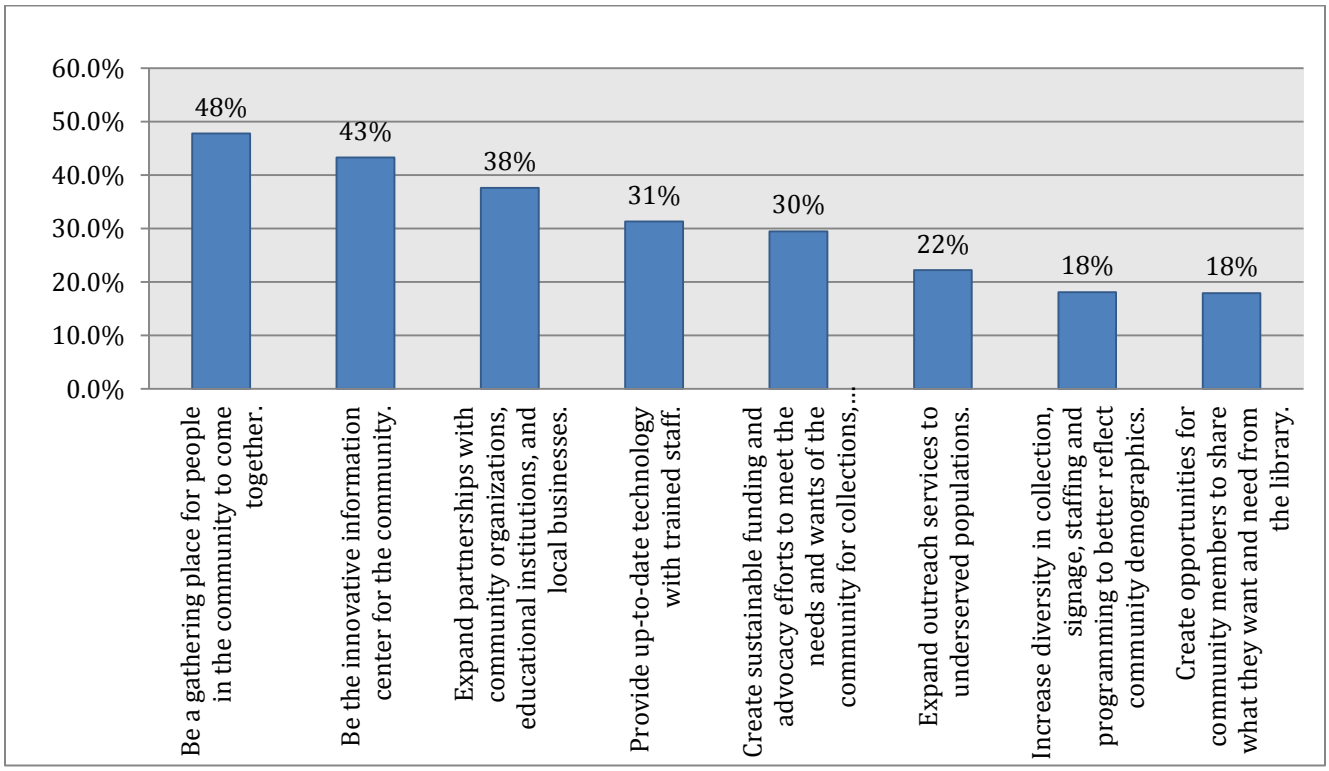
Q6. Do you use the Leominster Public Library's downloadable eBooks, eAudiobooks, movies and magazines?



Q7. To improve your library experience, what areas or services would you like the Leominster Public Library to focus on? Please select no more than 5 choices. (Shown here are the top 8 choices)



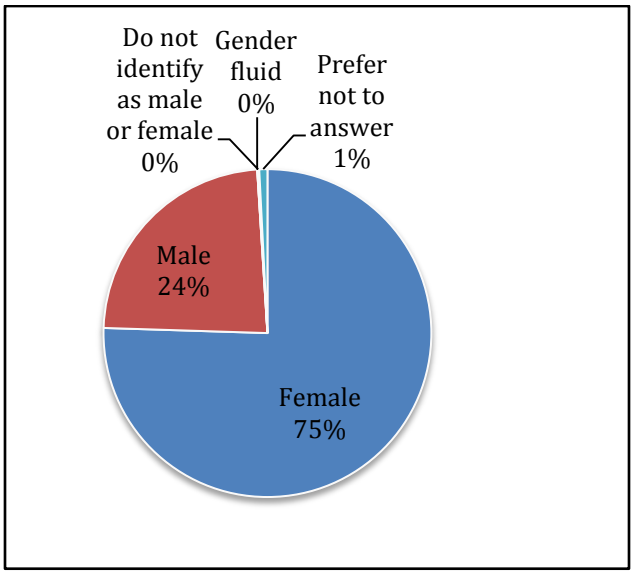
Q8. The Leominster Public Library has put together a Strategic Planning Committee to prioritize what the library should focus on in the next five years in addition to our core services. What are your top 3 priorities for the Library?



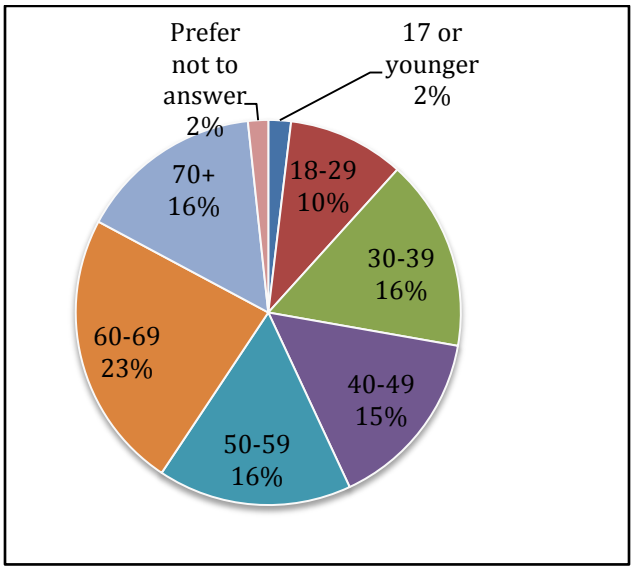
Q9. What would you like to be able to learn or do that isn't available in the community now?

Q10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Q11. What is your gender?



Q12. Age



Q13. What is the primary language spoken in your home?

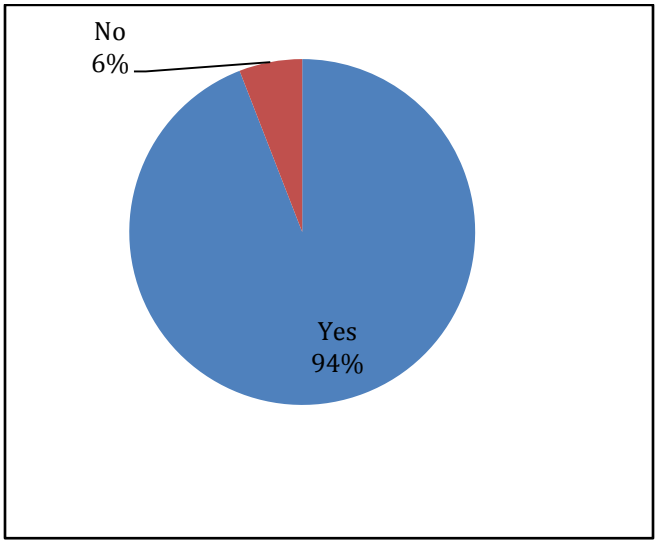
Answer Options	Response Percent
English	95.6%
Other/multiple languages (please specify)	3.0%
Spanish	0.6%
French	0.2%
German	0.2%
Korean	0.2%
Tagalog	0.2%
Chinese	0.0%
Italian	0.0%
Russian	0.0%
Vietnamese	0.0%

Q14. Do you live in Leominster?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	79.7%
No	20.3%

Other towns: Fitchburg, Townsend, Lunenburg, Gardner, and Westminster

Q15. Do you currently have internet access at home?



Q16. Which of the following electronic devices do you use? (Please select all that apply.)

Answer Options	Response Percent
Laptop Computer	76.4%
Smartphone (e.g. iPhone, Android)	73.1%
DVD or Blu-Ray Player	66.2%
Desktop Computer	56.2%
Tablet computer (e.g. iPad, Samsung Galaxy)	50.9%
E-book Reader (e.g., Kindle, Nook)	38.4%
Streaming Media Device (e.g., Roku, AppleTV, Smart TV)	31.3%
Other (please specify)	2.9%
I don't use any of these electronic devices	1.0%