



STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2025

Thank You!

Thank you to all the community members, volunteers, employees, and trustees who made time to provide the Library feedback. A special thank you to our Strategic Planning Committee who put in hours of effort and time to this updated Strategic Plan.

Strategic Planning Committee

Elizabeth Brown, Library Trustee

Laura Hunter, Secretary of the Board

Ellen Kornfield, Vice President of the Board

Amber Osborne, Library Director

Note from the Committee

We are pleased to introduce SwPL's updated strategic plan for 2022-2025. In 2017, SwPL issued its first-ever strategic plan to chart a course for the future. Based on our community's input, we built the 2017-2020 plan around four priorities: read, meet, discover, and grow. Under the umbrella of these priorities, we developed goals, mapped out our path, and took action. As the original plan comes to a close, we celebrate SwPL meeting over 90% of its goals.

The updated plan builds on this success and acknowledges areas for improvement. Our committee began meeting in early 2020 to decide our course of action. We held a SOAR Analysis with staff, volunteers, and trustees to determine the library's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our journey was waylaid but picked up again in the fall of 2020 when we released our Strategic Planning Community Survey. Through this survey and others like it, our community has made it clear that the library is a highly valued institution. There is always room for improvement, and we are listening to your feedback. We are dedicated to moving the library from "acceptable" to "excellent" in all respects.

Of note, meeting the physical space needs of our community emerged as a priority in this update and has the strong support of our staff and trustees. Our library has been short on space and in need of renovation for many years; looking all the way back to 2000, you will find the first of three reports recommending the library double its space to meet community needs. The library's trustees and staff recognize space as a barrier to excellence and are committed to making headway on this issue and keeping the library relevant in today's rapidly changing world. Improving sound and accessibility; providing differentiated spaces for children, teens, and adults; increasing access to staff; and providing attractive and relevant collections, settings, and programs are other notable goals of the plan.

Thank you to all the community members who provided their feedback and ideas. We invite your continued partnership on our journey to excellence!

About Swarthmore Public Library

The Swarthmore Woman's Club founded the first library in Swarthmore as a children's library in 1928. It began operation in July 1928 and was operated by The Woman's Club and housed in the Woman's Club, then located at 118 Park Avenue.

In April 1929, the children's library was merged with the first Swarthmore Public Library and a Board of Trustees was formed to run the library. The library opened in space donated by Borough Hall and was located on the second floor of Borough Hall. The library was formally opened on May 17, 1929 and boasted 3,546 books. That first year, 754 adults and 401 children borrowed books from the Swarthmore Library. The library was open 13 hours per week.

Today, in our ninth decade, the Swarthmore Public library has a staff of seven, dozens of volunteers, and circulates over 100,000 items each year. The library is open 6 days a week, for a total of 50 hours. The collection includes more than 58,000 books, periodicals, movies and music. The library offers award-winning programming for children and adults. There are five computers and three Chromebooks for internet use, word-processing and database access. Wireless Internet is also available.

Our library has the highest per capita use of any library in the Delaware County Library System. Our funding comes from individuals, the Friends of the Library, Swarthmore Borough, Delaware County and the State of Pennsylvania.

Our mission is to empower our community to read, meet, discover, and grow.

Summary of Survey Results

A survey of library users was conducted in the fall of 2020. In all, 134 people completed the survey, rating the library and its services on various scales and also entering written responses to questions. The respondents overwhelmingly appreciated the library and saw it as an indispensable part of the town. However, they highlighted four areas that were in need of improvement:

1. **More library materials.** Users are overwhelmingly in favor of the library further expanding its collections of books, music, digital media, and other library resources.
2. **More youth programs.** In addition to more events for children, there is a desire for teen programming.
3. **Larger building with community meeting rooms.** Users have expressed a desire for improved spaces, especially for youth that would also improve noise levels in the building. Many users wrote of the need for a larger children's area and also a defined space for teenagers.
4. **More adult programs.** There is an interest in expanded programming for adults, with both the senior and younger adult populations having been highlighted in the survey results.

Demographics

- 78% responses from Swarthmore, 10% from Wallingford, 5% Rutledge, and 7% Other.
- Most respondents were adults: 33% were between 30 and 45, 27% were between 45 and 60, and 28% were between 60 and 75.
- 49% of respondents had children aged 0 - 18 years old. Of those responding, 96% had library cards.

Library Usage

- 57% visited the library “pretty often” and 31% visited “once in a while.”
- Of those who rarely came to the library, 40% said they use a different library, 30% bought books, and 30% access ebooks from another source.
- Of the frequent library users, 97% borrow books, 41% attend programs, 33% borrow CDs/DVDs/Audiobooks, 16% to use the copy machine, 15% come for magazines or newspapers, 7% to meet friends, 6% to use the internet, and 3% to study/research.
- About 43% attend programs either “pretty often” or “once in a while”, and those that don’t cited “inconvenient times of the programs,” a “lack of time,” and the pandemic as reasons.

Rating of Library Services

- Patrons rated the following categories as EXCELLENT:
 - “Customer service”: 84%
 - “Responsiveness to the community”: 71%
 - “Physical condition of the library”: 44%
 - Of those for whom “youth programs” were applicable, 53% rated them as EXCELLENT.
- Patrons rated the following categories as ACCEPTABLE:
 - The “size of the library” and “physical collection offerings”: 56%
 - “Hours of operation”: 53%
 - “Library website”: 48%
 - Of those for whom the following services are applicable, patrons rated the following services as ACCEPTABLE:
 - “Adult programs”: 69%
 - “Access to online resources”: 57%
 - “Digital collection”: 56%

Access to Information about the library

- Most found information about the library from the library’s website (81%), emails (44%) or Facebook (33%).

Suggestions for improvement

- 60% would like to see more library materials (books, movies, etc), 35% more youth programs, and 31% a larger building. 27% would like more adult programs, comfortable seating and community meeting rooms.
- 76% of respondents would contribute to a capital campaign with the goal of increasing the size of the library.

Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

Our mission is to empower our community to read, meet, discover, and grow. This plan directly relates to this mission through the following strategic directions:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. READ: We will provide a varied and accessible collection.
2. MEET: We will provide spaces and opportunities for our patrons to interact, collaborate, and inspire one another.
3. DISCOVER: We will provide library experiences that inspire a love of reading, foster life-long learning, and enrich the lives of our community members.
4. GROW: We will increase SwPL's value in the community by ensuring we are dynamic and responsive.

Strategic Direction #1

READ

We will provide a varied and accessible collection.

GOAL 1: Provide a collection that meets the needs of our community in size, layout, and accessibility.

OBJECTIVES

- Address the shortfall in collection space through enlarging the footprint of the library, allowing for lower shelving in both the adult and children's areas.
- Increase displays and areas for marketing the collection.
- Improve wayfinding signage.
- Increase storage space for housing non-traditional collections such as eReaders, laptops, LEAP Kits, and Library of Things items.

GOAL 2: Support readers of all ages and abilities with rich and diverse collections.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify non-fiction areas in need of development and purchase appropriate materials.
- Encourage circulation by displaying and promoting the collection during programming.
- Explore and evaluate electronic and digital collection options to complement the library's print materials collection.
- Explore an increase of materials written in non-English languages, including the pairings of texts in multiple formats.
- Enhance and expand the adult graphic novel section.

GOAL 3: Increase the collection's usability through the exploration of alternative organization systems.

OBJECTIVES

- Research alternative organization methods, such as BISAC.
- Sample community members for opinions on moving away from the Dewey Decimal System.
- Visit a library that employs an alternative system.

Strategic Direction #2

MEET

We will provide spaces and opportunities for our patrons to interact, collaborate, and inspire one another.

GOAL 1: Provide a physical library space that meets the needs of our community.

OBJECTIVES

- Address noise issues with current library layout by separating adult and children's areas.
- Increase public seating, particularly for quiet reading or study, young adults, and community meet-ups.
- Eliminate the accessibility barrier created by having the children's area on the second level with a lift that is outside of the library, slow, and cumbersome.

GOAL 2: Actively welcome all residents of Swarthmore to use our library services and facilities.

OBJECTIVES

- Continue and grow our new resident initiatives.
- Offer spaces and activities that welcome gathering and interaction and celebrate the diversity in our community.
- Invest in outreach and marketing initiatives.
- Offer library programs and services at non-library locations and on evenings and weekends.
- Invest in services that are accessible and comfortable for people of all cultures, abilities, and communities.

GOAL 3: Create inviting spaces both indoor and outdoor for our community to read and gather.

OBJECTIVES

- Create quiet areas for studying and reading
- Increase outdoor seating options
- Create a café style area where tea and coffee will be available

GOAL 4: Expand programming to include tweens, teens, and new adults.

OBJECTIVES

- Use outreach tools and partnerships to make these age groups aware of the library.
- Create programming and opportunities for socialization.

Strategic Direction #3

DISCOVER

We will provide library experiences that inspire a love of reading, foster life-long learning, and enrich the lives of our community members.

GOAL 1: Create a physical library space that allows for discovery.

OBJECTIVES

- Design a library space where the programming areas are no longer disconnected from the library and its collection.
- Provide programming areas that are large enough to handle the number of our community members who want to participate, discontinuing the need to pre-register for regular events.
- Offer flexible meeting spaces with up to date technology.
- Explore the creation of a maker space and/or digital lab.

GOAL 2: Increase community access to improve learning and literacy.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide staff with training and tools needed to deliver innovative services for all community members.
- Increase direct services to the public through improved visibility of staff members.
- Develop partnerships focused on removing barriers to opportunity.
- Review policies to ensure the library is encouraging diversity, inclusion, and equity and empowering staff to provide the best possible customer service.
- Explore new resources and platforms that respond to changing community needs.

GOAL 3: Promote informed, active participation in the community and civic life.

OBJECTIVES

- Help people stay in touch with issues that matter in their community through increasing access to local resources and programming.
- Offer materials, tools, programming, and expertise to help develop critical-thinking skills.
- Partner with community leaders and organizations to foster public education and involvement.
- Bring people together for shared experiences that strengthen our understanding of each other.

GOAL 4: Continue building a Library of Things and other special collections.

OBJECTIVES

- Survey and seek feedback from community regarding ideas for new collection items.
- Provide access to emerging and assistive technologies, along with training on use of the technologies, perhaps in the form of video tutorials.
- Monitor LEAP Kits and Little LEAPer Kits for the opportunity to add additional kits to the collection.

Strategic Direction #4
GROW
We will increase SwPL's value in the community
by ensuring we are dynamic and responsive.

GOAL 1: Provide a physical space that encourages our patrons to connect with library staff.

OBJECTIVES

- Redesign staff spaces so they are incorporated with patron areas allowing for increased direct interaction and better supervision of the library.
- Provide adequate workspace for all staff members.
- Increase storage and space for materials processing resulting in a more efficient workflow.

GOAL 2: Develop strategies for obtaining long-term, sustainable funding.

OBJECTIVES

- Foster strong public and private support for the library.
- Increase advocacy for additional funding at the local and state levels.
- Reduce budget expenditures where possible in order to ensure a sustainable future.

GOAL 3: Invest in staffing to provide top-notch service to our community.

OBJECTIVES

- Review employee policies to ensure the library is encouraging diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- Assess and modify staff evaluation procedures where necessary to capitalize on best practices and encourage growth and improvement.
- Continue encouraging and providing access to continuing education and cross training.
- Negotiate employee compensation to meet rising minimum wage requirements.

GOAL 4: Focus on outreach to library users and non-users.

OBJECTIVES

- Use a mobile library set up to bring the collection to various community events.
- Create regular programming in partnership with local organizations and businesses that can help us further our reach.
- Tailor messaging in order to reach people where they are with specific information they are interested in, i.e. promoting audiobooks and eBooks at the train station.

GOAL 5: Hone current community relations practices to make better use of tools.

OBJECTIVES

- Assess current use of digital sign to determine if there are changes that should be made to better utilize this tool, including possible placement changes.
- Advocate for permanent space outside to post flyers to capitalize on foot traffic outside Borough Hall.
- Use programs and outreach to advertise other events.