



STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN
“A VISION FOR PORTSMOUTH”

2011 - 2015



VISION

The Portsmouth Public Library offers the citizens of Portsmouth a safe, accessible, attractive place conducive to life-long learning, research, enlightenment, creativity and enjoyment.

MISSION

It is the mission of the Portsmouth Public Library to offer access to a comprehensive collection of materials, in a safe and appealing environment, to encourage social, economic, cultural, and intellectual growth. Through the careful use of resources and a knowledgeable staff, the Library will contribute to the overall quality of life and meet the ever-changing needs of the citizens of Portsmouth. By encouraging an atmosphere of lifelong learning through traditional library services and emerging technologies, the library will continue to be a relevant part of our community.

INTRODUCTION

The Portsmouth Student's Club founded the Portsmouth Public Library in 1914. In the 1940's, the African American community established The Community Library and in 1963, these two libraries merged and moved to the Main Library's present location at 601 Court Street. Today the Library system consists of the Main Library and 3 branch libraries located within the city limits. The Main Library houses both Adult and Children's Services Departments and offers centralized reference to the general public, branch libraries, City Departments, students, area businesses, and military personnel. Also located within the Main Library are Library Administration, the Esther Murdaugh Wilson History Room, and the Portsmouth Law Library. The Esther Murdaugh Wilson History Room has a part time library assistant and a staff of dedicated volunteers devoted to collecting and archiving local history and genealogical items. The Portsmouth Law Library moved to the Main Library in 2002 serving legal professionals as well as the general public.

The Library system's facilities range from 2 to 100 years old and the older facilities provide many maintenance and renovation challenges. Two sites need additional space and furnishings to improve appearance, house ever-growing collections, provide space for technology areas, and quiet areas for study and research. Larger and better-furnished meeting rooms are needed to accommodate local groups seeking a free, central meeting place. Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements are not being fully met at three sites and it is difficult or impossible for elderly and disabled patrons to access buildings and services.

The Churchland Branch has consistently had the highest circulation and patron computer usage of all locations within the Portsmouth Public Library system. The 20,000 square foot building was opened in August 2009. This new building has significantly improved services to our patrons with a larger meeting room, children's area, a technology-training lab, group study rooms and adequate space for shelving, seating, and staff work areas.

The Manor Branch, which has the second highest usage and circulation in the system, is currently housed within the Wilson High School, providing unique challenges and space issues. The Cradock Branch, which is the



smallest, is located in a historic community constructed during World War I and currently serves a local community with significant usage by children. At some point plans should be discussed of combining Cradock and Manor into one facility geographically centered between these two branches. Another option would be to combine a branch and recreation facility into one community space. These solutions make sense in scales of economy and service. It must also be recognized that the PPL website is considered a fifth site and gives citizens access to the collection where they can renew materials, make requests, conduct on-line research, access e-books and other electronic media, and find needed information about library, city, state and federal programs.

With over 62,000 registered borrowers, the Portsmouth Public Library system serves a diverse group of patrons, including citizens of surrounding cities. Efforts continue to increase usage by nonusers and underserved users. Books continue to be an important part of the Library's collection, and every attempt is made to provide something for everyone, from fiction to cookbooks to automotive repair guides to biographies and history. The Library has collections for people with vision impairments and small children just learning to enjoy books or read, such as the "Ready to Read" collection. Monthly "Books by the Box" are provided to several daycare centers that do not have funding for large collections of quality books. Donations of funds and items are all the more important because of increases in the cost of materials over the past decade. It is a constant challenge to replace stolen and damaged materials, which is necessary to maintain a current and balanced collection.

The Library has twenty- seven full-time employees, several part-time Library Assistants and Associates, and part-time personnel. Because of rapid changes in library services over the past few years, particularly in the area of technology, the Library emphasizes staff training needs. Scheduling remains a challenge due to minimal staffing levels. Training and informational sessions on non-technical subjects are provided during staff meetings and in-service days. Necessary technology training for all staff is supplemented with one-on-one training, small sessions, and a variety of webinars and related online resources.

Through the use of grants and donations, the library is able to provide quality arts and educational programs to the city's youth and adult populations. Funding from the Fenster Foundation has made the annual Summer Reading Program extremely successful over the past sixteen years. Contributions to the Portsmouth Public Library Foundation, various service organizations, patrons, and the Friends of the Portsmouth Public Library (FOPPL) have contributed funds that have enabled the Library to provide varied and quality programs. The Library frequently takes advantage of opportunities for free and inexpensive programs such as annual visits from the Portsmouth Fire Department, speakers from NASA, and local storytellers and puppeteers. A generous benefactor has been the sole sponsor of the Children's computers (the Rapoport Room) in the Main Library since 1989.



GOALS

Goal I

Portsmouth Public Library will have library facilities that meet or exceed the information needs and desires of all citizens.

Objective 1: Persons with disabilities, the elderly, and people with small children will have appropriate and easy access to all departments and branches. Currently, none of the facilities meet all ADA requirements allowing disabled patrons to easily gain access to the facilities.

Action plan

- **Pursue every opportunity to upgrade handicapped access both inside and outside at Cradock, Manor, and Main Library, including ramps, elevator access (Main), wider aisles, wheelchair accommodating furniture, and doors that meet ADA standards.**

Objective 2: The Library will increase use of their facilities as a meeting place for community organizations. Only one of our locations meet the Library of Virginia's Planning for Excellence guidelines, which recommend 10 square feet per seat. Existing meeting rooms are frequently used for storage.

Action plan

- **Improve meeting areas by enlarging them to accommodate more people. New, more comfortable furniture that provides flexibility for a wider variety of programs will be added.**

Objective 3: Library patrons will use the services of the Library and make frequent return visits with a greater feeling of safety, security, and comfort. Current security hours are inadequate to provide coverage during all open hours.

Action plan

- **Increase security hours, provide better outdoor lighting, and theft detection systems at all locations to ensure that patrons feel safe while visiting the library.**
- **Create and maintain common areas that are both attractive, appealing, and include eye-catching displays of materials, comfortable seating areas, and sufficient lighting.**
- **Continue to renovate existing areas with new carpet, tiles, curtains, blinds, paint, and shelving that is attractive and practical for Cradock, Manor, and Main Library..**
- **Provide quiet spaces for reading newspapers, magazines, and books for all patrons, including children and young adults.**

Objective 4: The new Churchland Branch provides Library patrons with innovative library services, larger meeting room space, and emerging technologies enabling patrons to succeed in the information and knowledge based society of the future.



Action plan

- **Market the new meeting room and conference room so each is used to capacity.**
- **Explore new ways to bring youth into the facility.**
- **Provide technology training classes for both the public and staff.**

Objective 5: New buildings should be provided for the remaining three locations. All three of these buildings are inadequate for providing modern library services and new ones are necessary to remain competitive in the Hampton Roads area as a leader in providing and promoting a lifelong learning community.

Action plan

- **Address the changing needs of the population of Portsmouth and increase use of the library by planning for up-to-date, state-of-the-art facilities, accomplished by utilizing resources and standards published by the Library of Virginia and the American Library Association, and by seeking the assistance of professional consultants.**

Goal II

Portsmouth Public Library will explore and implement new technologies that follow **Bold New Directions** in providing information to the citizens of Portsmouth.

Objective 1: The Library will continually upgrade and maintain equipment that provides cost-effective service and enables patrons to electronically access information.

Action plan

- **Research and purchase the most cost effective hardware and software.**
- **Purchase and maintain public access computers, printers, and office productivity software following City's five-year refresh plan.**
- **Explore opportunities to increase the number of public access computers and databases.**
- **Purchase appropriate computer furniture and supplies for both public and staff workstations.**

Objective 2: The Library will provide a stable, efficient, and high capacity network that will be able to accommodate user needs and new technology.

Action plan

- **Further upgrade the network connections between the library locations and the internet.**
- **Install and purchase upgrades to network services in a timely and efficient manner to fully take advantage of new enhancements.**

Objective 3: The Library will maintain its award winning web site, which provides patron access to the library's catalog, their personal accounts, information on Library events and services, and links to other valuable resources.



Action plan

- **Monitor and adjust information on the website that best suits the needs of the patrons.**
- **Create and implement patron surveys to identify areas of interest.**
- **Promote Library programs and services.**
- **Provide online resources to meet the growing needs and demands of our community**

Objective 4: The Library will pursue more effective ways to use current and developing technologies in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness for staff and patrons.

Action plan

- **Systems Administrator and Microcomputer Analyst will be aware of current trends and new technology using subscriptions, listservs, and attending conferences and workshops.**
- **Develop training programs for all library staff to meet a benchmark (Core Competencies) level of knowledge.**

Goal III

Portsmouth Public Library will provide a current, balanced, and culturally diverse collection of materials and information in various formats, periodically surveying patrons about their wants and needs.

Objective 1: The Library will continue to evaluate purchases of new materials to satisfy the information needs of patrons including in-depth and authoritative reference materials. In addition, the Library will evaluate current electronic resources and add new ones in place of or in addition to print resources.

Action plan

- **Conduct patron surveys on a recurring basis.**
- **Continue to offer access to magazine and newspaper databases either by linking to databases offered free of charge by the Library of Virginia or by purchasing access.**
- **Promote the databases to increase usage by patrons.**
- **Continue to maintain and update the law library collection.**

Objective 2: The Library will provide a richness of reading materials for Portsmouth's children and young adults in order to expand curious minds and encourage a lifelong love of reading.

Action plan

- **Continue to take advantage of standing order plans to fill requests and to ensure that popular materials are always available to both children and adults.**



- **Provide a collection of books designed to improve reading skills to assist parents in helping their children outside of school hours.**

Objective 3: The Library will continue to enrich the local history room collection gathering documents and photos relevant to the “Pride of Past”.

- **Seek alternative funding to continue the digitization of local history documents that was discontinued by the Library of Virginia in 2002.**

Goal IV

Portsmouth Public Library will offer a level of customer service that meets or exceeds the Library’s Customer Service Policy.

Objective 1: The Library will provide a level of staffing that meets or exceeds the Library of Virginia’s Guidelines for Excellence.

Action plan

- **Pursue the implementation of the Library’s Personnel Plan**
- **Pursue adequate personnel to provide service on Sunday.**

Objective 2: The Library will provide all staff with a level of training and continuing education opportunities to meet the library’s Training Plan.

Action plan

- **Create a Librarian I position to be responsible for all training and continuing education for all library staff.**
- **Pursue training and continuing education opportunities that are available online, in house, or in the area.**
- **Adjust schedules to allow for all staff to take advantage of all training and continuing education opportunities.**

Goal V

Portsmouth Public Library will provide programs to challenge the minds and imaginations of young people and adults and inspire them to develop the skills, passions, and interests that will help them succeed in school and the world of work.

Objective 1: The Library will provide a variety of quality in-house programs for the entertainment and education of all citizens to enrich the quality of their lives. Program attendance and return visits to the library



for other services will indicate the success of these programs.

Action plan

- **Pursue grants and donations for programming geared for children, teens, adults, and families.**
- **Produce electronic resources for those who desire subject bibliographies and readers' advisory information.**

Objective 2: The Library will offer the necessary number of outreach programs to schools, daycares, and other organizations in order to increase the Library's visibility in the community and encourage more use of the library as a source of both entertainment and information. It is difficult to provide outreach, but programs are provided when staff is available.

Action plan

- **Provide library promotional programs in the community, including visits to schools and neighborhood events.**
- **Add a new Librarian III position to coordinate, promote and schedule events for the community and utilize the additional facilities at the new Churchland Branch.**

Objective 3: The Library will seek methods to provide library services to economically disadvantaged, elderly and disabled citizens.

Action plan

- **The Library will pursue partnerships with community organizations, such as SHARE and AARP, to provide space and computers to assist people seeking jobs, housing, and training.**
- **The Library will explore utilizing volunteers or interns to provide basic technology training classes at the Churchland Technology Training Center.**

Objective 4: The Library will sponsor programs, which will benefit childcare centers and Head Start classes, by providing them with materials and free activities that they might not otherwise be able to afford. The Library currently does this as often as possible, and groups are always invited to register for large programs at the Main Library and Churchland Branch Library, but dates and times are limited due to lack of staff to provide programs.

Action plan

- **Continue to offer programs such as Books by the Box for childcare centers and to provide limited services to the homebound, while seeking ways to provide these services with the assistance of outside agencies.**
- **Add Librarian I positions at the new Churchland Branch to develop and conduct programs needed in the community for Lifelong Learning and Thriving Neighborhoods and a Sense of Community.**

Objective 5: The Library will sponsor programs that promote family literacy and encourage the use of libraries and a love of reading.

Reviewed & revised May 23, 2011



Action plan

- **The Library will continue to provide Motherread/Fatheread and Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library programs when requested by community organizations.**
- **The Library will offer Babygarten and Two-Time programs to stress the importance of sharing pre-literacy skills with young children from birth.**
- **Offer Teen Book Club and other teen summer programming to encourage teens to visit the library.**
- **Continue to expand programming for families and adults**