

# FORBES library

NORTHAMPTON'S PUBLIC LIBRARY



## Strategic Plan 2019-2023



## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Message from the Chair. . . . .                                 | 1  |
| Why We do Strategic Planning . . . . .                          | 2  |
| Mission, Vision, & Goals. . . . .                               | 3  |
| Goal 1: Community Hub . . . . .                                 | 4  |
| Goal 2: Connecting Past, Present, & Future . . . . .            | 6  |
| Goal 3: Access & Innovation. . . . .                            | 8  |
| Goal 4: Children & Teens . . . . .                              | 10 |
| Goal 5: Fun. . . . .  | 12 |
| Community Description. . . . .                                  | 14 |
| Library Description. . . . .                                    | 18 |
| Appendix A: Overview of Strategic Planning<br>Process. . . . .  | 21 |
| Appendix B: Forbes Library Community<br>Survey Results. . . . . | 22 |
| Appendix C: Stakeholder Interviews . . . . .                    | 33 |
| Appendix D: Aggregated Summary of SOAR<br>Analysis . . . . .    | 35 |
| Acknowledgements. . . . .                                       | 36 |

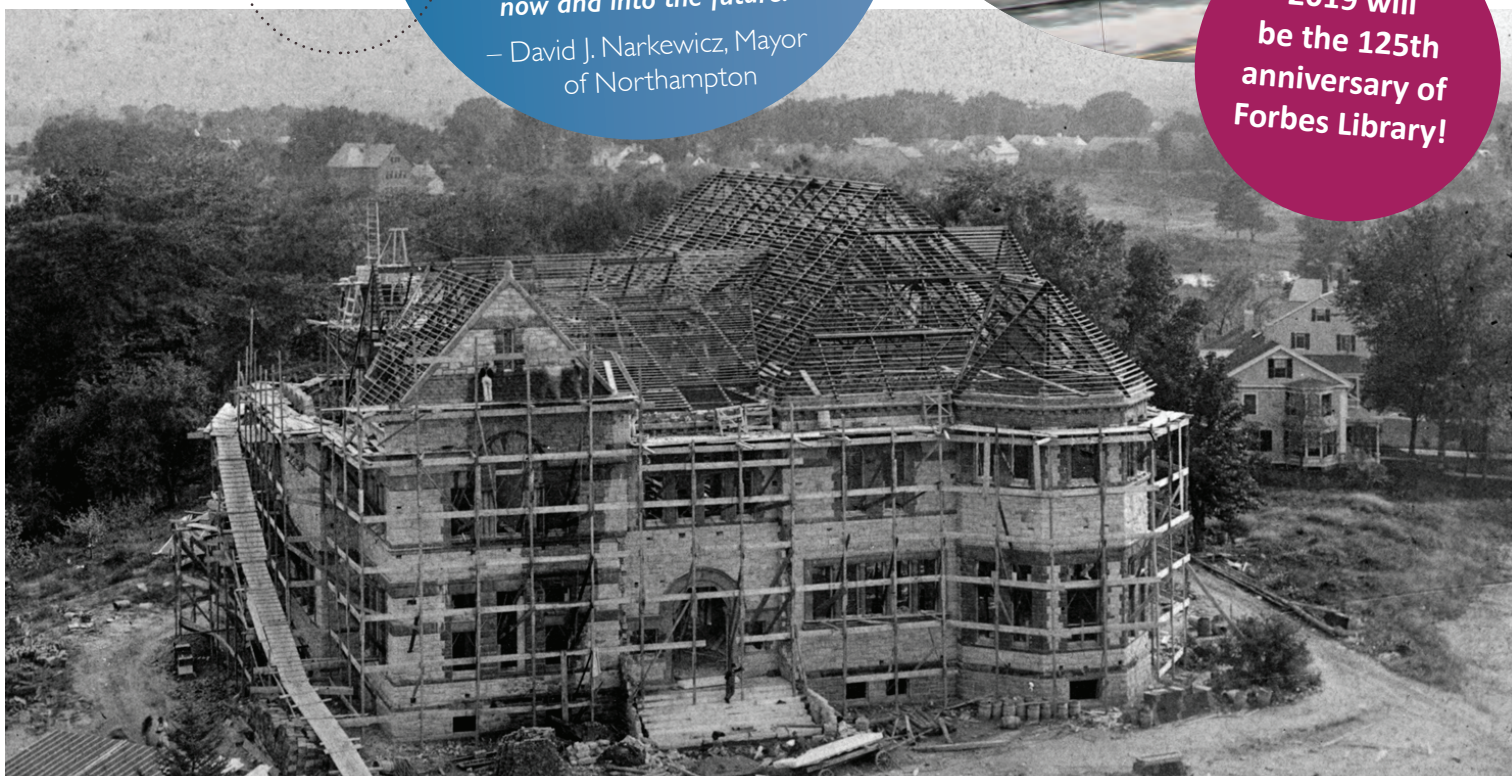
The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan was  
unanimously accepted by the  
Forbes Library Board of Trustees  
on September 21, 2017.



*Public libraries  
are a cornerstone of  
our democracy and vital  
centers of knowledge, inspiration,  
and community. Northampton  
is fortunate to have just such an  
institution in Forbes Library and I  
commend the Board of Trustees for  
working with our community to create  
a long-term vision for sustaining it  
now and into the future.*

– David J. Narkewicz, Mayor  
of Northampton

**2019 will  
be the 125th  
anniversary of  
Forbes Library!**



# Message From the Chair

We are pleased to share with you Forbes Library's Strategic Plan for FY2019 through FY2023. It is an exciting and ambitious plan that provides a framework for the library to meet the needs of our community and deliver higher levels of service. The plan was developed based on input from the Northampton residents who came to our community forum and the 1,060 community members who responded to our survey. We also spoke to over forty local stakeholders about the challenges their organizations, and our city, will face in the coming years and ways in which the library can help. The library staff, the board of trustees, the Friends of Forbes Library, the Coolidge Museum Advisory Committee, and the members of our strategic planning committee all participated in visioning exercises that helped identify the library's strengths and create goals for the future.

What we heard most often, from everyone who contributed to this process, was the need for more access to everything the library offers. This plan addresses the need for both physical access to the library building and expanded access to all types of resources for everyone in the community. It includes improving access to online resources as well as taking library services outside of the building to parts of the community where they are wanted and needed. In addition, the library aims to be a gathering space for our community to access each other's ideas and a place where information about vital services can be found. The objectives in this plan will help us improve services to children, teens, and families to ensure everyone has access to tools that spark curiosity and nurture learning. We will also expand access to local history and grow the library's special collections to gather information and work that is being created today. Included in our plans to further connect the past, present, and future, are enhancements to the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum that will attract more researchers, visitors, educators, and students. Providing books and information is an important and vital part of our mission, but we also want to show how information can be used to explore, entertain, and create. Through this plan we will celebrate and support the writers, artists, and makers in our community and provide people of all ages a place to create, collaborate, and learn how to problem-solve.

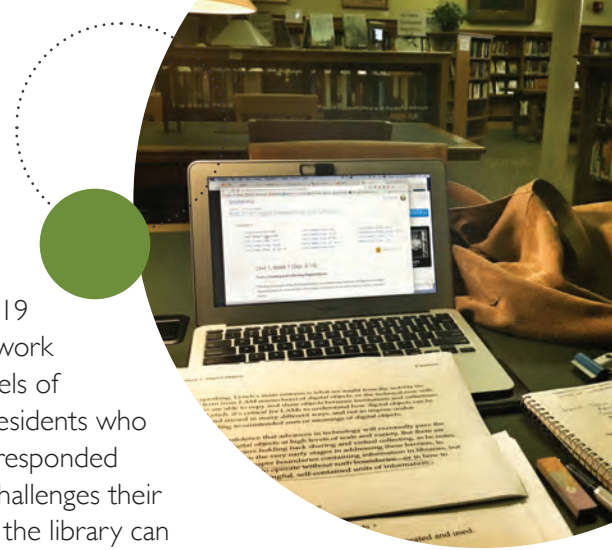
As part of the planning process, we have rewritten the library's Mission and Vision Statements so that they are aligned with our motto: Forbes for All. Everyone is welcome at Forbes. It is a safe space where access to information is free and discovery, participation, and dialogue are encouraged.

This has been a long process and a lot of effort went into it. Many people assisted and contributed to this plan. Please turn to page 36 to see a full list. I would particularly like to thank Lisa Downing and Molly Moss, the Director and Assistant Director of Forbes Library, for all of the time and expertise they put into making this plan. Northampton is lucky that the daily operations of our library are in their very capable hands.

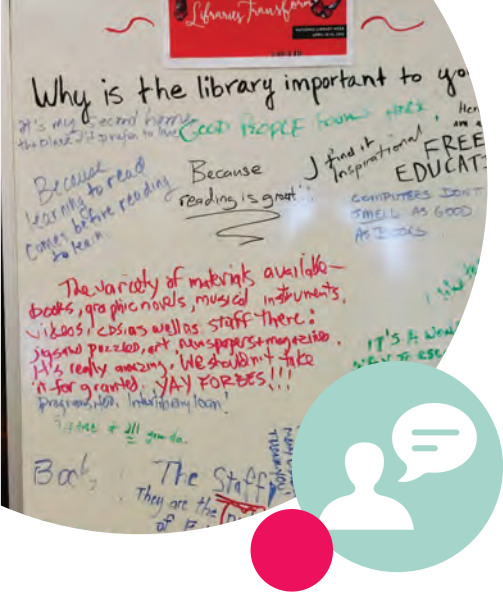
This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, providing a continuing touchstone for staff yet flexible enough to change as our city evolves. The library is here to serve our community. If you have any thoughts or ideas we'd love to hear them at any time! You can email me at [katywright@gmail.com](mailto:katywright@gmail.com), call or visit the library to speak to Lisa Downing or Molly Moss or email [director@forbeslibrary.org](mailto:director@forbeslibrary.org).

2019 will be the 125th anniversary of Forbes Library and we'll be hosting special programs and exhibits throughout the year. I'm looking forward to celebrating this milestone with the staff, patrons, and everyone in our community!

Katy Wight  
Trustee & Chair of Strategic Planning Committee



# Why We do Strategic Planning



The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) requires libraries to complete and submit multi-year strategic plans if those libraries want to be eligible for direct grants from the MBLC under the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program or any state funded grants.

A strategic plan is also a great management tool for organizations. The planning process gave us a chance to talk to many different members of our community about the library. It helped us to identify areas in which the library is already strong as well as areas in which our services need to be expanded or improved.

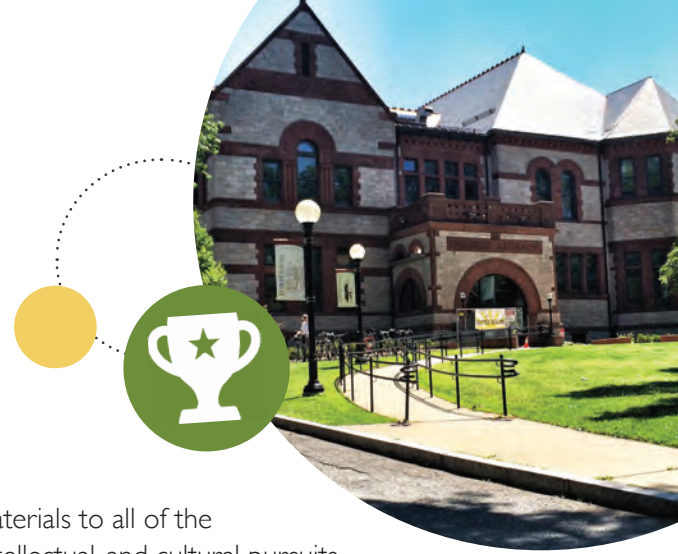
It will help us budget, prioritize activities, and continue to plan for the future.

It provides a clear sense of purpose for the library staff, trustees, friends, and volunteers.

2017 Staff and Volunteer BBQ



# Mission, Vision & Goals



## Mission Statement

Forbes Library exists to provide a wide range of information and materials to all of the people of Northampton, and to encourage and support the civic, intellectual, and cultural pursuits of the community. Forbes Library encourages curiosity, free inquiry, and lifelong learning, and provides a friendly environment as a community meeting place.

## Vision Statement

Forbes Library is a welcoming haven for all. We build connections that strengthen our communities, inspire curiosity, open windows to the past, and create pathways to the future.

## Goals

### 1. Community Hub

Forbes Library engages our community by providing a place and services that connect people, provides a gathering place, and helps bridge divides.

### 2. Connecting Past, Present, & Future

Forbes Library provides a connection to local history and documents today's history through our growing Special Collections, Hampshire Room for Local History, and the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library & Museum.

### 3. Access & Innovation

Forbes Library connects all patrons to services, resources, and technology that are convenient, relevant, diverse, current, and accessible.

### 4. Children & Teens

Forbes Library fosters the love of reading, and encourages the development of creative and critical thinking skills among children and teens, from early literacy through mature readership, by offering a slate of services that spark curiosity and nurture learning.

### 5. Fun

Forbes Library enriches lives by providing recreational reading, free entertainment, access to the arts, and opportunities to create.

## Activities

On the next few pages we've included some sample activities which help illustrate the scope of each objective. The objectives will help us fulfill the five goals above. The specific activities that the library will undertake each year will be determined annually.



# Goal I: Community Hub

Forbes Library engages the community by providing a place and services that connect people and help bridge divides.

Northampton is an increasingly intercultural city where diversity is welcomed and celebrated. In 2017, we invited refugee families to join our community. New variable income housing projects are being constructed throughout the city, and our schools and service organizations are working with increasingly diverse families. Throughout the strategic planning process, as we spoke to members of our community, we heard excitement about the opportunities that come with new perspectives and the advantages of living in a diverse community. We also heard about the challenges faced by schools, organizations, businesses, and local government because of the changing demographics.

During our interviews, stakeholders and community leaders spoke more about the growing income gap in our city than they did about any other topic. Addressing the insecurity and anxiety that come from economic disparity, job insecurity, housing stress, and global instability, is a crucial task for many of our local organizations and institutions. When we asked how Forbes Library could help with these challenges, outreach was mentioned most often which entails ensuring that members of our community of all ages and backgrounds are aware of the services available at the library, the resources which will be useful to them, programming that is interesting and relevant to them, and that they have access to technology.

Forbes Library is a safe and welcoming space for everyone. Through this goal we aim to address the unique needs of our community by embracing diversity, creating opportunities for civic engagement, connecting people with vital services, and providing a neutral place for critical discussions.

*“I’m excited by the parts of the plan that will increase the ways in which new and different people in Northampton will be drawn into the library by the proposed initiatives.”*

– Cheryl Zoll, Tapestry Health,  
Strategic Planning Committee  
Member

## Objective: Provide a safe, secure, and comfortable place

- Sample activity: Improve the Circulation Desk and front lobby to facilitate a welcoming and efficient experience
- Sample activity: Build upon our commitment to environmentally friendly practices
- Increase our use of green cleaning products
  - Increase our recycling efforts
  - Add a water bottle filling station
- Sample activity: Expand the visibility and availability of quiet space for working
- Sample activity: Emphasize hiring diverse staff including people who are bilingual
- ✔ *Outcome: Increasing patron satisfaction*



## Objective: The Library's collection, services and programming will reflect the cultural, ethnic, religious, economic, and gender diversity of the community

- Sample activity: Give voice to diverse perspectives in programming
- Sample activity: Review our collection management policy and procedures to ensure diversity in our collections
- ✔ *Outcome: The library will be a reflection of the community it serves*



## Objective: Leverage partnerships with local organizations

- Sample activity: Work with Lilly Library to coordinate library services through exploration of a shared staff position, joint publications such as bookmarks, and policy coordination
- Sample activity: Support the needs of people seeking employment as well as entrepreneurs, in collaboration with the Franklin Hampshire Career Resource Center satellite at Forbes Library
- ✔ *Outcome: Efficiently and effectively meet community needs*

## Objective: Provide opportunities for civic engagement

- Sample activity: Offer a Great Discussions series, supported by the Foreign Policy Association and designed to provide a format to discuss the most critical global issues facing America today
- Sample activity: Partner with local organizations to provide timely and accurate voter information
- Sample activity: Increase the number of opportunities for people to contribute to the library through volunteerism and provide information about opportunities in the community
- ✔ *Outcome: Our community will be well informed and supported in contributing to our democracy*

## Objective: Create an engaging and positive atmosphere for library patrons and staff

- Sample activity: Review library policies and procedures to improve the user experience with an emphasis on being flexible and patron-centered
- Sample activity: Develop core competency standards for staff and provide training to support success
- ✔ *Outcome: The library will be better positioned to succeed in all aspects of this plan*





## Goal 2: Connecting Past, Present & Future

Forbes Library provides a connection to local history and documents today's history through our growing Special Collections, Hampshire Room for Local History, and the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum.

Forbes maintains a century-old collection about Northampton and Hampshire County, in which it sits, as well as extensive resources for genealogists. The Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum is the only such entity housed in a public library. The library staff has expertise in these areas and serves more than 4,000 visitors from near and far each year.

All of the Special Collections and museum spaces are in desperate need of attention. The Hampshire Room for Local History and adjacent Special Collections Room are at maximum capacity and do not offer adequate space for controlled research, more innovative programs, or room for the collections to grow. This is an area of great concern as the library strives to collect items that reflect the ever-growing history of our community. The museum must evolve to better meet with modern visitor expectations for interactive and audio-visual based exhibits. Patrons want more virtual digital access to our collections as well. "Connecting Past, Present, and Future" strives to address these concerns, as well as expand the utilization of the collection to new audiences to fully realize their transformative potential.





**Objective: Grow collections by engaging our community to make and document today's history in partnership with other organizations**

- Sample activity: Review and revise our Special Collections development policy in consultation with Historic Northampton and other area institutions
- Sample activity: Develop a Historian-in-Residence Program to create and present new work based on our collections
- Sample activity: Develop an archive of born digital content pertaining to the ongoing history of our community
- ✔ Outcome: *Our community's historical record will be available for future generations*



**Objective: Increase digital access to, and awareness of, our collections**

- Sample activity: Digitize oversized unique special collection items, including maps
- Sample activity: Launch a crowdsourced transcription project of the multi-volume Judd Manuscript
- ✔ Outcome: *The next generation of researchers will create new discoveries*

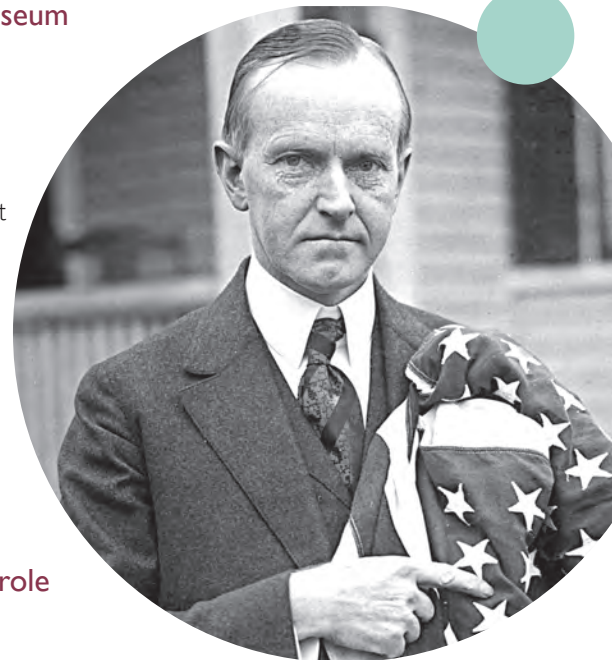


**Objective: Expand the Hampshire Room for Local History & Special Collections to provide research space and room for the collections to grow**

- Sample activity: Form committee to examine current and future needs of the collections as well as for visitors and researchers
- ✔ Outcome: *Visiting researchers will increase their knowledge of local history*

**Objective: Upgrade the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library & Museum (CCPLM) and expand community engagement**

- Sample activity: With guidance by the CCPLM advisory board, develop exhibits featuring audio-visual content and interactive displays
- Sample activity: Partner with the Northampton schools to offer a student research project based on the library's collections
- Sample activity: Partner with city and local tourism organizations to enhance findability of CCPLM
- Sample activity: Plan programming and events for 2023: the 100th anniversary of Coolidge becoming president
- ✔ Outcome: *A larger and more diverse range of visitors will learn about our 30th President and his role in our local and national history*



**Objective: Celebrate Forbes Library's history and continuing vital role in the community with 125th anniversary events**

- Sample activity: During the course of 2019, present a series of programs and displays about the library's history
- Sample activity: Conduct a publicity campaign about our founding principles and guiding values
- ✔ Outcome: *Our patrons and community will increase their understanding of the library's relevance*



## Goal 3: **Access & Innovation**

Forbes Library connects all patrons to services, resources, and technology that are convenient, relevant, and accessible.

As someone on the planning committee commented, “keeping the doors open is our baseline service.” Forbes Library’s hours have been drastically reduced from a time when you could visit seven days a week from morning until night. The library’s hours are on the low end compared to those libraries serving comparably-sized communities. The reason for that is budgetary. The library building is a 42,000 square foot Victorian gem that spreads services and collections over four floors. Sightlines are poor; navigation is not intuitive, and it requires a relatively large cadre of staff to safely and successfully be open to the public.

We heard from the majority of our current patrons who responded to our survey that they would like the library to be open more, and others expressing concerns about the impact of our current 48 hour a week (40 in the summer) schedule on working families. The “Access & Innovation” goal addresses this issue by increasing the library’s hours as well as increasing outreach services to those that we will serve outside of the library building.

This goal also aims to increase the community’s awareness of the services and collections that we offer that people are less aware of. These are identified by usage statistics and in survey comments where respondents suggested things that we already do.

The third key component to this goal is innovation. Our culture and our community are rapidly changing, especially in the area of information technology. Through this goal, we are committing to seek new ways of doing things as well as positioning the library to be both responsive to our community and a driving force for creating access to new ideas.



## Objective: Increase access to library services

- Sample activity: Expand hours by increasing efficiency of work processes and using technology solutions
- Sample activity: Add Bikemobile service in neighborhoods and at community events where patrons can sign up for a library card, get program and service information as well as reference services, and access a small, but targeted browsing collection
- Sample activity: Work with appropriate agencies to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation access to the library
- ✔ *Outcome:* A significant portion of our community will gain convenient access to the library and its services



## Objective: Increase digital access for our community (bridge digital divide)

- Sample activity: Offer an e-card for digital access to library resources
- Sample activity: Loan mobile hotspots, potentially in collaboration with the schools
- Sample activity: Develop effective strategies for delivering on-going training that is responsive to community needs
- ✔ *Outcome:* Our community will have the tools and the training to succeed both personally and professionally

## Objective: Raise public awareness of the library's resources and services

- Sample activity: Publish a weekly library e-newsletter
- Sample activity: Welcome newcomers to our community and introduce the library through targeted outreach in partnership with service organizations, the housing authority, and realtors
- Sample activity: Have a monthly presence in the community that reaches a wide audience at farmers' markets, schools, senior center, public events, etc.
- ✔ *Outcome:* School students, new residents, and other targeted populations will have increased access to quality information and free recreational reading and activities

*"I am excited that the Forbes Library has chosen to profile access in their new strategic plan. Access is at the core of what a library should provide. To have it front and center in the plan is a hallmark of the Library striving to meet patron needs. Specifically, I am most encouraged about the Library's focus on access through increased hours."*

– Nicole Sibley, Amherst College & Strategic Planning Committee Member

## Objective: Provide vibrant collections for all

- Sample activity: Continue to add innovative collections based on community interest such as puzzles, games, and equipment
- Sample activity: Make the Cutter Classification system easier for patrons to navigate through changes to labeling, patron guides, and instruction
- ✔ *Outcome:* Patrons will find the library easier to use and discover attractive and desirable books, media, and non-traditional collections to utilize



The Forbes Library Outreach Delivery Service provides access to library materials for residents who are unable to visit the library because of short or long-term illness or disability. We currently have about 30 volunteers and are actively recruiting. Visit [forbeslibrary.org/outreach](https://forbeslibrary.org/outreach) for more information.



## Goal 4: Children & Teens

Forbes Library fosters the love of reading, and encourages the development of creative and critical thinking skills among children and teens, from early literacy through mature readership, by offering services that spark curiosity and nurture learning.

Public libraries play an important role in children's learning from day one. Through programs like our baby storytimes, Baby and Me Yoga, and Toddler Times, we model early literacy practices for parents and caregivers, and support their roles as their children's first teachers. Early literacy encompasses what children know about communication and language before they can actually read and write. We have new staff that have experience in early literacy library programming, and we have already developed additional programs and seen an increase in attendance. In the coming years, we aim to build upon these successes and continue to welcome new families to the library community.

Families in the area consistently tell us that our children's and young adult programming and spaces are critically important. With the public schools' reduction in library services, the library is even more significant as a place for growth and development. In an effort to connect students and families with our services, we will focus on expanding school and community outreach. Our emphasis on early literacy and access to services helps children build foundations for academic success, intellectual curiosity, and civic participation. In this way, the library helps to create engaged and informed citizens who are active in their communities.



*"One of the things that we see in our practice is that children are reading fewer books. We've been trying to encourage parents to help their children access their local library and ask for reading recommendations from librarians. We also encourage kids to get Kindles and read books with text-to-speech software because we see a lot of children with dyslexia."*

– Sheri Katz, Clinical Director of Learning Solutions for Learning Success, LLC

**Objective: Actively engage with the community to increase access to and awareness of collections, programs, and services available to children, teens, and their families**

- Sample activity: Continue to increase outreach and communication with Northampton schools
- Visit all Northampton schools at least once each school year
  - Provide flyers for school newsletters of key programs
  - Promote teacher library cards
- Sample activity: Increase outreach and communication with nontraditional caregivers, emphasizing programs that engage all ages, families, and mixed generations
- Host early intervention providers to present after storytime to increase awareness of their services
  - Conduct outreach at, and provide tours to, local daycares and afterschool programs
  - Promote coverage of our programs and services in print and online media

✔ **Outcome:** *A growing number of our local school teachers and children will have access to books and research tools to support academic success*



**Objective: Update and improve children and teen spaces to provide appropriate, fun, and safe spaces for all**

- Sample activity: Update Children's and Young Adult Department brochure and website
- Sample activity: Remodel Young Adult Room to create a dedicated teen space
- Sample activity: Create more spaces available for individual and group homework use
- Sample activity: Rearrange collections for easier discovery and access
- ✔ **Outcome:** *Children and teens will feel welcome and easily identify age-appropriate spaces within the department for their activities*

*"As a newer parent, I love the children's library. There are resources as a new parent and my tiny human loves the fish tanks. My wife has utilized mama and me yoga programming which was so helpful in getting out of the house. I'm so excited for all the things we'll do at and with Forbes as our kids grow!"*

– Survey responder

**Objective: Foster a community around early literacy starting at birth**

- Sample activity: Distribute welcome packets to families of new babies
- Sample activity: Incorporate learning opportunities for caregivers about early literacy topics in early childhood programming
- ✔ **Outcome:** *Parents and caregivers in our community will feel empowered to help their children develop the self-confidence, enthusiasm, and motivation they need to read and succeed*





## Goal 5: Fun

Forbes Library enriches lives by providing free entertainment, recreational reading, access to the arts, and opportunities to create.

From our committee, survey, and conversations with stakeholders, we heard repeatedly that the community wants us to keep doing what we are doing, but even more so. As we tackle so many important and serious topics in our plan, we didn't want to lose sight of the fact that most people come to the library for leisure, whether it is reading, movies, or music; or to experience a concert, art, or other program. We have the advantage of being located in Northampton, Massachusetts, one of the top small cultural cities in the United States, with lively art, music, dance, theater, and literary scenes. We also are fortunate to be centered in the Five College communities of the Connecticut River Valley. This positions us to serve as an important place to connect the community to these resources.

We also heard about the isolation that some people are experiencing with our increasing reliance on technology and a growing income disparity that puts some recreational opportunities out of reach. The library is a place that encourages people to come and to connect with their neighbor, a stranger, or become more involved with their community.

*“As a disabled person with limited income, Forbes Library is an invaluable source of education, entertainment, connection to distant friends (through internet), self-care (yoga), and a comfortable free place to get out of my tiny apartment, so important for my well-being on many levels.”*

– Survey responder



## Objective: Celebrate and support authors and readers

- Sample activity: Present a local children's authors series
- Sample activity: Continue the library's longstanding tradition of excellent and diverse literary series curated by the library's Writer-in-Residence
- Sample activity: Increase awareness of popular reading materials through increased displays, newsletters, book talks, and partnerships with local booksellers
- ✔ *Outcome:* Local authors will have opportunity for public awareness and patrons will have opportunity for discovery of our rich local literary environment



## Objective: Inspire and encourage the community to explore and create

- Sample activity: Develop a circulating collection of A/V equipment in partnership with Northampton Community Television (NCTV)
- Sample activity: Add a garden tool collection in partnership with community organizations
- ✔ *Outcome:* The community will have increased access to equipment that can be used to develop new skills and interests



## Objective: Provide opportunities to experience art and music

- Sample activity: Develop a series of intergenerational hands-on art workshops
- Sample activity: Offer a Musicians-in-Residence program annually
- ✔ *Outcome:* Patrons will have free opportunities to create and experience art and music

## Objective: Enhance library grounds for community building and education

- Sample activity: Increase outdoor seating areas, including cozy reading areas
- Sample activity: Create garden spaces that educate and provide peaceful reflection opportunities
- ✔ *Outcome:* The community will increase their use and enjoyment of the library grounds



We're new here.  
Take us home!  
3-week loan, 1 per patron





# Community Description

## Introduction

The city of Northampton is situated in the heart of the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, which in 2007 *The New York Times* called “arguably the most author-saturated, book-cherishing, literature-celebrating place in the nation.” Indeed, Northampton is known for its extensive resources for families, senior citizens, and those interested in the arts, historic preservation, and outdoor activities both recreational and agricultural, all of which Forbes Library seeks to support and augment. Smith College, a member of the valley’s Five College Consortium, is located directly across West Street from Forbes, and affords residents access to world-class educational opportunities, entertainment, and cultural activities that belie its rural setting.

Northampton has what its city planners, writing in 1999, called a sense of place: “The physical character of our buildings, the beauty of the landscape, and the passion for community we citizens hold dear makes this city livable and worth planning for” (Northampton Vision 2020). Located in the foothills of the Berkshires, on the fertile soil of the western bank of the Connecticut River, Northampton is a small city, with about 28,600 residents. The city was founded in 1654 and has a long history of small farms, factories, and mills, and today includes the villages of Florence, Leeds, and Bay State.

The city’s active, walkable downtown, located just a couple of blocks from Forbes Library, is one of the most successful regenerations of a New England village. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a cultural district by the state, the downtown is known for its large number of locally-owned businesses, many along its historic Main Street, that attract visitors and locals alike. The 2016 *WalletHub* named Northampton one of the top 10 best small cities in the U.S.

Northampton has frequently been named as one of the “Top 25 Arts Destinations” by *American Style Magazine*. In 2017, the *Boston Globe* highlighted Northampton in an article: “How Western Mass. became kids’ lit central”. The article said, “Few regions are as familiar with this resurgence as the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, which, for a variety of reasons, positively teems with children’s book authors. ‘We think, per capita, we have the largest population of children’s writers in the country,’ says Jane Yolen, prolific author of 350 books.” Northampton has also won numerous city planning, governing, and transportation awards. The city has been the home of luminaries including Sojourner Truth, Calvin Coolidge, Leonard Baskin, Amelia Earhart, Sylvia Plath, Kurt Vonnegut, and the fiery Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards.





The city is often known by its moniker, “Paradise City,” conferred on it by opera singer Jenny Lind in 1851. That this name has endured for more 150 years is not an accident. Northampton is a culturally rich, tolerant, and pleasant place to live, but is not immune to challenges. More than 17% of people in Northampton (21% for children under 18) have income below the federal poverty guidelines which is 1½ times more than the state average of people living below the poverty line. There is an increasing gap between local wages and cost of basic needs with the biggest drivers of this gap being the high cost of housing and child care. Other contributing factors are inadequate public transportation, high rate of food insecurity, and a significant rate of mental health issues.

Northampton is known for its large LGBTQ community that is celebrated each year with a parade and rally during “NoHo Pride” on the first Saturday in May.

Northampton is 20 miles north of Springfield, 100 miles west of Boston, and is situated in close proximity to Interstates 91 and 90. As the county seat of Hampshire County, it hosts the county jail and courthouse, two homeless shelters, a domestic violence service organization, transitional housing, halfway houses, a center for immigrants, and a variety of subsidized housing complexes. Northampton is also home to 2,500 Smith College undergraduates.



## Demographics

While Northampton closely follows the norms of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it is slightly poorer and significantly whiter, according to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates:

|                                      | Median income | Household median income | White | Black | Latino | Asian |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| <b>Northampton</b>                   | \$35,102      | \$59,274                | 87.4% | 2.2%  | 8.7%   | 5.9%  |
| <b>Commonwealth of Massachusetts</b> | \$36,895      | \$68,583                | 80.4% | 6.6%  | 9.6%   | 5.3%  |

Northampton’s current median age is 40.0 and there are 12,000 households in the city. While 20.7% of the population is under the age of 20, 13.5% is over the age of 65 – indeed, the city was named “#1 Best Place for Retirees” by *The New York Times* in 2007, and one of the “Great Cities for the Simple Life” by *AARP* magazine in 2009.

Northampton has 15,279 working residents, of whom 50% work in the city (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. *Northampton Community Profile*. 2015). The majority of residents, 63.9%, are employed in service industries, including education and health care. The retail trade employs 9.6% of the population.



The ongoing wars in the Middle East have led to an increased veteran population over the last decade. Northampton is a regional hub for veterans' services, and has the largest per capita population receiving veterans' services in the Commonwealth. This is due in part to the V.A. Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System, and the nonprofit Soldier On, both located in Leeds, which together house more than 450 veterans.

Northampton residents age 25 and older are roughly twice as likely to have completed postgraduate work than Commonwealth residents in general. In fact, they are more likely to have completed a graduate or professional degree (33%) than to have completed a bachelor's degree alone (24.6%). About half the population age 25 or older (57.6%) has four or more years of college, according to the city's 2011 Community Profile. A third of all young people (18-34) live with parents and 25% of those are idle, not going to school or work.

While several private and charter school options exist in and around Northampton, most residents send their children to public school. The total enrollment in the public schools is 2,681, although some of these are school-choice students from other municipalities. Four elementary schools feed into the middle school, and most of those students continue to the Northampton High School in the ninth grade. English is not the first language for 7.7% of the population, and 1.5% have limited English proficiency; 20.5% of students fall in the special education category; 28.7% are considered low-income, and 28.7% of Northampton public school students receive free or reduced lunch. The high school graduation rate is 88.4%.

In the city overall, 6.5% of the population are foreign-born, and 12.5% speak a language other than English at home. According to the Center for New Americans, a local agency that serves the area's immigrants, the greater Northampton area is home to people from more than 50 different countries and 35 different languages. Spanish and Asian languages, including Chinese, are the most commonly spoken.



## Housing & the Economy

The city has a significant affordable housing gap. (The federal government considers housing affordable when it accounts for no more than 30% of household income.) The median sales price of a house is \$270,000, per the city's 2015 Community Profile, and the city has a vacancy rate of less than 5% on both rental properties and houses for sale. Rental costs are at or slightly above the affordable mark for the median income of city residents. There are also a number of homeless people in our community.

The increase in property values is also skewing age demographics, as older people with higher incomes and more savings move into town. The percent of the population aged 45-55 increased by more than 75% between 1990 and 2010, while the percent of the population aged 15-44 has decreased. City planners have worked to create guidelines that will bolster what affordable housing exists by enacting dense zoning in the downtown area, and by adopting mixed-use zoning for new construction.



# Green Northampton

The city's residents have long shown great interest in the environment:

- Northampton's Community Preservation Act imposes a 3% surcharge on city property tax (for residential properties this applies only after the first \$100,000 of value).
- The city has achieved "Tree City U.S.A." status from the National Arbor Day Foundation, ten times between 2005 and 2016.
- Northampton received an award for having citizens sign up for New England Greenstart, whereby residents pay a higher electricity rate to generate their power from renewable resources.
- The city's sustainability movement is very strong. For instance, Northampton has been acquiring land for preservation in excess of its goals and, in 2015, a City Council ordinance banned the distribution of single use plastic bags.
- Grow Food Northampton was established as a local non-profit whose mission is to promote food security by advancing sustainable agriculture in the Northampton, Massachusetts area.
- The city hosts two vibrant weekly farmer's markets including one that runs year round.
- In 2014, Northampton was named as a 5-STAR community, recognized as top tier achiever in national sustainability.

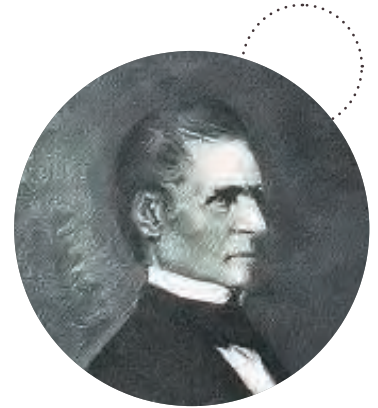
All of this points to a community that values quality of life and is willing to support those values fiscally and to organize around them socially. Forbes Library fits well in this context and, as such, benefits from broad community support.





# Library Description

The Forbes Library, situated near Northampton's popular downtown, opened in 1894, the product of a bequest by Judge Charles E. Forbes, who wished to build a public library for the citizens of Northampton. The massive three-story stone building, which is on the Register of Historic Buildings, was designed by William Brocklesby to be completely fire proof with all steel framing and stone, slate, and copper exterior. A complete renovation of the interior was finished in 2001, accentuating many of the Forbes' unique features, such as the glass mezzanine floors, expansive spaces, and the Guastavino arches which support the second floor.



The first Librarian of Forbes was Charles Ammi Cutter, who had created the Cutter Expansive Classification System while he was Librarian at the Boston Athenaeum. He implemented his system at Forbes Library, which is one of only five libraries in the world still using the Cutter System.

Forbes served as Smith College's first library and still maintains a close connection to its collegiate neighbor as well as to the vibrant town of Northampton. Northampton is home to two independent public libraries. Lilly Library with its own board of trustees, endowments, and charter is located in the Florence neighborhood of Northampton. Both libraries share city and state library support and their combined hours fulfill the state requirement for certification. Lilly Library is smaller and therefore costs less to operate, but the libraries cooperate in as many ways as possible. Both are members of the resource sharing network C/W MARS and the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) by which they share resources with all libraries in the region. Forbes and Lilly coordinate some programming, support each other's initiatives, and share certain resources, such as selected databases and large print books.

Forbes Library depends upon the city for its operating budget, but its entire materials budget is supplied by endowment funds and library fundraising. The library received a construction grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in 1998 which paid for part of the interior renovation. The library has received several humanities grants, preservation grants, local targeted grants for programs, and significant support from the Friends of Forbes Library.



*I think you are on exactly the right track with your mission, vision, goals, and objectives . . . it is critical to have multiple approaches for each objective that allow that evolution with limited resources.*

– Wayne Feiden, City Planner & Strategic Planning Committee Member

The Forbes collections and services are large and varied, including popular fiction and non-fiction, museum passes, large arts and music and children's departments, community meeting rooms, and an impressive art gallery, but also an extensive local history and genealogy collection for Hampshire County as well as the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum. Forbes also offers Northampton an array of programming and reference services for both children and adults, ranging from author readings, music and dance demonstrations, dramatic readings and performances, to writing workshops, book and poetry discussion groups, garden tours, and film series. There is a meeting room, study room and community room available for public use. Forbes offers an Outreach Delivery Program which delivers materials to nursing homes and the homebound. The information services and children's departments present programs to community groups to connect them to the library's many targeted services. The library's website provides remote access to databases, ebook collections, and a calendar of events and serves as a virtual branch for the library.



What our patrons say:

*"Because books = love, wisdom, inspiration, imagination, communication, LIFE"*

*"Among other things: It is sooo beautiful, especially all the oak on stairways, bookshelves, circulation desk, walls, etc. Must mention the wonderful, helpful, congenial staff as well!"*

*"My 2nd home in Noho. Can't live without."*

*"I've taken out so many books that have had a profound impact on my life. They have helped me to grow and learn. They have given me reassurance and strength. I've learned how to run my first 5K, how to make a career switch, how to practice mindfulness in my daily life, how to make crepes, all from books I borrowed from our local library."*

*"I often use the library as working space. I write there. I see many others doing this as well. Forbes is a co-working space, on top of everything else that it is."*

*"I love Forbes and how it is so connected to the community."*

*"Forbes Library is a beautiful, spacious sanctuary for me."*



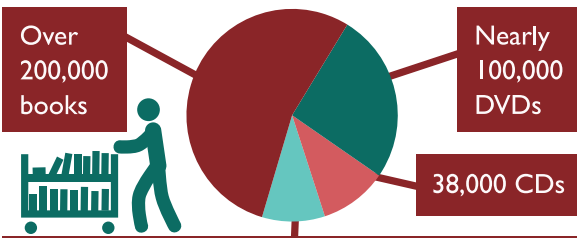
# Forbes Library in 2017

Forbes Library had 223,948 visitors in the last year. What brought them to the library?



*"Forbes Library is a safe refuge in any kind of weather or turmoil in the world. The staff are very knowledgeable and kind, the stacks are very accessible, the resources are vast. I love our library!" — a Forbes Library patron*

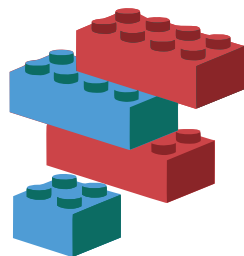
## The library lends over 370,000 items a year



With the remaining 10% made up of magazines, e-books, musical instruments, museum passes and other non-traditional collections!

## The meeting rooms were used 1,841 times

That includes programs for kids and teens (with attendance of more than 4,500) and programs for adults (with attendance of more than 9,700). Programs have included:



ukulele sing-alongs,

author events, yoga,



writing groups, book discussions, storytimes, concerts, films, local history, and much more!

## People connect to the Internet.

Many folks rely on the library to get online. With 525 computer reservations and more than 300 wireless sessions each week, this is a popular and essential service.



## The library answered 55,744 questions.

Librarians answer a variety of questions, about books, movies, history, genealogy, current events, and more!

How can I learn more about...?

What should I read next?

Where can I find...?

Who was...?

## The library has all sorts of collections...

more than 172,000 books, CDs, DVDs, and periodicals,

more than 111,000 e-books, e-audio, and other e-content,



museum passes,

drums,



ukuleles,



concertinas,

and many other musical instruments,



a local history collection with maps, photos, journals, and other historical documents

and much, much, more!

**Please Support Forbes Library!**  
<http://forbeslibrary.org/giving/>



20 West Street, Northampton, MA 01060  
 413-587-1011  
[forbeslibrary.org](http://forbeslibrary.org)

# Appendix A: Overview of the Strategic Planning Process



In early 2017, we embarked on a highly collaborative and community-focused strategic planning process. The Trustees appointed fellow trustee Katy Wight as the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee on February 22, 2017. Forbes Library's current plan had expired, and with a new director and assistant director, it was noted that, "With so much change, the plan will help to focus and set the direction for the library." Susan Kohler-Gray was selected as consultant for this endeavor, donating part of her time.

The Strategic Planning Committee was formed in March, and had three very focused meetings, following the 'Three Meeting Model' endorsed by the Massachusetts Library System. This group participated in a SOAR exercise (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results), which allowed us to learn what we are doing well, what we could be doing better, and what people would like to see the library concentrating on. The SOAR exercise was also conducted with the Coolidge Committee, Friends of Forbes, the staff of the library, and the Forbes Library Trustees. Kristi Chadwick, Consultant, Massachusetts Library System, moderated a public forum in May. Nora Blake, Director of the Emily Williston Memorial Library, Easthampton, MA, moderated a Forbes Library staff forum. This was part of an exchange, as the Emily Williston Memorial Library, Easthampton, MA, was also conducting a strategic planning process.

Library staff and trustees conducted over 40 interviews with community stakeholders. See Appendix C for a summary of the interviews.

A community survey was conducted, with 1,060 responses. We made an effort to reach out to people who were not current library patrons or used the library infrequently.

The Planning Committee conducted research and analysis of:

- Northampton demographics and community analysis
- Forbes Library statistics, existing programs, collections, staffing, and available technology
- Trends and key issues impacting Northampton and the surrounding region
- Nationwide trends relevant to library use.

We reviewed and adopted a revised library mission and created a library vision. We involved patrons, stakeholders, and staff through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The resulting Strategic Plan articulates a clear set of principles and priorities for leaders, staff, partners, and supporters, capitalizing on the needs of the community and the library's unique strengths. The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, providing a continuing touchstone for staff and flexible enough to change as our city evolves. There will be another public meeting to introduce the plan at which the library will be soliciting feedback and seeking ongoing communication.

*I am most excited by the potential of community-building activities enabled by thoughtful Children's Department programming.*

– David Lukens, Northampton Montessori & Strategic Planning Committee Member



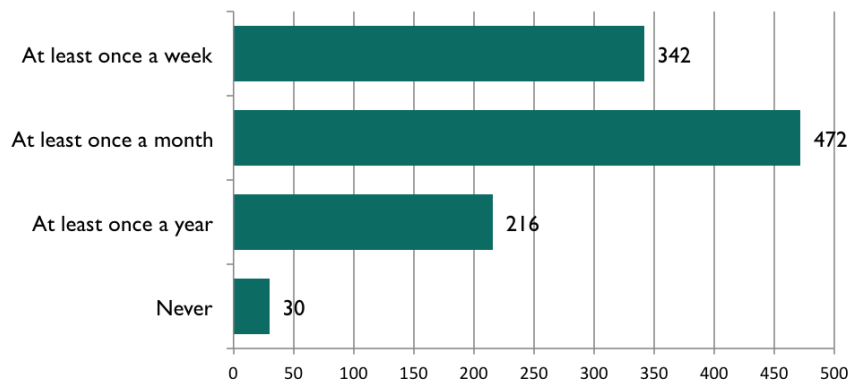
# Appendix B: Forbes Library Community Survey Results

Forbes Library conducted a community survey from April 21, 2017 until May 21, 2017. The library distributed large print surveys and promoted an online version using SurveyMonkey. In all, the library collected 1,060 responses exceeding our goal of 1,000 responses. Below is a summary of the survey's results. This survey is one of several tools used by the Strategic Planning Committee to ascertain the community's needs.

## Question 1: How often do you use the library?

Respondents to the survey were mostly regular library users, with 814 of the respondents (77%) using the library at least once a month. Only 30 of the respondents (3%) use the library less than once a year.

**Q1: How often do you usually use the library?**



## Question 2: If you do not use Forbes Library, what reasons prevent you from using it?

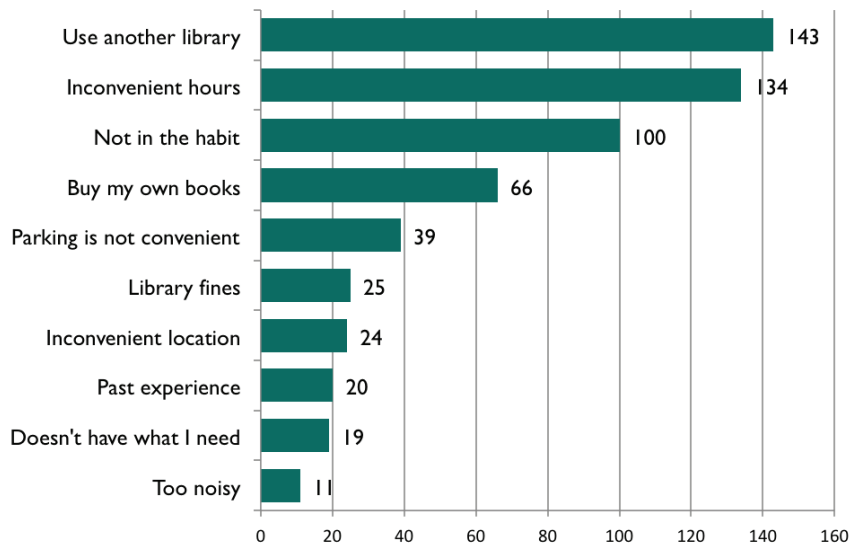
The top response was "Use another library". Many respondents selected this response because they use multiple libraries including Forbes Library. Geography may play a factor here: of the 143 respondents who selected "Use another library", only 26 (18%) gave their zip code as 01060 and many respondents indicated in the open response that they frequent another library closer to their home.

After "use another library" the top responses were: "inconvenient hours", "not in the habit of using the library", and "buy my own books".





## Q2: If you do not use Forbes Library, what reasons prevent you from using it?



You can find explanations on how to use many of Forbes Library's services at: <http://forbeslibrary.org/help/>



## Question 3: Of the times that we are closed, when would you be most likely to use the library?

Saturday mornings, Saturday afternoons, and Sunday afternoons were each selected by more than one third of those answering the question, but even the least popular choices (Saturday and Sunday evenings) received more than 60 answers each.

The responses to this question are distributed somewhat differently from the responses about hours in Question 2 ("What reasons prevent you from using the library?"). Respondents were nearly evenly divided between those who couldn't visit the library because it wasn't open on weekday evenings, those who couldn't visit the library because it was closed on Saturdays during the summer, and those who couldn't visit the library because it is closed on Sundays.

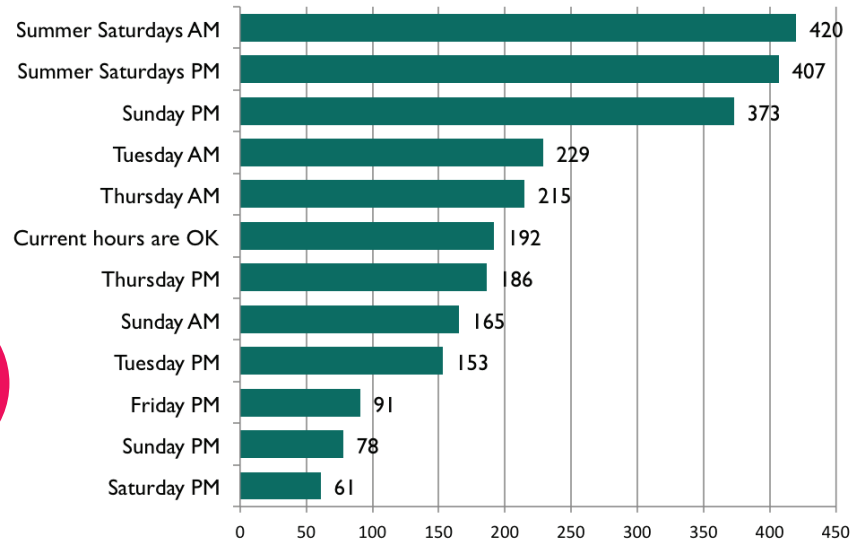
In addition, in the responses to both Question 2 and Question 3, many patrons indicated that they find the irregularity of the library's hours from day to day confusing, or that they find the necessity of looking up the library's hours, because of their irregularity, inconvenient.



The comments to this question make it clear that many respondents feel strongly that the library should be open more or different hours. Several respondents complained about the limited hours of specific departments (the Children’s Department and the Hampshire Room for Local History) which are sometimes closed even when the library is open.

Several respondents suggested possible redistributions of the library’s schedule in order to either make the schedule more regular or to allow more evening or weekend hours.

### Q3: When would you be most likely to use the library? (Of times the library is closed.)



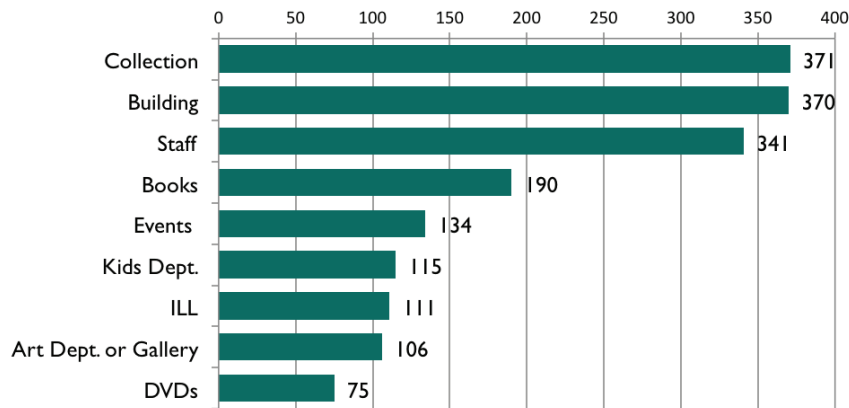
## Question 4: What do you like best about Forbes?

Major themes in the responses received were the quality of the collection, the many desirable characteristics of the building including its atmosphere and location, and quality and helpfulness of the library staff. One third of all responses included one or more of these themes.

In addition, the library’s books, events, Children’s Department, Interlibrary Loan, and Art Department and gallery were each praised in more than 100 of the responses. Other aspects of the library that respondents said they liked best include the film collection, the ideals of the library, ebooks, databases and other digital resources, the magazine collection, the Writer-in-Residence and related programs, the Hampshire Room for Local History and genealogical resources, meeting spaces, audiobooks, accessibility, the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum, book displays, staff picks, and reader’s advisory services.



**Q4: What do you like best about Forbes?**  
(answers with more than 50 responses)



## Question 5: What do you like least about Forbes?

The responses to this question were diverse. The following themes were identified in ten or more of the responses: library hours, parking, the quality of the collection, library staff, the use of the Cutter system, noise in the library, unclear layout of the library making it difficult to navigate, other library patrons, poor software or software documentation, poor Wi-Fi or Internet, and the climate being overly hot or stuffy. Themes that appeared in less than ten, but more than five responses include dim lighting, smell, the appearance of the library, that there are not enough comfortable chairs or comfortable areas, the stairs, the weight of the front doors, that the library is unfunded, overdue fines, sleeping patrons, and physically difficult shelving.

The most common complaints by far were about the hours, parking, and the collection. These were often more specific and are worth breaking down further.

### Hours

Many respondents indicated that they did not like the library hours, either indicating that the library was not open enough, not open when they needed it, or that the hours were confusing. Many respondents told stories of times they arrived at the closed library expecting it to be open.

| Breakdown of Responses about Hours |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Hours short, or unspecified hours  | 108 |
| Summer hours                       | 60  |
| Evening hours                      | 30  |
| Sunday hours                       | 26  |
| Morning hours                      | 25  |
| Hours confusing                    | 14  |
| Children's department hours        | 5   |



## Parking

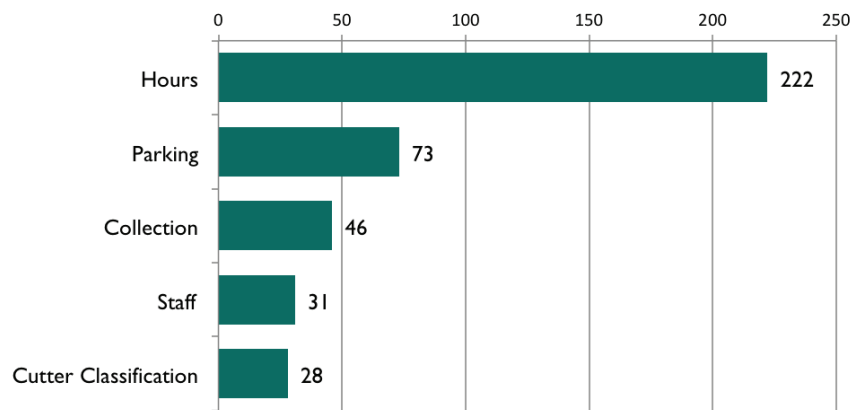
Many respondents indicated that they did not like parking at the library. Many said they disliked having to pay to park. Others indicated that they were happy to pay, but felt that the time limits on the meters were a problem. Some disliked the walk from the parking lot to the library's entrance, and some were concerned that too many people parking in the library lot were not library patrons.

## Collections

Many respondents indicated that they did not like the library's collection or some part of the collection. These responses were diverse, but most respondents either felt that a collection was too small or that it was out of date.



**Q5: What do you like least about Forbes?**  
(Themes appearing in 25 or more responses)



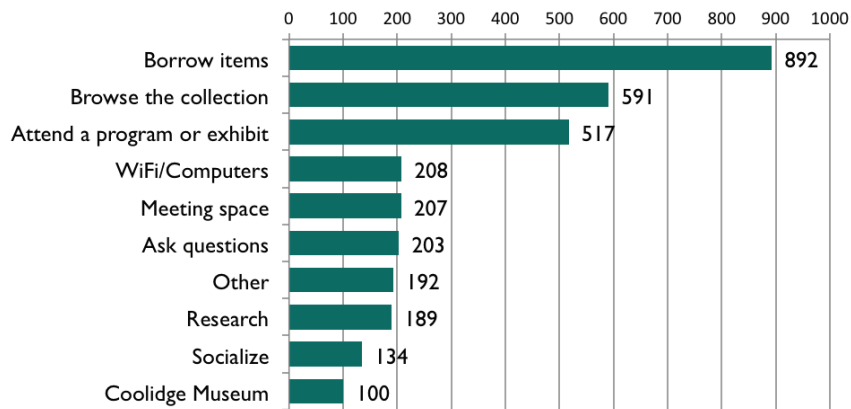
## Question 6: What do you usually use the library for?

The majority of people use the library to borrow items or browse the collection (85.3% and 56.6% respectively). Almost 50% of respondents said they used the library to attend a program or exhibit.

A number of people chose to provide comments for this question. Many of the responses related to bringing children to the library; writing; accessing magazines, newspapers, Hosmer Gallery, exhibits, museum passes; interlibrary loan; and to enjoy the space both inside and the library lawn. It's clear that the library is a resource in many different ways for people.



**Q6: What do you usually use the library for?**  
(answers receiving 100 or more responses)

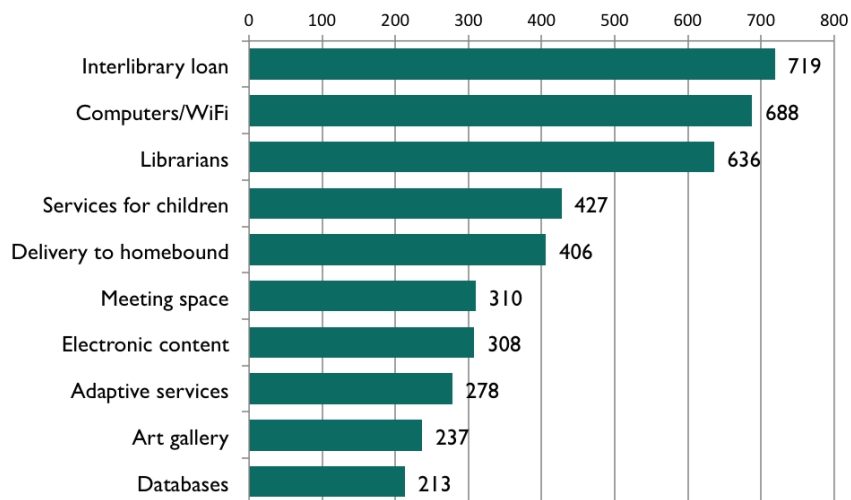


**Question 7: Which services do you think it is most important for the library to offer?**

Interlibrary loans, access to computers and Wi-Fi, assistance from librarians, services for children, and delivery of books to homebound persons in Northampton were the five most popular responses. Write-in responses included museum passes, e-books, movies, access to microfilm, workshops, and the rotating art exhibit.

A number of people noted that it was hard to choose only five responses from this list; several stated that all options were important. One person representative of others said "Very difficult to choose because ALL of these seem critical to me."

**Q7: Which programs or services do you think are most important for the library to offer?**  
(responses receiving more than 200 responses)



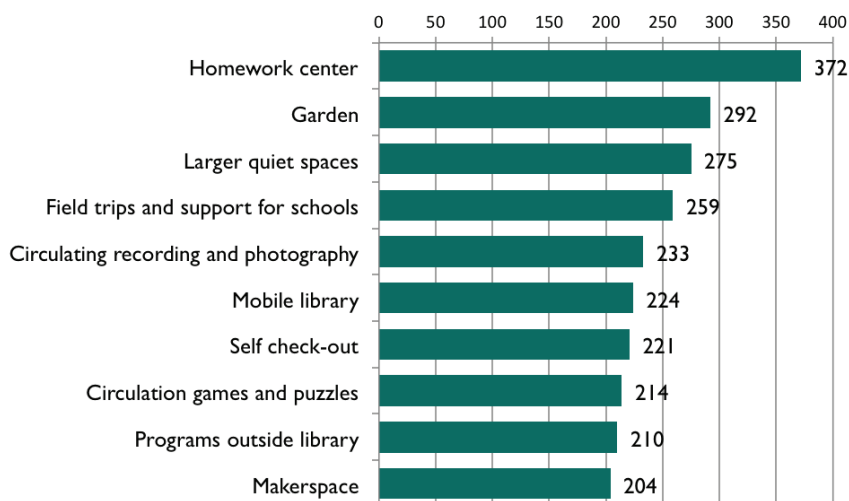
## Question 8: Which services would you like to see the library create?

The top three responses were: after school homework center, library garden, and larger quiet space. Some respondents noted that the library should focus on what it was currently doing well rather than adding new services, while others noted that all options presented seemed important.

Several people noted that additional hours were more important. One person said “First and foremost, I’d like the library to be open more hours and have better access to the resources already there before trying to add new things.”

### Q8: Which services would you like to see the library create?

(answers receiving 200 or more responses)



To stay informed about upcoming programs at Forbes Library, check our events page and sign up for our mailing list at: <http://forbeslibrary.org/events/>



“A space for tweens that is modern and inviting.”

“I frequently use the lawn chairs and tables and I love the peace of working outdoors in a visually beautiful space.”

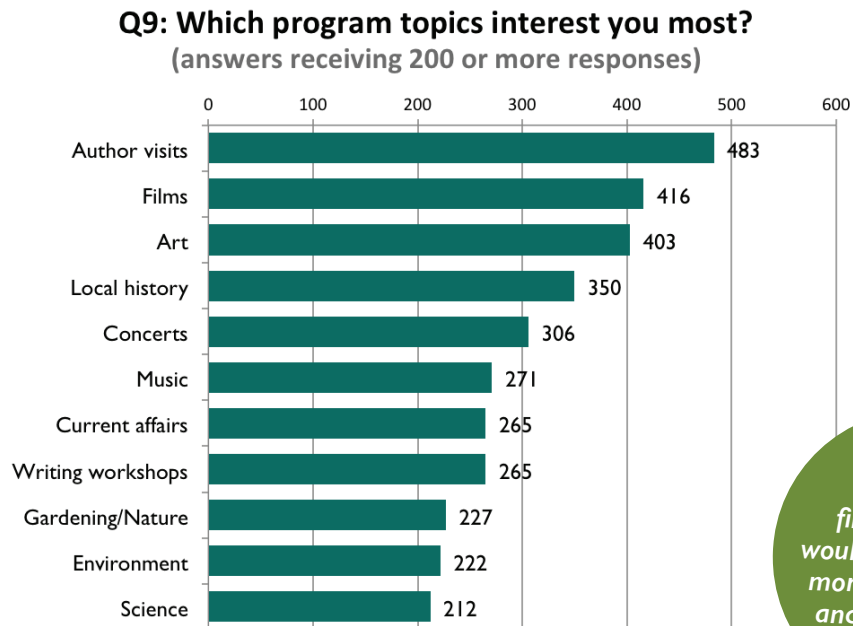
“It just feels impossible to choose five, as all of these services seem so vital to our community”

“I like how the library is trying to do more with writing. There is presently a kind of writing/manuscript discussion group, but it seems to be for large projects. One that was just for smaller pieces would be great. Also, Westhampton’s library offered a memoir writing class, and that was so full they had to turn back people! I would love a program like that.”

Great Idea! Our “Writing Your Life” workshop begins Oct 23, 2017!  
(Find more information at: [forbeslibrary.libcal.com/event/3435105](http://forbeslibrary.libcal.com/event/3435105))



## Question 9: Which program topics interest you most?



“Ongoing classes in how to use particular well-known software, like Adobe Photoshop or QuickBooks.”

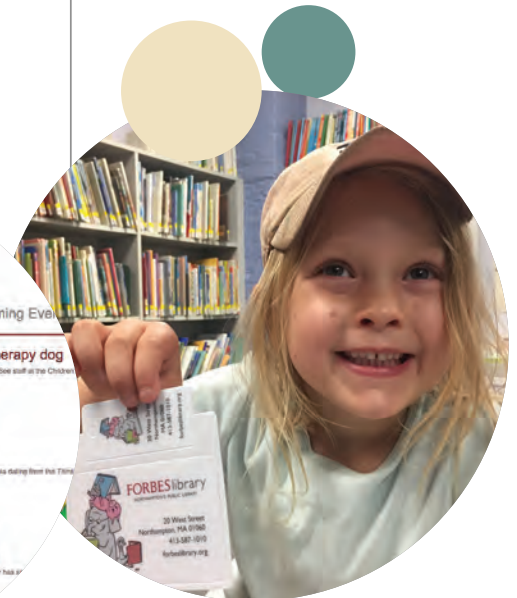
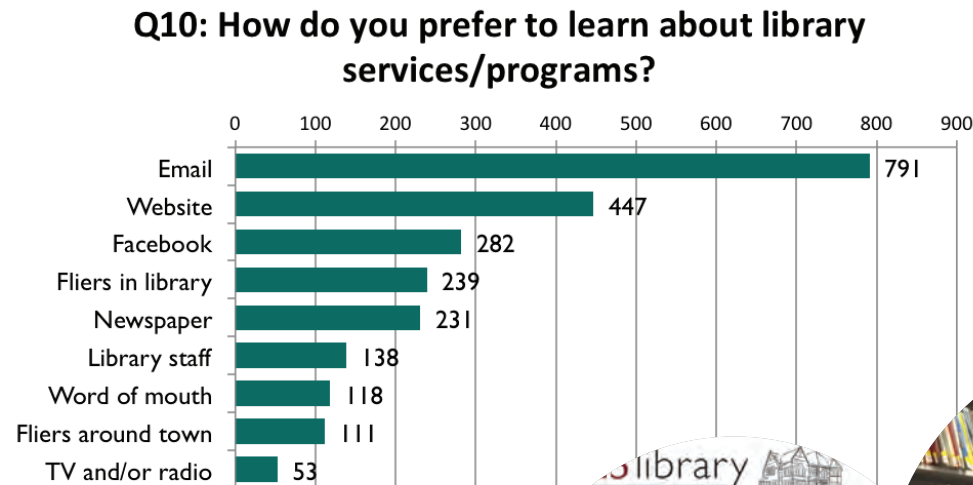
“Singalong nights . . . jazz standards, 60’s songs, show tunes.”

“Please have more films – weekly would be great! And more yoga classes, and meditation.”

“Environment, films, genealogy, local history, mind/body, music, poetry talks, philosophy, writing workshops.”

“local Ted Talks?”

## Question 10: How do you prefer to learn about library services/programs?



## Question 11: Are there parts of the library's collection that you would like to see expanded? New collection suggestions?

There were a wide variety of responses such as:

*"I thought about this for a good ten minutes and I am hard pressed to think of a collection that I feel needs expansion. I usually find what I'm looking for, and more! I guess a collection of tabletop/rpg [role-playing] games would be neat. There's a flourishing local indie game design community here in the valley, too."*

*"Women of color authors writing sci-fi like Marge Piercy, Butler and so many contemporary ones."*

***"What happened to the LGBTQ collection that visited once a month at the Senior Center? How about inviting them to share their collection monthly at Forbes?"***

*"Perhaps this is beyond the scope of the library, but perhaps in collaboration with NCTV, create a film collection that includes non-mainstream films and/or conduct a monthly film series that highlights independent films with a discussion or Q&A afterwards."*

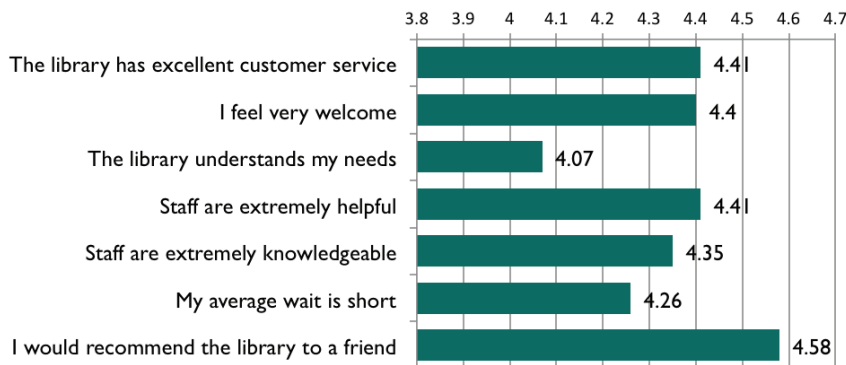
The Out Books on Wheels collection is available in the library's Reading Room

## Question 12: How would you rate your customer satisfaction with Forbes?

Most of the responses were positive, generally simple praise of the library or its staff. Some of the responses provided context or qualifying information for the ratings, generally because a library patron had received good service on some occasions and poor service on others. The remaining responses identified specific problems.

### Q12: How would you rate your customer satisfaction with Forbes?

3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree



*"Forbes has an awesome staff; and programs/collections/ devotion to community. We really love our library and so appreciate everyone, all the staff, trustees, matrons and patrons. Thank you for everything."*

*"The building and grounds are clean and well-groomed, at all times."*

*"Children's area staff is always wonderful. I bring my granddaughter here at least 1-2 times a week after pre-school. The librarians are always very good with small children."*



## Question 13: What would you like to tell us that we have not already asked?

The responses varied greatly. Here are some examples:

*"I use a combination of local libraries: Lilly, Forbes, Meekins, and Westhampton. I am deeply appreciative for how you work together and that I can have a good experience across different libraries. The interlibrary loans and this collaboration make it far easier to take advantage of our libraries."*

*"I hope you keep in mind services for people who do not use computers... I fear they may get lost in this technology-driven society."*

### **"Do you do anything special for people with disabilities?"**

*"A speed-read section where high demand books are available for one week with no renewables or reserves. This would speed the circulation of popular books – many books can easily be read in a week and this would shorten wait times. Many libraries do this."*

*"I find myself wanting to help out with routine maintenance at the library, both inside and outside the building. Might it be possible to organize groups of work parties throughout the year so that residents can help maintain the precious resource?"*

*"More Spanish speaking programs & outreach into the Latino community."*

*"I know I miss lots of great events that happen at Forbes. I'd like to be sure I'm hearing about them. And I would very much NOT like to see self-check out. The human touch is very important, and I'd hate to see the library cave in to more automation. Up with people!"*

*"I know you guys have to handle all members of the community, including those that might not be in the best mental or physical health. I just want to commend you (and libraries in general) for welcoming everyone in, even when it may be uncomfortable to do so."*

*"I would like more interaction and activities for youth, especially a better presence at JFK Middle School and the public high school."*



**Forbes Library** strives to serve patrons with disabilities through accessibility features and accommodations. We have accessible formats in our collections (large print, audio books, Braille), accessible software available for patrons (screen reading software, magnifiers), and provide accommodations upon request (captioning or interpreters at programs, longer loan times, text reference service).

Visit <http://forbeslibrary.org/accessibility/>

or call 413-587-1011 to find out more.



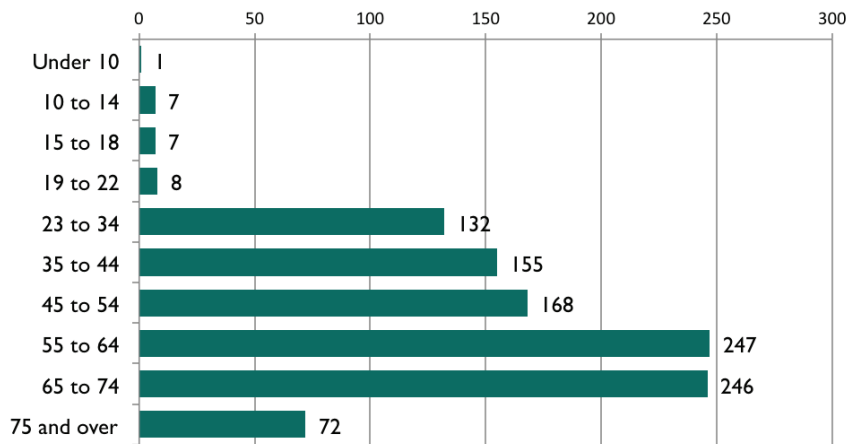
## Question 14: What three words would you use to describe Forbes Library?

The following words appeared twenty or more times in the responses to this question: welcoming (122), beautiful (113), community (96), friendly (89), helpful (77), resource (75), accessible (68), historic (64), comfortable (47), useful (38), convenient (31), library (30), excellent (24), quiet (24), books (23), essential (22), local (22), important (20).



## Question 15: What is your age?

Q15: What is your age?



## Question 16: Please tell us the zip code where you live.

Responses were not limited to valid zip codes, but most respondents did provide a five digit zip code. This question, was answered by 1,047 people (98.8% of respondents).

23% of people who responded indicated they live outside of Northampton. Of the 51% who live in Northampton, 21% live in Florence and 5% in Leeds.



# Appendix C: Stakeholder Interviews



Library staff and trustees conducted over 40 interviews with community stakeholders. The stakeholders are representatives of city and state government, local schools of various types and levels, nonprofits and businesses, and other community organizations. We asked the following questions:

- Do you see changes or big issues in the community that have or will affect your organization?
- How is your organization meeting these changing needs?
- Would these changes affect the way you now or would use the library?
- From the perspective of your organization, are there changes Forbes Library can make that will help your organization?

## Challenges local organizations are facing

The issues mentioned most often by our stakeholders fell into five categories. The increasing income gap and housing disparity were mentioned most often followed by changing demographics (including an aging population).

### Economics

- Income & housing disparity/wage gap
- Funding
- Healthcare affordability
- Transportation

### Technology

- Rapid changes in technology
- Modern technology is isolating
- Fake news/information overload

### Community Engagement

- Increased interest in community organizing/action/participation
- Engaging all parts of the community in non-traditional ways (i.e., online)
- Space for activities/meetings

### Demographics

- Aging population
- Changing demographics
- Incoming refugees
- How to better serve non-English speakers
- Need more skilled workforce
- Islamophobia/racism

### Health

- Stress, insecurity, anxiety
- Increased need for health and mental health services
- Opioid crisis



Many of the organizations our interviewees are associated with are already working on these challenges via:

- new programs
- changing curriculums
- adding staff
- seeking additional funding/grant writing
- increased outreach and more promotion of services
- experimenting with different ways of engaging with people
- task forces
- holding community stakeholder meetings
- joining forces with, or supporting other organizations
- redesigning missions and values
- investing in training and technology
- hiring people with higher tech skills

Interviewees were asked how their challenges affect how they use the library and how Forbes can help. These are some of the responses:

#### Services for seniors

- Outreach delivery service
- Programs at senior facilities
- Offer technology training

#### Education

- More outreach in schools (no elementary school librarian in Northampton now)
- More outreach to families re: early childhood education
- Offer more resources and tech for children with learning issues

#### Income inequality issues

- More outreach to ensure low-income community members feel welcome
- Easy access to computers for all (especially refugees)
- Services for teens aging out of foster system
- Outreach programs when new housing facilities open in town
- More outreach to low income students during the summers – go to them
- Offer events relevant to refugees
- Bookmobile to lower income neighborhoods
- Loan mobile hot-spots (collaborate with schools)

#### Collaborate with other organizations

- More collaboration with Smith Library (especially to provide study space during construction of their new building)
- Work with local bookstore on joint programming
- Shared programming with other organizations & shared grants

#### Financial

- Work more closely with Lilly Library to reduce costs for both
- Look for ways to be more efficient to enable more open hours

#### Miscellaneous

- Provide remote access to more of special collections
- Encourage people to walk or bike to the library
- Increase use of library lawn
- Better social media presence and announcement of programs/events
- Provide information for young people looking to become more civically engaged



# Appendix D: Aggregated Summary of S.O.A.R. Analysis



| <b>STRENGTHS</b><br>What are the Forbes' greatest assets? What is working really well? What is valued most?<br><br>What good things do stakeholders say about the library?   | <b>OPPORTUNITIES</b><br>What is happening in the community that helps Forbes benefit others?<br><br>How can Forbes repurpose its weaknesses? How can Forbes repurpose its threats?  | <b>ASPIRATIONS</b><br>Considering the Forbes' strengths and opportunities, where do you want it to be in 2024? What are your hopes for the library?   | <b>RESULTS</b><br>What will be the measurable results if we achieve our preferred future? How will we know success? What will be different for our stakeholders/community? What will be different for the staff?   |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Iconic Building</b> – attractive, historic, comfortable, good location</p> <p><b>Expert Staff</b> – welcoming, highly trained and skilled</p> <p><b>Supportive Community</b> – dedicated patrons, Friends of Forbes Library, volunteers and community at large</p> <p><b>Quality Collections</b> – well curated book and media collection, Special Collections and digital offerings</p> <p><b>Educational and Recreational Programming</b> – something for all ages and tastes</p> <p><b>Community Center</b> – meeting space, hub of activity, art gallery</p> <p><b>Strong Values</b> – free and open to all, responsive, community driven, supports literacy, democratic, innovative</p> | <p><b>Organizational Partnerships</b> – schools, colleges, businesses, other non-profits</p> <p><b>Engagement with Underserved Populations</b> – teens, immigrants, limited transportation, working families</p> <p><b>Marketing and Publicizing</b> – branding, utilizing social media, making website more mobile friendly</p> <p><b>Responsive Programming</b> – makerspace, tech classes, highlighting special collections, in response to community needs and interests</p> <p><b>Access to Technology and 21st Century Literacy</b> – equalizing digital divide</p> <p><b>Enliven Coolidge Museum</b> – partnerships, interactive exhibits, contextualized displays</p> <p><b>Additional Funding</b> – new sources of revenue, advocacy</p> | <p><b>Increased Accessibility</b> – more hours or revised schedule, improvements to space, transportation for patrons, library service out in the community</p> <p><b>Improved Spaces</b> – for teens, quiet space, Special Collections</p> <p><b>Increased Funding</b> – including more hours and better staff wages</p> <p><b>Increased Utilization</b> – including for Coolidge Museum, with the community's youth</p> <p><b>Innovation</b> – new collections, new programs, new service</p> | <p><b>Growth</b> – number of cardholders, number of visitors, increased borrowing, higher program attendance</p> <p><b>New Populations Served</b></p> <p><b>Better Quality of Life for Community for Northampton</b></p> <p><b>Higher Achievement for Students</b></p> <p><b>Improved Patron Satisfaction</b></p> <p><b>Stronger Community Partnerships</b></p> <p><b>More Funding</b></p> |



# Acknowledgements

## Strategic Planning Committee

Summer Cable  
 Linda Desmond  
 Lisa Downing  
 Nancy Dubin  
 Karissa Fabin  
 Wayne Feiden  
 Dylan Gaffney  
 David Lukens  
 Naila Moreira  
 Molly Moss  
 Betty Sharpe  
 Nicole Sibley  
 Janet Spongberg  
 Katy Wight  
 Al Williams  
 Cheryl Zoll

## Forbes Library Staff

### Forbes Library Trustees

### Coolidge Committee

### Friends of Forbes Library

## Mayor David Narkewicz

### Northampton City Council

## Stakeholder Interview Participants

## Survey Participants

## Community Forum Attendees

## Consultants

Susan Kohler-Gray  
 Kristi Chadwick, Massachusetts  
 Library System  
 Jonathan Wynn

## Forbes Library Staff Forum Moderator

Nora Blake, Director of the  
 Emily Williston Memorial Library,  
 Easthampton, MA

## Additional Contributors

Mary Fagan  
 Jacquie Fraser  
 Margaret Groesbeck  
 Ben Kalish



## Forbes Library Trustees

*Left to right, standing:*  
 Joseph Twarog, Marjorie Hess (Vice  
 President), Elaine Reall, Cheri Buckhout  
 (Treasurer), Russell Carrier (President)

*Seated: Lisa Downing (Director),  
 Katy Wight, Molly Moss (Assistant Director)*

*Not pictured: Elizabeth Sheirer  
 (Secretary)*

# Photo Credits



Almost all of the photographs used in the plan are from the library's Special Collections including the historic photos of the library and community. Many of the contemporary photographs were taken during "Midnight to Midnight: Northampton's self-portrait in 48 hours" held over the course of two days in May 2014 in a project organized by Historic Northampton in collaboration with the Northampton Camera Club and Forbes Library. For more information about our photo collection contact [reference@forbeslibrary.org](mailto:reference@forbeslibrary.org) or call the Arts & Music Department at 413-587-1013.

P 4 Robert Morrison, "Courthouse," 1990, Forbes Library Special Collections.

P 14 Robert Morrison, "View of Main Street," 1990, Forbes Library Special Collections.

Wendy Sinton, "Sojourner Truth Memorial Statue," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/2246>.

P 15 Ted Borowski, "Entrance to Smith College," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/2226>.

Adam Cohen, "The Expandable Brass Band," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1339>.

Kathleen Washut, "Hampshire County Courthouse," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1762>.

P 16 Mark LaCroix, "Rainbow Crosswalk 2," Forbes Library Digital Gallery, 2014, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1874>.

P 17 Walter E. Corbin, "Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges," Forbes Library Special Collections.

Jill Apolinario, "City Hall," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1686>.

P 32 Robert Morrison, "Coolidge Bridge," 1990, Forbes Library Special Collections.

P 34 Betsy Stone, "Northampton Roofs," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1455>.

P 37 Richard Cowles, "Forbes Library," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/2116>.

Henning Ohlenbusch, "Pride Parade from Above," 2014, Forbes Library Digital Gallery, <http://images.forbeslibrary.org/items/show/1648>.





# FORBES library

NORTHAMPTON'S PUBLIC LIBRARY

20 West Street  
Northampton MA 01060

Phone: 413-587-1011  
Fax: 413-587-1015  
Text/SMS: 413-570-0444

<http://forbeslibrary.org/>