

# **THE WEST ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

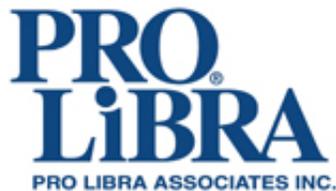
*West Orange, New Jersey*

## ***Strategic Plan***

***2016 - 2019***

Developed in cooperation with

**PRO LiBRA® Associates Inc.  
Summit, New Jersey**



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## *A Message From the Board of Trustees*

As residents of West Orange and active Library users, it has been a great honor for us all to play a pivotal role in something as significant, meaningful, and community-defining as the Public Library's Strategic Plan. It is an exciting and challenging time for public libraries, and to be involved in the creation of a roadmap that the West Orange Public Library will adhere to for the next three years is a true privilege. This roadmap, founded upon our new vision and mission statements, is presented here.

The Strategic Plan will be used as a dynamic tool for both the Library's Board of Trustees and the administration to utilize in making public policy and strategic decisions. In light of our constantly evolving environment, one driven by emerging technologies and continual shifts in the community's demographic composition, this plan is designed to position and maintain the West Orange Public Library as a relevant public service entity. This Strategic Plan will be treated as a "living" document, capable of evolving as the community around the Library evolves, to be referenced on a regular and continual basis by the Library's leadership in an effort to guide decision making.

We would like to express our profound appreciation to everyone who dedicated so much of their time and talent to the creation of this plan. In particular, we want to thank the Community Leaders who were interviewed and gave of their time so generously, the Library staff, members of the Strategic Planning Committee, the consulting team of Anne Roman and James Hecht of PRO LiBRA Associates, Inc., and most of all the residents of West Orange who cared enough to participate in the development of the plan.

### **2015 West Orange Public Library Board of Trustees**

Sheri Prupis, President  
Desiree Barber, Vice-President  
Jane Kennedy, Secretary  
Sheila Otner, Treasurer  
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Joseph Riopel  
Lisa Touzeau (Alt. for Superintendent of Schools)

Ex-Officio Members:  
Mayor Robert Parisi  
Jeffrey Rutzky, Superintendent of Schools

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*Several groups and individuals contributed their experiences, opinions and insights to the development of this plan. As a publicly-funded community institution, a great deal of effort has gone into engaging the public in the development of this plan for the Library's future. Library staff members have been involved throughout the process, providing valuable insight into the preferences and needs of Library patrons, as well as ideas and suggestions for new or better ways to serve our residents.*

*Throughout this planning process, the Strategic Planning Committee met regularly with our consultants to review Library and community data and consider the specifics of current and future Library services with respect to the Library facility, digital media, community outreach, partnerships and technology. The committee served as a sounding board, refining the Library's key service responses and creatively designing a plan of service that is right for the residents of West Orange.*

*The Strategic Planning Committee would like to acknowledge the support and contribution of the Library Board of Trustees, the Library's governing body that inaugurated the plan and provided input at key junctures during the 8-month planning process. This Strategic Plan will guide our efforts and is intended to set an ambitious course for the future of the Library. We also wish to thank all the members of the community that contributed to the process by completing surveys, participating in focus groups and speaking with the Library Director. Their input into the final plan was invaluable.*

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Sheri Prupis, President-Library Board of Trustees  
Jane Kennedy, Library Board of Trustees  
Lisa Touzeau, Library Board of Trustees  
Dave Cubie, Library Director  
Faith Boyle, Children's Services Department Head  
Mary Jean Gurzenda, Reference Services Department Head  
Catherine LaBelle, Adult Services Department Head  
Debra Sarr, Circulation Services Department Head  
Donna Sharpe, Senior Clerk Collection Services  
Brittany Chiles, Community Representative  
Tina Kaplan, Community Representative  
Lisa Suss, Community Representative

### **Consultants**

James M. Hecht, Planning Consultant  
Anne M. Roman, Planning Consultant

PRO LiBRA<sup>®</sup> Associates Inc.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The West Orange Public Library seeks to respond in the most effective manner to the current and evolving needs of its patrons. Our goal is to continue to help our residents thrive and grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by nurturing learning, supporting economic advancement and strengthening our community. Due to the financial constraints facing libraries combined with rapidly changing technology, it is more important than ever for our Library to identify its priorities for the future and review all aspects of current Library operations. In recent years, due to reductions in the annual budget and changes in staffing, the staff and the Board of Trustees have become more resilient and innovative. Prior to 2016, the Library became a member of the BCCLS Library automation consortium, created a Teen Space with grant funding, made adjustments in staffing, increased funding for programming, started a world language collection, and reduced the print reference materials' budget and collection as we moved to digital options.

To identify priorities for the next three years and to enable the Library to use its resources most efficiently, the West Orange Public Library trustees embarked upon an eight month strategic planning process during the summer of 2015. This Strategic Plan spells out how the Library will enhance the community by providing a local gathering place that will promote a continuum of educational and entertainment programs and services. The Library will continue to pursue and broaden our partnerships with community organizations and the business community to provide patrons of all ages with enhanced opportunities for reading, viewing and listening as we promote lifelong learning from birth through the senior years. To achieve this we need to offer an active calendar of programs and classes and continue to build diverse collections that enable people to pursue a self-directed education in addition to supporting our local educational institutions.

Early in the process, the Planning Committee reflected on the Library's current operations, its strengths and opportunities for change and growth. The Library Board of Trustees and the staff conducted visioning exercises to help develop the new mission and vision statements and a set of core values to provide the foundation upon which staff and trustees will work and interact with each other and the community they serve. The committee then assessed all the information collected from the surveys, focus groups and meetings with community stakeholders plus demographic data and Library statistical analysis to determine the service responses that will guide the West Orange Public Library for the next several years. Objectives are listed under each service response to help achieve that goal. The staff developed action steps for the first year and will continue to develop and modify the annual action steps for each year of the plan. Success measures were created for each service response to measure the Library's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT

*“Libraries have been my home away from home all my life. They are such valuable resources, for a variety of needs and regardless of income/background. Priceless!”*

*“Like having good schools – a good educational system including the Library should be part of the town.”*

Community engagement was central to the plan development process. In an effort to define the community’s opinions on the Library and service expectations, the needs assessment process involved broad community participation and input that included a survey designed for both users and non-users, focus groups, and eleven one-on-one interviews with community leaders conducted by the Library Director. These activities were undertaken to ascertain the perceptions of West Orange residents about their Library and to solicit positive and negative comments about the programs and services provided. Residents who attended the focus groups were highly engaged and provided relevant observations that played a key role in the development of the Library’s major service responses, which will guide the Library’s strategic and operational efforts over the next three years.

### **Focus Groups**

The consultants conducted five focus groups that targeted specific groups of users: the business community, parents of young children, teens, adults ages 25 to 55, and seniors. At the focus groups our consultants listened to feedback about what the Library means to the West Orange community and what improvements could realistically be made in the next few years. The following topics were discussed at these activities:

- Importance of a public library in the community
- The Library facility
- Space for teens
- Communications and marketing
- Public perception of the Library facility
- Programming for adults, teens, and children
- The Library’s collections
- The Library’s website, access to research databases, and public computers
- Customer service attitudes

Participants also shared their thoughts on what barriers (if any) prevent them or members of their family from using the Library or making the most of its resources and what other libraries in surrounding communities they use and why.

### **Library Surveys**

A survey of Library users was conducted during the fall of 2015. In all, 417 responses were received both online and in print. Of the residents responding to the user survey, 44%

were between the ages of 18 and 54, some filling out the survey with services to their children guiding their responses, and 53% were 55 or older.

### **Interviews with Community Leaders**

The Library Director conducted one-on-one interviews with eleven community leaders:

Douglas Adams, Joy Church of God  
Pat Duffy, Health & Welfare Department  
Jerry Guarino, Township Council  
Bill Kehoe, Recreation Department  
Suzanne McCartney, Township Council  
Robert Parisi, Mayor  
Rudolpho Rodriguez, Hispanic Foundation  
Jeffrey Rutzky, Superintendent of Schools  
John K. Sayers, Township Business Administrator  
Ysabel Stowe, Business Owner  
Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler of Congregation Ahawas Achim B'nai Jacob David

## **A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY INTERACTION**

The plan also addresses the need for a variety of improvements to the Library facility, especially better utilization of existing space, so that the Library can successfully achieve its vision of the future to *“be a welcoming and lively center for lifelong learning and literacy, personal enrichment, and community interaction as well as a major contributor to the prosperity and growth of our town.”* Accomplishing this, however, will require a concerted effort on the part of the Library board, township officials and residents who regularly use and rely on the services provided.

Notably, the comments received on the community survey and those that were expressed during the focus groups indicate a high level of support for the Library and praise for the helpfulness and the customer service ethic of the staff. In the survey, 92 respondents felt that the entire building needed to be modernized or refreshed. A few examples of suggested improvements were better lighting in the stacks, a more welcoming first impression upon entering the Library, a larger lounge area, and more parking. A major reason West Orange residents use other libraries is that other communities offer facilities that are more inviting than West Orange.

Service improvements include revamping of the Library’s website and an enhanced marketing campaign to increase the community’s knowledge of all the Library resources and programs that are available.

The Library Board of Trustees, staff and Strategic Planning Committee hope that this plan will provide the impetus for changes in the services we provide and to the Library facility. The plan is a guide that prioritizes our work; shaped with the understanding that change is inevitable and we will remain flexible, adaptable and focused on serving the community.

# MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES

## MISSION

**Our mission describes the primary purpose of the Library and reflects our commitment to the community.**

*The West Orange Public Library provides a stimulating and supportive environment for lifelong learning, literacy and the enjoyment of reading through free and open access to relevant collections and engaging programs.*

## VISION

**Our vision describes the desired or intended future state of the Library in terms of its fundamental direction and the educational and social scenarios that the Library is motivated to help sustain in the community.**

*The West Orange Public Library is a welcoming and lively center for lifelong learning and literacy, personal enrichment, and community interaction as well as a major contributor to the prosperity and growth of our town. The dedicated and knowledgeable staff serves all patrons, promotes the love of reading and self-expression, and through a dynamic global network of resources, provides a physical and virtual gateway to information literacy.*

## CORE VALUES

**Our core values are principles that guide the Library's current and future actions both internally and externally. We place great value in:**

- *Excellent customer service*
- *Free and equal access to Library programs and services for patrons*
- *Private and confidential use of Library resources*
- *A commitment to providing diverse materials, technologies and staff to reflect the community we serve*
- *Providing an accessible, inviting facility*
- *Promoting good environmental practices*
- *Creating partnerships between groups and organizations that share similar missions and values*
- *Fiscal responsibility*
- *Encouraging and supporting staff development*
- *Respect and trust in each other, our work and our daily interactions with our patrons*

## OUR SELECTED SERVICE RESPONSES

To guide the work of the Strategic Planning Committee, the consultants conducted five focus groups, held information gathering sessions with the staff, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Library trustees, and collated the results of a survey that was completed by 417 residents. Additionally, the Library Director met with community leaders that included the mayor, business administrator and the superintendent of schools.

The planning committee also examined analyses of the Library and the West Orange community, reviewed Library statistics benchmarked against comparable libraries in New Jersey and studied Library revenues and expenditures for 2014.

In order to provide the best possible Library for the West Orange community and to strive for continued excellence in its program of service, the Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the West Orange Public Library focus a significant part of its financial, personnel and physical resources on the following six service responses during the next three years:

(Note: Service Responses are in alphabetical order - not priority order.)

### **Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness**

*Library patrons will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.*

West Orange is a diverse community and residents are proud of their heritage. Many rely on the Library to pursue a comfortable life, find employment and integrate into the community. According to the 2010 census, 28% of the population is foreign born and survey respondents indicated that 29 languages other than English were spoken at home. When asked what Library services non-English speaking residents would be interested in, 50% of those who responded to that question said books and magazines in languages other than English as well as ESOL classes. Other services mentioned included foreign language instruction, story times in native languages and partnerships with the schools to teach second generation ESL.

### **Connect To The Online World: Public Internet Access**

*Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever growing resources and services available through the Internet.*

The importance of keeping up with the latest technologies was mentioned often in both the survey responses and the discussions that took place in the focus groups. While the majority of all survey respondents indicated that they would like to see the Library's collections (books, DVDs, and CDs) increase, over 23% also said that they would like greater availability of e-books and downloadable audiobooks and that accessing research databases was an important service.

Wi-Fi was important to 28% of those who responded to the surveys; although several mentioned that at times there was spotty Wi-Fi service. Several comments were made suggesting that the Library further develop technology classes or provide assistance with learning to use new technology and mobile computing devices. Several community leaders interviewed said that it was important that the Library keep current with the latest technologies and to play a significant role in providing technology training and introducing residents to new technologies.

## **Create Young Readers: Literacy From Birth Through Age 12.**

*Children from birth to age twelve will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write, and listen.*

Children from birth to age 12 will have collections, programs, services and technology chosen or created specifically for their needs. The Library will assist parents in their efforts to prepare their young children to enter school ready to learn, read, write and listen. The Library will continue to supplement and support children's elementary school education and further a love of reading, creativity and imagination.

In West Orange, 1/3 of the households have children under the age of 18 and that same percentage said that children's books and programs were important Library services. Focus group participants agreed that the Library plays an important role in preschool literacy and that good youth collections and relevant programming were important to the community and helped to build a foundation for early literacy skills.

Programs for kids remain very popular. In 2014, the Library offered 246 programs with an attendance of over 8,600. Parents indicated they would like to see more weekend programs and suggested more craft type programs, a children's book club and storytimes in Spanish.

## **Stimulate Imagination and Satisfy Curiosity: Providing Library Materials and Programs for Entertainment and Lifelong Learning**

*Residents who want to enhance their leisure time, to explore topics of personal interest and to continue learning throughout their lives will find the resources and programs they want in a wide range of traditional and emerging formats.*

A vast majority of all survey respondents indicated that they had borrowed books during the past year (72% fiction and 60% non-fiction) and new books and best sellers were very important to them. Of equal reported importance was the availability of various non-print media such as DVDs (34%) and books on CD (20%). Nearly half had borrowed a DVD in the past year.

Twenty-one (21%) percent of the respondents indicated that they had downloaded a book in the last year, a service that continues to gain in popularity. Also, nearly one in four said that they wanted more downloadable books and music. Several focus group participants said that the Library's collection, including those available through BCCLS, needed to be expanded.

The Library's interlibrary loan service through BCCLS was extremely popular with 201 respondents (48%) having used the service in the past year. All agreed that this service should be a top priority for the Library.

Having the ability to borrow items from other libraries that are part of BCCLS was highly regarded although survey respondents and focus group participants indicated they would like the West Orange Library to improve/expand its own collections. Comments during the focus group session with older adults were extremely supportive of more diverse programming and offered many examples of the types of programs they thought would be of interest to Library users including author lectures, history and current affairs, concerts, family art programs, gardening and crafts.

A major area of concern expressed in focus groups and on the surveys was the lack of publicity. When asked why they did not attend programs or utilize other Library services, one of the major reasons cited was they did not know about them.

### **Understand How to Find, Evaluate and Use Information: Information Fluency**

*Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their needs.*

Over 25% of West Orange residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree and 20% have a graduate or professional degree. Responses to questions about the Library's collections on the surveys and in the focus groups indicate that there is a high expectation for the Library to provide a wide variety of accurate resources in many different formats.

Residents still seem to be reliant on the Library's reference services as 36% of the survey respondents sought research help from a librarian during the past year. Additionally, many residents have long commutes to and from work (over 32 minutes), so visits to the Library are often difficult to fit into busy schedules. It is important that the Library continues to provide responses to reference queries quickly and accurately. Additionally, it is important to provide easy access to online tools and resources via the Library's website. Nearly one in four felt that accessing the research databases was an important service although some focus group participants were not aware of their availability on the Library's website and that there should be more publicity about them.

## Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces

*Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.*

It was evident from the comments made during the focus groups that residents are proud of their Library and strongly support it as one of the best values for tax dollars. Library staff gets very high marks for helpfulness and great customer service as indicated consistently in the survey responses and from focus group attendees.

With respect to the Library facility there were many comments made during the focus groups and in the surveys that improvements were needed and there could be better utilization of space. In the survey, 92 respondents felt that the entire building needed to be modernized or significantly refreshed. Specific suggestions included:

- Better lighting in the stacks and more natural lighting
- Better first impression when entering the building
- More comfortable seating
- More convenient parking
- Fix exterior
- Larger more inviting space for teens
- Quiet study areas
- Self-checkout stations

Several people commented on the survey that they used other libraries that had nicer Library facilities.

Library computers are heavily used and the space dedicated to this service is important to maintain in order for the Library to offer significant and usable virtual space. Patrons would like longer computer time and the space for patrons to use their own laptops is important, as is a robust Wi-Fi connection.

Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that the Library's website was an important service and necessary for a seamless connection to the virtual services offered by the Library. Nearly 3 out of 4 of the survey respondents would prefer to get information about the Library through the Library's website. There were, however, comments made by attendees at the adult focus group about the need to make the website more visually appealing and that the Library publicizes the resources available through the website.

## **LIBRARY RESOURCES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN**

### **Funding**

More than 90% of the Library's annual budget comes from the municipality and is derived from a New Jersey Library funding formula based on community property values. It is essential that the Library identifies as service responses not just what they can do efficiently, but what is truly desired by the community and thus provide the most effective service by reallocating resources to the priorities deemed the highest in community feedback and analysis.

The annual budget covers personnel, building operation and maintenance, computer hardware and maintenance, membership in BCCLS (Library automation) Library materials in all formats, programming, supplies and training. Over 80% of the Library's annual expenses involve personnel costs and building operation and maintenance – the two most expensive line items in the budget.

Joining a multi-Library consortium like BCCLS with 77 member libraries in four counties, benefitted the Library by providing shared resources, technical support, online resources for patrons to borrow, and automation costs based on the buying power of a large consortium of public libraries. The new plan encourages building partnerships with local schools, other township departments, social and cultural organizations. This would help to reduce the duplication of services, allow each organization to focus on what it can do best, and advance publicizing activities across agency lines.

The desire for building renovations and improvements expressed in the survey results and by participants in the focus group sessions is not covered by the annual budget. It is advisable for the Board of Trustees to begin exploring fundraising possibilities and the creation of a Library foundation paired with the development of a five year capital budget request for the township.

### **Staff**

The Library is open 60 hours each week including 3 weeknights and Saturday and Sunday. The total number of employees based on the total hours worked throughout the year is 19.4 full time equivalents with 8.4 full time equivalent librarians. However, this figure that has historically been supplied to the State Library over the past few years, includes the hours worked on Sundays by existing staff as well as the workers supplied by outside vendors. The actual number of employees on the West Orange payroll is 17.2, making it the lowest employee total among libraries of a similar size in New Jersey. In recent years the Library has lost staffing hours that are equivalent to 4 full time employees. The survey revealed that 85% of the respondents rated the customer service they received either Excellent or Very Good. Library improvements desired by residents indicate a need for more one-on-one and small group training in technology and the use of online resources. There is also strong demand for more children's programming throughout the year and additional offerings of programs and workshops for

adults. These initiatives in addition to maintaining adequate staffing levels at the public service desks during the 60 hours the Library is open each week would require additional staff hours and/or the implementation of self-checkout stations so that Library patrons can serve themselves for routine checkout tasks. The Library needs to develop a staffing plan to meet changing demands and to deliver expected service for residents that includes updating job descriptions for all personnel.

To remain vital in today's culture, the Library needs to increase its presence and visibility online and connecting to the public through social media. Staff will need to be responsible for frequent updating of the Library website, Facebook page and other social media. The survey showed that 76% of the respondents wished to get their information about the Library from the Library website. All of the focus group sessions revealed the need for increased and improved communication with the community so that they are well informed about Library programs and events. Library patrons would like to receive regular electronic notices and newsletters from the Library to keep abreast of activities, new services, and additions to the Library's collections. In a community as large and as diverse as West Orange, the Library needs to establish an ongoing outreach program with both public and private schools and local clubs and organizations to reach both Library users and non-users. As libraries evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the focus on outreach and public relations is of vital importance, yet it is another labor intensive task.

The Library should consider creating a dedicated part-time or full-time public relations and marketing position. In addition, define ways in which volunteers and interns from local college and universities may be able to provide both routine help and assistance with special projects. Retired executives may be willing to volunteer to help residents and local business owners who may need career and business advice and assistance.

## **Facility**

Residents expect the Library to adapt to their changing needs and create a warm, welcoming and comfortable environment similar to bookstores and coffeehouses where people can relax, read, access the Internet, attend a program or browse the Library's collections at their leisure. As a community gathering place with multiple activities occurring at the same time, the Library is expected to have differentiated spaces for quiet study and reading, space for computer use and research, space for collections of print and non-print materials and meeting space to accommodate informal community gatherings, conversations, discussions, training, and programming.

Building improvements that were identified in the survey were the need for quiet study rooms (20%), more convenient parking (28%), modernization of entire Library building (23%), and Library kiosks or book returns in other parts of the township (27%). The desire for more workshops and technology training classes indicate a need for small classrooms or multipurpose flexible spaces that can be used for small group programs, community meetings, and training classes. Wi Fi service at the Library is important to many users and this requires not only robust connectivity but also charging stations and adequate seating for those visiting the Library and using their own devices. The Library that was constructed in 1959 and expanded in 1979 does

not sufficiently provide for these new demands. Patrons expressed a desire for new shelving to showcase recent fiction and improve the “browsing experience.” There is an untapped resource in the basement storage areas that could be converted into either multipurpose flexible spaces or office space. These needs combined with an overall refreshing and modernizing of the main floor suggest that the Board of Trustees should contract with a skilled professional(s) regarding upgrades to electric and technology needs plus space allocations for the Library’s collections, programming areas, technology training, study areas, lounge seating, and meeting room space.

## **Collections**

During our survey period, we discovered that the Library’s collection of books and non-print materials is still the most used service and ranks high in importance to Library patrons along with the ability to reserve items and request items from other libraries. Even today, with all the available technologies, interest in reading the printed book is still high among all age groups. This is highlighted by the fact that 77% of survey respondents answered that they borrowed adult fiction books and 64% responded that they borrowed adult non-fiction books in the last year. During the focus group sessions, participants expressed satisfaction with the adult and young adult book collections. Parents would like to see the Children’s Room print collection updated and refreshed. The DVD selections (adult and children’s) received a more mixed response indicating they need some attention which translates into more funding to support these collections. The desire to borrow music on CD has decreased and that collection plus the print reference collection appear to be the least important to survey respondents. Less than 12% of survey respondents replied that they used the print reference collection in the last year. The Library needs to investigate the feasibility of phasing out the non-print music collection now that they have started offering downloadable music to residents. In recent years, the print reference collection was reduced by 75% and free digital options were reviewed as replacement sources. In a multi-ethnic community such as West Orange there is a need to increase the purchasing of books in languages other than English to enhance the new World Language Collection and to maintain a sizeable literacy collection to support the needs of English-As-A-Second Language residents. Our survey indicated that 50% or more respondents would be interested in books in languages other than English and magazines and newspapers from other countries for non-English speaking residents.

There is a strong demand for a sizeable browsing collection that would include not only the newest books but other titles that have been published in the last one to two years and/or suggested reading selections. The Library needs to make it easier to browse the collection throughout the Library by creating displays using bookstore concepts like easy to reach shelving, face-out displays, and display tables. This may necessitate the allocation of funds for some new furnishings. The collection development plan should be updated in order to rebalance and renew the collection. There are many books in storage due to lack of space on the main floor. The “storage” collection needs to be evaluated to determine if that is the best use of space.

The amount of discretionary spending available for Library materials becomes more limited each year as costs rise in all sections of the budget. Expenditures for Library materials are approximately 12% of the overall budget. Satisfying the diverse interests of community members is a challenge as the Library materials budget decreases or remains flat. This challenge

is compounded by the need to provide residents with multiple formats for a single title such as a hardcover book, large print book, audio book and e-book. Grant funding and fundraising for collection development should continue to be pursued.

## **Technology**

In 2015, West Orange Public Library became a member of BCCLS, the largest Library consortium in the state. This will enhance the capabilities of the Library's automation system and provide more cost effective upgrades as part of the annual consortium fees. The consortium will also provide technical support staff and expertise for BCCLS' computers.

The Library currently has 27 computers for public use with printing capability and a system was recently installed to monitor these computers and improve print management. Survey respondents indicated that 16% of them used the Library's desktop computers and 20% of them accessed the Library's Wi-Fi for a personal laptop or mobile device while visiting the Library. A computer replacement schedule for both public and staff computers needs to be developed to ensure that they have sufficient memory and speed to meet customer and staff needs.

The proliferation of hand-held devices such as e-readers, tablets and smart phones has resulted in a need to offer technology assistance in addition to regular computer training classes offered by Library staff. Staff members who are knowledgeable in basic computer maintenance, troubleshooting, and routine functions are needed to instruct and assist the public. The rise of social media online and the abundance of "apps" on mobile devices create new opportunities for staff to educate the public and improve residents' information fluency. The Library may wish to investigate the feasibility of providing technology devices for loan to customers and staff such as iPads, Kindles, and other tablets and electronic reading devices.

As the Library moves away from a print reference collection and replaces it with online sources, staff needs to teach Library patrons of all ages how to find, evaluate, and use resources they find online. This involves not only training in small group classes but also creating pathfinders on different topics that can be posted on the Library's website and distributed in the Library.

Recognizing that many of our residents are not able to visit the Library due to long working hours and other time constraints, the Library should strive to maintain a website that is easy to navigate, up-to-date, and contains links to a variety of free and reliable information so that the website can function as a virtual Library for those who are unable to visit in person. The website and Facebook page along with other social media tools are becoming increasingly necessary to keep residents informed and engaged about Library activities and services.

To succeed as a 21<sup>st</sup> century public Library, staff expertise needs to transfer from traditional reference service to increased technology support not just in maintaining the hardware and troubleshooting when problems arise, but as educators and guides in the Internet world.

## **CREATING OUR PLAN: THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

In the summer of 2015 the West Orange Public Library Board of Trustees contracted with a consulting firm to provide a strategic plan developed through community research and a thorough analysis of the municipal Library. The last recession has left a lingering impact on public Library funding throughout New Jersey and the rest of the country even as our economy continues to improve. Library funding is gradually increasing, but at the same time employee benefit costs and building maintenance costs continue to rise significantly straining the budget. In addition, West Orange recently joined the BCCLS Library consortium, a new Director arrived in 2014, and the Library has had to reduce some full and part time staff hours. A Library facility that needs sprucing up and space reallocation combined with rapidly changing technology and significant changes in how people access both information and recreational materials led the Board of Trustees to recognize that the development of a strategic plan was of the utmost importance. A roadmap was needed to guide the Library as it updates and improves the building and develops services to best meet the community's needs and ensures the future success of the Library.

The Library contracted with PRO LiBRA Associates, Inc. to embark upon the Library's first strategic planning process led by James Hecht and Anne Roman. The eight month process that followed guidelines developed by the Public Library Association and the New Jersey State Library began in July 2015. The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of twelve members that were selected from the Library Board of Trustees, Library staff, and members of the West Orange community. Four planning committee meetings were held and the committee communicated online between meetings. All meetings were facilitated by the consultants. During the first phase of the project the consultants met with all of the Library staff and the full Library Board of Trustees to review and analyze the Library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the current environment. The community profile was reviewed by studying 2010 census information, the Library's expenditures and revenues for the year ending in December 2014, and Library usage statistics for the last three years. Library output measures were benchmarked by comparing the West Orange Public Library to other New Jersey libraries that serve communities with a population of 40,000 to 50,000 and annual expenditures of \$1,500,000 to \$2,500,000.

Under the direction of Dave Cubie, Library Director, trustees and staff identified various community leaders to be interviewed by the Director, organized five focus group sessions conducted by James Hecht and Anne Roman, and surveyed Library users via the Library website and visitors within the Library.

The Library Director met one-on-one with 11 community leaders from West Orange to explore their opinions of the Library and to assess what was most important to each of them and the organization that they represent. The consultants conducted five focus groups with residents. These groups included members of the Business Community, Parents of Young Children, Teens, Adult Library Users Ages 25-55, and Seniors. In addition, a survey of Library users was

conducted during October and November of 2015. In all, 417 survey responses were received both online and in paper format.

Upon the completion of all the community research, the Strategic Planning Committee reviewed the eighteen Library Service Responses outlined by the Public Library Association in *Strategic Planning for Results, 2008 edition*. This process involved identifying and prioritizing “service responses” or typical Library services that could be provided in response to a community’s needs and expectations. The committee carefully evaluated the critical resources required for the successful provision of each response against the West Orange Public Library’s current and anticipated financial resources, building facilities, technology, existing collection and staff expertise. After much deliberation, the committee developed service responses that would become the organization’s focus for the next three years. Objectives were created for each of these six key service responses and action steps for year 1 of the plan (2016) were identified. In order to determine the success and effectiveness of the various action steps, success measurements were constructed to measure the progress of the plan.

Finally, the committee created new Mission and Vision statements plus Core Values based on interviews with the full Library staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Strategic Planning Committee.

***PLANNING DOCUMENTS USED IN  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PLAN***

## **OUR TOWN – A PROFILE OF WEST ORANGE TOWNSHIP**

The Township of West Orange as we know it today first began in 1862 as the smaller town of Fairmount. The name West Orange wasn't actually used to 1863. However, almost 200 years of history encompassing the time before the American Revolution would lead to the eventual founding of the township.

On March 11, 1862, West Orange as we know it today began to take shape. On that date the Township of Fairmount was formed by an act of the New Jersey State Legislature. It was formed by taking a parcel of land from Orange that was once part of the Newark Settlement. A dispute had developed over education by those living on top of the first mountain and the state of New Jersey decided to form a new town with a new school district. The boundary line between the new Township of Fairmount and neighboring Orange was Perry Lane now present day Prospect Avenue in West Orange.

On April 10, 1863 another act of the New Jersey State Legislature created the town of West Orange. It took Fairmount Township's existing population of 102 and combined it with another parcel of land taken from Orange forming the current day West Orange with its present day boundaries. Since parts of West Orange today can trace its beginnings back to Fairmount Township in 1862, that year has always been recognized as the founding of West Orange. The name of West Orange however did not exist until the following year of 1863. In 2012 West Orange celebrated its 150th Sesquicentennial Anniversary.

The residents of West Orange today make up a diverse population with a proud community heritage. The township is governed by a Mayor-Council system of municipal government pursuant to the Faulkner Act, as implemented on July 1, 1962. Each member of the Council is elected to a four-year term of on a staggered basis, with either three council seats or two seats and the mayoral seat up for election every even-numbered year. Township elections are nonpartisan and seats on Council are at-large.

***Note: The above condensed profile of West Orange was taken from the West Orange Township website. It was written by local historian Joe Fagan and is included in this document with his permission.***

## **OUR LIBRARY PROFILE**

Before 1948, Library access in West Orange was provided by the Orange Library in a small branch at Tory Corner. In 1946, the first West Orange Library Board of Trustees was appointed and residents were finally able to register for membership in their own Library in 1948. The original West Orange Library was located in an old house near the Library’s current location where the West Orange High School stood until the early 20th century. That building housed 10,000 books and had reached its maximum weight and space capacity. The floors were buttressed to help them support the weight of the books.

The citizens of West Orange voted to establish a municipal Library in 1950. The “new” Library building at 46 Mt. Pleasant Avenue was dedicated in 1959 and an addition was built in the 1978. The Library’s collection now includes 140,000 books.

In 2015 West Orange Public Library joined the BCCLS Library consortium joining 76 other libraries with a unified catalog collection of 3.6 million books and over 6 million items available to residents.

### **Staffing and Budget – 5-Year Comparison**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Staff in Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) *	23.3	20.2	18.4	19.4	19.4
Number of Librarians (FTE)	8.6	7.5	7.5	8.4	8.4
Total Library Expenditures	\$2,305,182	2,180,814	\$2,049,434	\$2,024,417	\$2,153,227

\*Note: Total staff includes Sunday workers as well as skilled personnel supplied by outside vendors. The actual total number of staff on the West Orange payroll in 2014 and 2015 was 17.2 (FTE) and the total number of certified librarians was 7.5 (FTE).

### **Organizational Profile**

- One stand-alone Library constructed in 1959 and expanded in 1979. Current facility is 25,000 sq. ft.
- Total hours open to the public per week – 60 (includes 3 weeknights and Saturday and Sunday). Library closed Sundays from the end of May to the middle of September.
- Service population – 46,207 (2010 U.S. Census); 46,995 (2014 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

### **Financial Data (2015)**

- Total Revenues and Expenditures - \$2,153,227
- Materials Expenditures - \$194,135

### **Service Statistics (2015)**

- Total Circulation – 272,809
  - Adult Circulation – 161,138
  - Children’s Circulation – 94,049
  - E-books – 17,622

*Note: Total Circulation includes reciprocal Borrowing – 38,890*

- Loans provided to other libraries – 420
- Loans received from other libraries – 780
- Circulation of non-print collections – 31%
- Circulation of electronic collections – 6%
- Reference Transactions – 34,418
- Patron visits – 153,122
- Number of registered borrowers – 32,249 (including 720 non-resident)
- Number of Internet computer users – 31,800 (annually)

### **Materials and Resources Owned (as of December 2015)**

- 126,036 print books
- 36,317 e-books
- 1,821 audio (spoken)
- 1,811 audio (music)
- 18,824 audio (downloadable)
- 6,210 video
- 132 print subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals
- 41 databases
- Total Volumes – 140,803
- Total Titles – 123,036

### **Programming (2015)**

- Number of Library sponsored adult programs – 91
- Attendance at adult programs – 957
- Number of Library sponsored programs for young adults (ages 12-18) – 59
- Attendance at young adult programs – 483
- Number of Library sponsored programs for children (under age 11) – 198
- Attendance at children’s programs – 7,189
- Total number of community sponsored programs (all ages) – 30
- Attendance at community sponsored programs – 1,002
- Summer reading club participants – 493; Books read – 895

## **Technology**

The Library currently belongs to the 77 member Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) and offers a wide variety of technology to its Library patrons. Through the Library's website [www.wopl.org](http://www.wopl.org) patrons can:

- Access the searchable online catalog that includes the holdings of all BCCLS' libraries, view their account, renew titles and place holds
- Download audio and e-book titles, through a shared database
- Access research databases from the Library or from home, on topics as diverse as history, genealogy, literature, full-text newspaper/magazine indexes and career and job assistance
- Access on a computer or download to a portable device a digital collection of over 200,000 streaming and downloadable movies, TV shows, music, and audiobooks using a free service called Hoopla
- Listen to thousands of musical tracks that includes classical, folk, jazz and world music through the Naxos Music Library
- Subscribe to and receive e-mail news about the Library
- Apply for a Library card
- View listings of upcoming programs for adults, teens and children

The Library currently has:

- 26 PCs for public use with Internet access
- Wi-Fi for public use

## OUR LEVEL OF USE – A 3 YEAR PERSPECTIVE

<b>Function</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Circulation	323,609	247,997	254,187
Reciprocal Borrowing	20,634	13,108	38,890
Items Borrowed from Other Libraries	998	1,161	783
Items Lent to Other Libraries	381	498	420
Public Computer Sessions	37,884	27,806	26,740
Reference Transactions	38,720	21,981	34,418
Program Attendance (Adult, YA, and Children) **	11,597	11,728	9,406
Library Visitors	170,301	152,688	152,122
Registered Cardholders	31,651	32,077	32,249

\*\* Library sponsored programs