

# Newton Public Library: Past, Present and Future Board and Staff Needs Assessment Report May 2006

## Summary

Interviews of Newton Public Library Board Members and Staff were conducted in March and April 2006 to assess library needs for the future. Facility and Services were addressed in the initial interview questions and responses, but Funding was not and Funding is to be included in more detail in a future Library Facility and Improvement focus group composed of community members. In general, Board Members and Staff perceive that the library facility needs improvement and expansion in order to continue to provide needed library services to the community. The ability to provide expanded and new services are all constrained by the lack of space. Among the expanded and new services identified by Board Members and Staff are young adult services, small group meeting /study areas, increased reader seating and increased computer access, a coffee shop and Friends bookstore. The entire list of interview responses are presented on pages 4 - 7.

## Background

In February 2006, the Director and the Consultant determined the following charge:

*"The board, staff and community of the Newton Public Library will develop a 5-year plan for library services. The plan will include a needs assessment to address the facility, services and funding. The plans will be presented as part of the Newton Public Library's 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2006."*

Subsequently, sixteen needs assessment questions were developed and the Consultant interviewed a total of fourteen staff and six board members during March and April 2006. Five key service supervisors - children's, adult, circulation, technical and public relations/special services - were individually interviewed while part-time staff were grouped by those with one or more years of service and those with five or more years of service. Key service supervisors were individually interviewed and they provided more detailed responses than other groups.

Interview responses are presented in rank order. If more than one group gave the same response to a question, that response is listed first and suggests greater validity because it is a shared perception among the four groups of respondents. However, before drawing too many conclusions from the Needs Assessment Report, the responses of Board Members and Staff need to be correlated with those of the upcoming Library Facility and Improvement focus group composed of community members.

## Observations

On the bases of interviews with board members and staff, it is noteworthy that the following responses were shared by both groups:

- One reason for the Newton Public Library's past success has been its children's programs and services.
- Newton Public Library's future will be successful if the library as an organization continues to encourage change and flexibility and makes transitions in technology.
- One of the most important services that Newton Public Library provides is the opportunity for people of all ages to read and learn.

- A coffee shop and Friends bookstore are services that the library does not currently provide and which library users most frequently request.
- Staff and board members believe citizens will support a library expansion and improvements if the community understands the library's needs.

In addition, the Consultant offers the following observations:

- Board and staff perceive that the library facility needs improvements and expansion in order to continue to provide needed library services.
- The ability to provide expanded and new services are all constrained by the lack of space. Among the expanded and new services identified by Board Members and Staff are young adult services, small group meeting /study areas, increased reader seating and increased computer access, a coffee shop and Friends bookstore.
- Board and staff have an excellent awareness of library services and programs and their importance to individuals and the community. Library services and programs appear to be driven by the library's clear understanding of community needs. All staff acknowledge the importance of strong customer service orientation. Staff wants to learn and receive training about how to provide improved library service and contribute to the organization's planning and success.
- Key Service Supervisors want to work with the Director and Board to address policy and service issues regarding Internet and computer access policies, circulation policies, weeding of collections, eliminating services and/or collections, young adult services, improved customer service, staffing, training, marketing and publicity as well as service issues indicated by the Needs Assessment Report.

### **Recommendations**

The Consultant and Director offer the following recommendations regarding the Needs Assessment:

1. A Library Facility Improvement and Expansion focus group should be created and give further consideration to facility, services and funding issues. The Director will coordinate the group's formation and the Consultant will conduct the focus group and report responses by August 1, 2006.
2. A Young Adult Services focus group should be created and give further consideration to developing a plan for young adults services. The Director will coordinate the group's formation and the Director's Community Designee will conduct the focus group and report responses by August 1, 2006.
3. The Director will compile a 5 Year Plan from information gathered in the Needs Assessment, Focus Groups and any other relevant information sources for presentation in September 2006.
4. The Board, Director and Key Service Supervisors will address service and policy issues identified in the Needs Assessment.

### **Prepared by**

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## Newton Public Library: Past, Present and Future Staff and Board Interview Questions and Responses

Groups	Key	# Participants
Library Board of Directors	Board	6
Key Service Supervisors	KSS	5
Part-time Staff Employed 5+ Years	PT5	4
Part-time Staff Employed 1+ Years	PT1	5

1. What are some of the reasons for NPL's past success?

**Response**

**Response by Group**

Children's services/programs	Board, PT1, PT5, KSS
Community support	Board, KSS
Service-oriented, knowledgeable staff	PT1, PT5
Wide range of materials including AV	PT1, KSS
Access to technology	PT1, PT5
Popular materials	KSS
Welcoming atmosphere	Board
History of service to community	Board
Staff	Board
Technology training/education	PT1
Meeting room	KSS

2. How has the library changed since you began your association with NPL?

Technology	Board, PT5, KSS
More children's programs	PT1
Wireless access	PT1
Remodeling/new carpet	PT5
Online resources	KSS

3. What will make NPL's future successful?

Encourage change and flexibility	Board, PT1, PT5, KSS
Technology and change	Board, PT1, PT5, KSS
More space	Board, PT5, KSS
Young adult area	Board, KSS, PT1
Staff cooperation and training	PT5, KSS
Coffee area/Used bookstore	KSS
Shelving	Board
Keep changing	PT1
Adequate pay	KSS
Interlibrary loan	KSS
Current materials and formats	KSS

4. How should NPL be different in the future?

Open to change	Board, PT1, KSS
Reduce magazine subscriptions	Board, PT1
Friendly, custom service-oriented	PT1, PT5
Adequate staffing	PT5, KSS
Balance between print/electronic resources	Board
New services	Board

4. How should NPL be different in the future?

**Continued...**

<u>Response</u>	<u>Response by Group</u>
Eliminating unused services	Board
Books	PT1
Materials and programs for hobbies	PT1
Move from low tech to high tech	PT5
Opportunities for staff training	PT5
Provide online reference services	PT5
Shorten ordering to on-shelf period	KSS
Reallocate resources to popular services	KSS
Assistant children's librarian	KSS
Information Technology position	KSS
Young adult librarian	KSS
Promote databases	KSS
Weed collection	KSS
Provide business reference services	KSS
Work more closely with senior population	KSS
Web development/maintenance	KSS
Marketing/graphic design	KSS

5. What do you think are the three most important services NPL provides?

Opportunity for reading/learning	Board,PT1,PT5,KSS
Children's services	Board,PT5,KSS
ENLITE	Board,PT1,KSS
Computer access	Board,KSS
Access to information	Board,KSS
Willingness to reduce barriers to service	KSS
Specialized formats such as audio books	PT1
Interlibrary Loan	PT 1
Popular fiction	KSS
Community information and referral	KSS
Humanities programming	KSS
Genealogy	KSS

6. What do you think the community perceives as the three most important services NPL provides?

Children's services	Board,PT5,KSS
Tax assistance	PT1,PT5
Internet access	PT1,PT5
Services are free	PT5,KSS
Traditional library services	Board
Interlibrary loan	KSS
Respect for diversity and age of users	KSS

7. What do people in the community like about NPL?

TALK book discussions	Board,PT5
Children's service/Programs	PT1,KSS
Relaxed atmosphere	PT1,PT5
ENLITE	PT5,KSS
Special programs and events	Board
Kansas Reads!	Board
Summer Reading Program	Board
Children's Storytime	Board

7. What do people in the community like about NPL?

**Continued...**

<u>Response</u>	<u>Response by Group</u>
Popular fiction	KSS
Large Print	KSS
Computers	PT1
CD and audio books	PT1
Car repair manuals	PT1
Evening hours	KSS
Variety of materials	KSS

8. What do people in the community dislike about NPL?

Unattractive physical environment	Board,PT5,KSS
Fines	PT1,KSS
Internet/computer use polices too complicated	PT5,KSS
Rules/policies	Board
Not enough computers	Board
Can't check out without a card	PT1
Lost material policy too strict	PT1
No instructions on how to use catalog	PT5
Inadequate space to provide services	PT5
Poor customer service	KSS
Accessibility to Director by library users	KSS
Reserve policy	KSS

9. What services do library users request that NPL doesn't currently provide?

Coffee shop/Used book store	Board,PT1,PT5,KSS
Quiet study areas	PT5
Requests for materials not in NPL collection	PT1
Display area	PT1
Display, shelving for DVDs	PT5
Wireless access	PT1
Young adult	KSS

10. What services do current library users not use?

Art collection	Board, PT1,PT5
Reference	PT1,KSS
Genealogy	Board, PT1
Services with fees	Board
Reduce Large Print	PT1
Back issues of magazines	KSS
Non-Newton subjects in clippings file	KSS
Oversize books	KSS

11. Is the facility adequate to provide library services?

Unattractive interior and furnishings	Board,PT1,KSS
No	PT5,KSS,PT1
Adequate but not ideal for future	Board
Needs more shelving	PT5
Improve parking	KSS
Bookdrop next to street	KSS

11. Is the facility adequate to provide library services?

**Continued...**

<u>Response</u>	<u>Response by Group</u>
Drive-up service window	KSS
Improve lighting	KSS

12. How could the building be changed to provide improved library services?

Young adult area	Board,PT1
Small group meeting/study area	PT5,KSS
More reader seating	PT1,KSS
More computers	Board,PT1
Office/staff work space	Board
More space for shelving	KSS
Outside reading area	PT1
Expand ENLITE program	PT5
Rearrange/utilize Bessmer Room	PT5
Growth of audio visual formats	KSS
Improve signage	KSS
Make better use of windows	KSS
Don't use bottom shelves	KSS
Rail along sidewalk at main entrance	KSS
Improve exterior landscaping	KSS

13. If there is one thing that could be done to improve library services immediately what would it be?

Current materials	PT1,PT5
Additional open hours	Board
Speed of Internet access	Board
Display area	PT1
Weed collection	KSS
Emphasize reading	PT5
Promote library as a place for community	PT5
Staff cooperation and training	PT5
Weed Large Print	PT5
Greater staff involvement in decision-making	KSS
Fines amnesty	KSS
Improve customer service	KSS
Review circulation & computer policies	KSS

14. What should be done to make the library valuable to the next generation of library users?

Children's services	Board,PT1
More materials	Board,PT1
More programs	Board,PT1
More technology	Board,PT1
Noise tolerant	KSS,PT5
More audio visual materials	KSS
Young adult librarian/section	PT1
Up-to-date materials and technology	PT1
Work with schools	PT5
Emphasize reading	PT5
Children's Internet access	KSS
More downloadable resources	KSS

15. Who are non-users of the library? Why don't they use the library? What would help encourage them to use the library?

**Response**

**Response by Group**

Non-readers	Board, PT1
Bi-lingual staff	Board, KSS
Persons without photo ID	Board
More flexible policies for persons in poverty	Board
More cooperation with schools	Board
Current materials	PT1
Attractive interior environment	PT1
Board members	PT5
Non-users are very rich and very poor	PT5
Work with ethnic groups	PT5
Misperception that library is just books	KSS
New audio visual formats	KSS
Bridges Out of Poverty training helpful	KSS

16. What should the library be doing to encourage people to vote "yes" for an expanded library?

Rationale for why expansion is needed	Board, PT1, PT5, KSS
Community Information	Board
Architectural drawing of proposed expansion	PT1
Promote services	KSS
Publicity	KSS
Critical community service	KSS
Encourage users to vote "yes"	KSS

DATE: May 9, 2006  
TO: Newton Community Partners  
FROM: Marianne Eichelberger, Library Director  
RE: Newton Public Library Expansion Plans & Support Request

Newton Public Library will be celebrating 120 years of service to the Newton community on September 27, 2006. As we approach this anniversary, the NPL Board of Trustees has initiated a planning process with input from the NPL staff and the community. The goal is to develop a 5-year plan for library services. The plans will include a needs assessment to address the facility, services and funding. The plans will be presented as part of Newton Public Library's 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2006.

The NPL Board is interested in working with public and private partnerships to develop the NPL facility and services so our community and its residents have the resources available to help everyone "grow" with the rapidly changing 21st Century. The Newton Public Library facility needs to be expanded and updated to continue as a vital part of the community and to attract patrons of all ages with a welcoming comfortable environment. We would greatly appreciate the support of the Newton Community Partners as funding partners and community supporters as we develop plans for the NPL facility and services.

The NPL Board, staff and patrons have recognized in recent years the cramped public service area on the main floor of the library. The "new" 720 North Oak Street library was opened to the public 33 years ago in 1973. The east wing was added in 1980 through the generous donation of Miss Florence Bessmer to enhance children's library services. Subsequent remodeling projects have been within the exterior walls to maximize space usage for changing public services. Among the most significant changes in the 26 years since the last expansion project is the impact of technology and related space needs. The information age has impacted the way patrons access library services and what they expect within the library space. Requests for more computers and technology training space, casual sitting and quiet study areas, designated teen area, along with "coffee shop" and storage space are among the most frequent comments heard repeatedly from the community and staff which cannot be provided due to lack of space.

The following are examples of some NPL/community partnership efforts and/or brainstorming:

- NPL space needs and ADA concerns included as part of NPL budget request and annual report presentations to City Commission for a number of years
- NPL needs have been presented to the USD 373 facilities task force and noted in USD community forums
- Expressed interest in one-stop community services joint facility
- Meetings with local arts representatives about public art as part of the NPL facility
- Discussed NPL expansion with Chamber Design committee chair
- Brainstorming possibility of joint Newton Recreation Center & NPL teen center with NRC Wellness director
- Discussions underway with a possible private donor

The NPL Board and I would be very interested in discussing with you plans for NPL and its future. Thank you for your consideration of supporting NPL as it moves forward with plans to improve the quality of life of the Newton community.



**Newton Public Library Technology Brainstorming Session Findings**  
**Facilitated by Larry Papenfuss and Paul Hawkins – South Central Kansas Library System**  
**Held on Thursday, August 3, 2006 @ NPL**

August 8, 2006

On August 3, 2006 thirteen individuals from the Newton community met at the Newton Public Library to brainstorm on current and future technology needs for the library. Three groups were created with Paul Hawkins, Director, South Central Kansas Library System, Marianne Eichelberger, Director, Newton Public Library and Larry Papenfuss, Automation Technology Coordinator, South Central Kansas Library System serving as group facilitators.

In order to bring forth an appropriate agenda, technology related data findings gathered by Paul Hawkins in his May 2006 Newton Public Library Board and Staff Needs Assessment Report were utilized as discussion points.

**Executive Summary**

Library services must take into consideration the competitive / cooperative environment with business and schools. By finding the library's unique niche in the community and enhancing that/those service(s) the library will have an excellent opportunity to flourish. Expansion of the library outward appears to be a key aspect towards the success of technology promotion / usage at the Newton Public Library. Through the addition of a computer lab, coffee shop and adequate individual seating and small group areas for technology use the library will be able to best meet the needs of all of its service population. At the same time it is inherent that the library employs a full time technology support staff to promote, support and enhance current and future technology at the Newton Public Library.

**Listed below, in no specific ranking order, are the findings and recommendations to be considered for further action from the August 3, 2006 Newton Public Library Technology Brainstorming group.**

**Information Access (Speed and Types of Access)**

1. There is a strong need for Information access and fast access
2. Wireless access should be available for patrons with their own laptops
3. The library's electronic resources should become more multi-media and interactive
4. Stated daughter is very involved in Internet games and tries to connect everywhere she is, as an example of expectations of finding wireless access
5. Changes in social economics have changed users, such as travelers expecting Internet access
6. Increase in lower income users to access Internet/computer resources

**Training**

1. There is a need for more computer training
2. The library should facilitate technology training and use for seniors
3. The library should facilitate computer literacy for workforce development
4. The library should facilitate independent and virtual learning through its technology

## **Marketing**

1. There is a need for more marketing – especially towards seniors and YA
2. Misconception library is just books
3. Market online resources and other library services
4. Partner with more community organizations to get the information out to a wider audience
  - a. Chamber of Commerce
  - b. Taste of Newton
  - c. Harvey County Fair
  - d. Senior Organizations
  - e. Newton Public Schools U.S.D. 373
5. When marketing the expansion of the library use the local U.S.D.'s model for their FIRST bond issue
6. Be community driven and outline the process with a roadmap of what is going to happen and why
7. Interlibrary Loan, Free Tax help and Free Internet Access are major positives, but are not marketed well
8. Not everyone in the brainstorming group was even aware of all the services available
9. The library should identify and market its unique technology that is not available elsewhere in the community
10. The library should determine and identify the various groups of technology users it serves because these users each have different needs
11. Different groups who use the library's technology have different needs
12. Kansas Library Card - questions on how to use it and need to be promoted more
13. Change home page more frequently highlighting library services as one marketing approach; others questioned if people look at the home page
14. Suggested having more seminars to bring people into library and then also promote other library resources and services at each seminar
15. Younger people and others who don't think the library has anything for them - suggested trying to reach people who have interest in other things (Mitchell Automotive online database was used as an example a number of times during the discussion as something a number of non users are not aware NPL has and need to market specific resources to persons with interest in specific areas)
16. Suggested letting the smaller Harvey County towns know what additional resources NPL has to offer them beyond their local libraries
17. Cooperation with schools - letting them know what's happening at the library - one noted information has been included in parents' packets about library activities

## **More Computers and Current Computers**

1. Add a computer lab – it will give the library a better opportunity for effective training
2. Consider adding thin client technology and wireless
3. The library should provide the most up-to-date technology and replace every three years or as needed
4. Consider library providing laptops for use in library and noted for use in coffee shop area
5. Make a projector/laptop, etc., available for programs in the library

### **Expanded Library to Enhance Technology**

1. Expand the footprint of the library – too cramped now to allow for optimal computing / learning – By expanding you will allow for computer lab, small computing spaces and wireless access
2. Improve lighting, electrical and seating to accommodate all types of computer users
3. An expanded library will also address the noise issue by giving users more personal space
4. Don't want to expand up; spread out instead
5. Have space for "in between's": talked about not wanting to discriminate on how people use computers, that both leisure use and research use should be allowed - gave example of youth using Adult Services computers for Internet games while others were waiting to use computers for resources can be frustrating - suggested having additional space for youth with online game area, study stations, etc
6. Space for additional seating is needed - for computer usage
7. Add appropriate signage (Latino / other)
8. Relocate Adult service desk closer to main entrance to provide a more welcoming atmosphere

### **Internet and Computer Use Policy**

1. Current Internet policies are a barrier to ease of use
2. Need to offer more open access to outside floppy / jump drives / thumb drive use
3. Do not see Internet Policy as overly burdensome, but it rather reflects the reality of what a library has to do to maintain compliance with state and federal laws in regards to e-rate funding
4. Consider allowing use of Jump Drives and other portable storage devices for those who need broadband to download updates / files / etc. You need to keep in mind that many users still have dial-up at home and rely on the library or other places to give them the needed access to appropriate bandwidth

### **Staffing and Technology**

1. The library should provide trained staff to assist users with technology
2. The library should hire a full-time technology staff person to manage technology

### **Coffee Shop**

1. Add a coffee shop to draw in non-traditional users as well as enhance services to current users
2. The community "wireless hotspot"

**Newton Public Library: Past, Present and Future  
Young Adult Focus Group Responses  
August 2006**

1. In your experience, what services does the library provide to young people?  
*Summer reading group*  
*Summer reading, internet*  
*Only summer programs*  
*Young Adult section, club read time*  
*Club read, internet, YA book section*  
*Club read, story time for little kids*
  
2. How has the library changed during your contact with it?  
*Computers are easier to use*  
*Computer services, more activities*  
*More modern, range of media, cd's, internet*  
*New programs*  
*New kids section, club read program*  
*Children's section moved downstairs*
  
3. How should the library be different in the future?  
*More modern, not old-fashioned so more youth will visit*  
*Decorate-its kind of drab, more of a reading area (more than some chairs)*  
*Redecorate main floor*  
*More natural lighting, more fiction selection, new carpet, new upper level, handicap accessible places*  
*Bigger youth book section (YA),*  
*Continue to expand range of services*
  
4. What are the library services that you do not use?  
*Card catalog, elevator*  
*Interlibrary loan*  
*Newspapers, magazines, books on tape*  
*Large print, internet, videos, children's section*  
*Internet*  
*Chairs behind young adult section, internet, tables*
  
5. What do you like about the library?  
*Summer programs (2)*  
*Section for YA, reading program*  
*"I like books"*  
*Lots of different medias (books, dvd's, cd's, etc.) don't have to pay*  
*Air-conditioning*
  
6. What do you dislike about the library?  
*Everything, lighting, book selection, book catalog, carpet, needs updated appearance*  
*Old books, gross, dead bugs, YA section too small, no sitting places*  
*The colors are boring, renovations needed*  
*Too crowded, need more place for books*  
*The computer programs are confusing*  
*No complaints, no worries mate*
  
7. What services for young people would you like to have that the library doesn't currently provide?  
*More things for us to do, more activities, more new books, YA reading and sitting room*  
*More activities to participate in*  
*More activities, guest readers*  
*More computers*  
*Study sessions, whole year reading programs*  
*Separate space for studying and talking*

8. If there is one thing that could be done to improve library services immediately what would it be?  
*More books (2)*  
*Make sure books are checked-in/multiple copies*  
*More book selection/more copies*  
*New program for book catalog*  
*More workers in general*
9. Is the library building adequate to provide services to young people?  
*Yeah*  
*Yes, it seems so no worries*  
*Yes, but it is separated from the main building*  
*No, needs a private reading section like downstairs*  
*No, more sitting and studying areas*  
*Better young people selection*
10. How could the building be changed to provide improved services to young people?  
*Bigger YA section*  
*More decorations, larger YA section*  
*Moved YA section to front more inviting, more snazzy*  
*A section like the little kids for YA, more new books*  
*More computers, more study areas*  
*Bean bags, better place to sit, more space in between shelves*
11. If you have younger sisters or brothers, what should be done to make the library useful to them?  
*More exciting, more activities*  
*Have activities, make them want to be there*  
*Book suggestions (list of suggestions, what books they like for example)*  
*Downstairs area for kids not just books but also computers*  
*Better signs for organization*  
*It is already useful-good selection*
12. What do you think would encourage young people who don't currently use the library to use it?  
*More inviting, more computers*  
*Better use of space, better first impressions, library should sponsor more things*  
*Bigger area to sit around and read*  
*Better area to read, a room for reading*  
*Wider selection of books, more activities*  
*More programs, a program during school*
13. How do you currently get information about library services for young people?  
*Mostly if I happen to come in and read a poster or pamphlet*  
*Usually someone calls me with info or I see posters in the library*  
*Marilyn tells me when I come in*  
*Sometimes the newspapers or flyers around the library*  
*School librarian, see posters around library*  
*Signs at schools, the library and parents*  
*My school librarian Mrs. Buller*  
*Friends, read the signs*  
*The website, newspaper, friends, school librarians, posters*  
*I use the internet catalog and school, posters that advertise, emails*  
*Email, postal service, phone calls*