Craftsbury Public Library
Community Survey 2019

SUMMARY
Craftsbury Public Library engaged the services of library planning consultant Lawrence Webster to facilitate a community analysis in response to a generous offer by a private donor to provide funds for a significant expansion of library space. This was a three-part analysis, and included data and literature review, community meetings and conversation, and survey.

Findings
- The people of Craftsbury stay involved in the life of their town, and value the library as one of the town's major social and cultural assets. While always eager to bring their imagination and abilities to the library's table, they respect library's leadership, trusting the director and trustees to make prudent decisions. Several specific recommendations evolved from consulting the community, outlined below and in greater detail in the body of this report.
- The Craftsbury Public Library has a history of successful programming and high usage of collaboration with allied organizations in the town and region. It also attracts unusually high amounts of private funding for both capital and operating expenses.

Recommendations and Priorities
Immediate next steps include informing the donor of progress, developing sufficient documentation to solicit design and bids for the expansion. Among the priorities identified through this process:
- Energy efficiency - keep at front-of-mind throughout design process.
- Right-sizing - remain mindful of ongoing costs of maintenance and staffing, do not overload future operating costs.
- Flexibility - consider moveable partitioning or other methods to allow for small and large group meetings.
- Aural and visual privacy - allow for individual quiet endeavor as well as active and conversational use.
- Storage - the library needs more accessible storage for a variety of purposes.
- Communicate closely with neighbor organizations on the Common, considering such matters as parking and joint use.
- Take a whole-building approach to designing or re-designing spaces - don't just tack on a new wing for a specific purpose.
- Keep the homey, welcoming feeling of the library as it is now configured when designing any change or expansion.
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Craftsbury Public Library commissioned this community analysis as a response to a generous offer of a capital gift, a memorial gift providing funds to expand the library. The library trustees and director wish to carefully consult the community as it plans the expansion. The Library has a good record of deliberate, community-based decision-making both in building and in developing programming and collections. The existing, much-loved library building (still called the "new library" after 16 years) was long in gestation, and its aesthetic and programmatic success are testament to the value of such care.

THE TOWN

The Town of Craftsbury is in Orleans County, part of the Northeast Kingdom region of Vermont. Its residents are engaged in the daily management of town resources and governance; a report from the Vermont Rural Development Council 2015 community visit program outlines several areas of interest and indicates much ongoing thought and effort on the part of many people in town.

With some exceptions, Craftsbury population demographics are generally in line with state and county figures, as shown in Table 1. Its median age of 40.1 is lower than the county and state, and there are many fewer people under 5 and more people over 65 than is the case statewide and of the county and state. The median household income of $51,618 is higher than county as a whole, but well below the state median of $57,808.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Craftsbury</th>
<th>Orleans Cty</th>
<th>Vermont</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>26,951</td>
<td>624,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent under 5</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent under 18</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent 65 and over</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$51,618</td>
<td>$45,664</td>
<td>$57,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income</td>
<td>$24,859</td>
<td>$25,392</td>
<td>$31,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in poverty (percent)</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Library

The Craftsbury Public Library (CPL) is a 501(c)(3) corporation, as are 53 other public libraries in Vermont. Most of the rest are municipal libraries, that is, functions of town government, and a handful are joint school-public libraries.

Use

CPL is one of the best used and supported public libraries in the area and in the state. It provides leadership and demonstrates innovative programs and services for other small and rural libraries, and its staff is active in the national Association of Small and Rural Libraries. It has pioneered a joint catalog/circulation system with Albany Public Library, and was among the libraries demonstrating maker space programs under a Vermont Community Foundation grant program in 2014 -16. Staff regularly provide informal advice and counsel to colleagues in the area and statewide.

CPL has been a six-time "Star Library," an honor from Library Journal based on national data indicating library usage. Of the 180 libraries in Vermont, only nine others have been recognized as Star Libraries. It is clear from the data shown in Table 2 that the usage of Craftsbury library collections, digital resources, and program offerings is far above county and regional averages.

Table 2 - Public Use of Public Libraries in Craftsbury, Orleans County, and Vermont. Selected data from Vermont Department of Libraries Public Library Statistics, FY 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Craftsbury</th>
<th>Orleans Cty</th>
<th>Vermont</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population w/ library cards</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation per capita</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Visits per capita</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Attendance per capita</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless sessions per year</td>
<td>16,147</td>
<td>26,707</td>
<td>518,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web visits per year</td>
<td>9,049</td>
<td>15,861</td>
<td>2,256,485</td>
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</table>

Support

Community support for the library is significant, reflecting the value people place on the library. Figure 1 shows that Craftsbury Public Library, and Orleans County libraries in general, are more dependent on private funding sources than most libraries in Vermont. Statewide and throughout the nation, the great bulk of public library operating revenue derives from local taxes. This translates into added effort on the part of trustees and staff on fund-raising events and endowment growth, as well as annual budget requests and reporting to the Town.
Figure 1: Public Library Revenue Sources, FY 2018, Craftsbury, Orleans County, and Vermont. Data derived from Vermont Department of Libraries Annual Statistics, FY 2018.

Methodology

To develop this community analysis, the consultant worked in partnership with library trustees and director. They used three methods to gather quantitative and qualitative information:

1. Document review and data inventory: Gathering and synthesis of information on community and library history, usage, funding.
2. Conversations: Facilitated meetings with Library Trustees, the Library directors in the region, and two community meetings.
3. Survey: Distributed electronically and in person; compiled data using Survey Monkey software.

Findings

General

The Craftsbury Public Library is in a unique leadership position in region and state. It is highly valued locally and throughout the region. Generally, the community doesn't want radical changes in library services, but there is no shortage of good imaginative ideas for ways to further improve services. At the same time, Residents are aware of the hard work put in by staff, volunteers, and trustees, and recognize the need for prudence in undertaking new or expanded programs.

Most of the challenges to general community health revolve around a sense of divide within the community, reflective of the zeitgeist of the entire nation at present. Such divides are complex, but are perceived to range along socioeconomic divisions, and "native" vs. "from away" populations. The library is seen as a potential major force in building bridges across real or perceived divides.
The Library works closely with *many allied organizations* - Craftsbury Schools, Sterling College, the Historical Society, local businesses, and the Town. These alliances present a number of opportunities to strengthen services by cooperative efforts.

**Library Building**

The Craftsbury community would like its library to provide *multipurpose, flexible spaces for a variety of uses* - including small group meetings, large meetings, "third space" hangout, a haven for teenagers at particular times, place for learning (demonstrations, classes), quiet space for study and thought.

The community is aware of the ongoing costs for staffing and building operations, and many people suggested caution in undertaking a building project, being careful not to overcommit the library to any unsustainable operating expenses.

Survey findings support the impressions from meetings and conversations.

**Recommendations**

As a result of all the information gathered in this analysis, it is time to get underway with a building program and selection of a designer and builder. The following considerations are paramount:

1. Ongoing communication with donor and community who have already contributed time and thought to this process.

2. Undertake space use analysis, considering the existing space and potential new space *as a whole*; rearrangement of current uses might be called for in overall context of an addition.

3. Bear in mind the relationship of library to its *neighbors on the Common*, both physically and programmatically.

4. Be a model of *energy efficiency*.

5. Aim for plenty of *meeting* space, adaptable for small and large groups, individual and group use.

6. Provide *accessible storage*.

7. Book stacks that don't need to be moved. Or moved very often.

8. Partitions that can be moved to configure large and small spaces.

9. Comfortable furniture.

10. Aural and visual privacy

11. Quiet space as well as active space.
APPENDICES

A. Detailed survey findings

Library staff and trustees distributed a survey by email and in person during August 2019. The response rate of 220 represents just over than 18% of the legal service population of the library - a good response, by must general survey rules of thumb. Results were entered into and analyzed by Survey Monkey. The Survey included three quantitative and four open-ended questions.

Quantitative Responses

The **library is highly prized** by respondents -- more than 90% see it as important or vital, and none selecting "not at all important."

When presented with a list of **services**, 216 people responded. The most-used services are book-related; with 80% selecting "borrowing books" and 51% "help finding good books to read." Equally important in the aggregate were measures of library as a place -- to study and to sit and read was selected by approximately 40% each. Programs for adults (36%) and children (26%) were also important. Library equipment was also high on the list of important services, including computers (37%) and fax/copier/scanner (40%). Statewide digital information services, Vermont Online Library and Universal Class, were used by 7 and 14% respectively.

When asked "what would you like to see in the **new addition**?" people (almost 40%) checked "more books," but library as space was equally important, with "public meeting space," "quiet area," and "small rooms" each gathering more than 35% of respondents.

Opened - ended questions

A high percentage of people took the time to write thoughtful responses to the three opened ended questions. There are several themes running through the copious results. People frequently mentioned the "cozy" and "welcoming" atmosphere, thoughtful design, location, and specifics such as the porch and the children's room, and urge that designers are careful not to get in the way of the "energy" of the current facility. Staff were high on the list of assets as was internet access and 24/7 wifi. The need for teen space, for program/class space, and more room for books and for quiet reading and study were all mentioned. A few people suggested a cafe, and there were some voices of caution and moving ahead with deliberation. Representative responses are quoted below:

**What do you like about the library now?**

"It has wifi that is always on for the public use."

"It is a very nice place to work and be. The energy is very nice."

"Very welcoming. The building itself is storiyed and connected to the town. Open and inviting but still has little nooks for various activities"

"Comfortable space with knowledgeable librarians"

"Beautiful, functional, well appreciated by the community, honors community needs, playground""It is a bright, spacious place to pick
out books, use the computers & copier. Also nice to connect with other library patrons."

"The librarian! Also easy to find a quiet space and just as easy to run into friends & have a chat."

What would you like to see in a new library space?

"Enlarged! Stay gorgeous and quaint while you design an expansion."

"Be a meeting space for teens, but also for adults needing a quiet space -- usually adults on computers are trying to conduct business/banking, etc. be a cool space on hot days."

"Work with the Simpson library in east craftsbury on mutually productive collaborations, sharing of space."

"More online learning, more ebooks, 1 day programs for adults (I work and can't commit to more than 1 session at a time). Maybe even make the learning online at our convenience."

Any additional thoughts?

"When I use the library in Craftsbury--mostly in the summer and fall--I always get something else that i don't get in new jersey...a smile from the staff. That makes me feel welcome and makes me want to use the library when i'm up there. It is a true community resource."

"I do not want the public library to make space for private meetings or private phone calls. That seems antithetical, anti-access, anti-welcome."

"This is a wonderful establishment in a small community that is very welcoming, informative and comfortable."

"I really think there should be a cafe."

B. Community Meetings - Summary

Two community meetings were held in June and July 2019. The first included about 30 invited community leaders; the second was open to all, with about 40 people participating. Both groups were given information about the library and about libraries in general, and asked to discuss and suggest ways in which the library can best move forward to further the town vision. The conversations were similar, and here is a facilitator's summary:

- The Town of Craftsbury works hard to define a visionary future, but is nonetheless affected as the rest of the nation by "The Divide," -- a gulf between people of different outlooks, socioeconomic levels, length of time living here, and ethnicity. Building communication and trust across this gulf is an important priority.
• CPL is held in high esteem and value as a gathering space, a warm "living room," a place for children and families. It also is a leader in making connections with other libraries (example: joint catalog with Albany).

• CPL serves the community in alignment with broader vision/purposes in town, and also provides bridges across the divide, perhaps particularly in relation to its children's programming.

• Specific library possible programs to strengthen or start might include coordination of volunteer efforts across agencies and organizations, general building on its hub, or "information central," role. Look at more for teens and tweens - both a place to be and things to do, but not formal classes

• Any physical space planners should consider these broader issues, and also be mindful that flexibility and energy efficiency are paramount, without sacrificing the aesthetic value of the existing building in its setting, or the warmth and welcoming atmosphere of the interior. Storage is also a strong need.

• Very specific ideas include looking at this whole corner of the common as a whole, tying together landscaping, patron paths, etc.; and both large and small meeting spaces perhaps with flexible partitioning.
Notes on the library usage data: Note that data for Orleans County Libraries include only the 10 libraries (of 14 total) that reported these measures, and population has been adjusted accordingly in figuring per capita numbers. Population for Vermont as a whole is figured at the 2017 U.S. Census figure of 634,636, rather than the number used in the Vermont Department of Libraries statistical report, which includes duplicated populations, i.e., those claimed by more than one library.