

Utica Public Library Long-Range Plan 2024-2026

With over a century of service to the Greater Utica Area, The Library remains dedicated to providing information and learning experiences throughout our diverse community.

Executive Summary

As the Utica Public Library (“The Library”) prepares to embark on its 131st year of service to the communities of the Mohawk Valley region, the Library offers its Long-Range Plan 2024-26 (the “Plan”) to outline The Library’s plans to ensure the continuation of stellar service to its constituents.

As a public association library chartered in New York State, The Library must ensure compliance with New York Education Law and the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. In furtherance of its compliance efforts, The Library must have a long-range plan informed by community input that outlines its plan of service for the future. The Plan affords the opportunity for The Library to review and assess its performance with respect to the goals set forth in the Plan.

Since 1893 The Library has been a pillar of public service by stewarding sources and artifacts of knowledge and creating learning opportunities for all ages. As a community resource it continues to adapt to the needs of its surrounding communities and enhance its capabilities to address those needs in an age of rapid digital evolution.

Currently, The Library’s priorities include, but are not limited to, developing a social media Policy for Library Staff and Trustees, enhancing Library staff training, addressing Library facility needs, cultivating new forms of outreach in the digital age, and increasing awareness of Library programs for children, teenagers, and adults. The Library is constantly adjusting its goals and priorities according to the issues which presently challenge the Library—this begins with targeted investment in The Library’s personnel, physical space, and content capabilities.

Planning Process

The Plan is the collaborative effort spearheaded by the Library’s Board of Trustees and Library Staff. Initially, the Board of Trustees created a subcommittee called the Long-Range Plan Committee (the “Committee”), which, together with Library Staff, communicated with, and gathered information from, the community through multiple mediums, including a community stakeholder focus group and a community survey.

The individuals listed below agreed to participate and attend a Community Stakeholder Focus Group meeting organized and hosted by Library Staff. This eclectic group of individuals includes representatives of local institutions which have a significant interest in the quality of life of the

populace served by The Library. Their attendance and participation in the Community Stakeholder Focus Group was central to the development and implementation of the Plan.

- Steve Bulger, *Executive Director of ICAN*
- Shelly Callahan, *Executive Director of The Center*
- Anna D’Ambrosio, *President and CEO of Munson*
- Heather Hage, *Executive Director of the Griffiss Institute*
- Darlene Mack-Brown, *Community Engagement Director at Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency*
- Richard Panetta, Licensed Physical Therapist, Professor at Utica University, *Owner of Inertia Occupational and Physical Therapy Services PLLC*
- Barry Sinnott, *Senior Vice President of The Bank of Utica*

The questions that formed the basis of discussion in the Community Stakeholder Focus Group emphasized community perception of The Library, the Library’s services, and the effectiveness of The Library’s channels of communication:

- 1) What are the services you believe a library provides today, generally?
- 2) What local needs can you identify that you believe The Library can satisfy?
- 3) How can The Library satisfy those needs? / How can The Library demonstrate value to those who are not already Library users?

The Library also facilitated conversations between the Library Board of Trustees and Library Staff to ensure that the implementation of the Plan is consistent across all Library departments. Once the Library gathered sufficient information from the community, the Long-Range Plan Committee and Library Staff developed this Plan to create a path forward with actionable items and bases for analysis of services to gauge The Library’s progress in achieving each facet of the Plan.

Monitoring Progress

It is expected that goals and the metrics measuring those goals may change with the course of time. As a public entity, the Library is susceptible to change based on local needs and governmental regulations. The Library shall monitor progress in accomplishing the goals set forth in this Plan. The Board’s Long-Range Plan Committee shall assess progress on a quarterly basis and engage with Library staff as necessary to monitor progress and adherence to the Plan.

As the Library implements new protocols in adherence to the Plan, the Library will also develop the proper monitoring infrastructure to assess the Library’s progress in meeting its goals and find ways to use the information gathered in the assessment process.

Goals

1. Content & Programming

- a) Ensure the quality, quantity and accessibility of the Library's content.
- b) Perform a diversity audit of the circulating collection.
- c) Explore options for serving users who may not be readers with alternative circulating items and programming.
- d) Provide programs that address health and wellbeing, including a plan to integrate The Library's Garden space on Park Avenue into its programming.
- e) A Customer Satisfaction Survey will be done once per year to assess the adequacy of materials including accessibility and efficiency of access to content.
- f) Investigate opportunities for The Library to work on a "Community Calendar".
- g) Create exhibits that draw in visitors and capitalize on downtown location's new attractions.

The Library boasts a wide variety of items for all ages spanning paper and digital content. The Library hosts several reading clubs of various styles of reading, and has a loyal customer base of readers. The Library's ability to develop and maintain a quality collection of diverse content across all information mediums is paramount.

"The Library bridges the technology gap in the community."

2. Technology

- a) Maintain cutting-edge quality in The Library's internal operations and capabilities.
- b) Provide the public with access to hardware and software that keeps pace with growing use of technology in everyday life.
- c) Establish infrastructure to implement digital skills to benefit The Library's constituents.

The Library is a community resource. As such, the Library provides access to the technology required for people to participate in society to their fullest potential. To that end, The Library must maintain excellent broadband capabilities and ensure the ease of accessibility to the Library's constituents.

“Leveraging the Library as a connection to the world outside the door.”

3. Event/Community Space

- a) Broaden the community’s presence in the Library’s building.
- b) Explore new events to host in the Library facility and an investigation into necessary items for hosting private events, including a fee structure, staffing and energy use requirements.

The Library takes pride in its history and its welcoming aura, which is best seen in the building itself. The Library is constantly working to improve its physical space to ensure a welcoming and adaptable environment for its constituents whether to host community events, or to provide a quiet space for individuals.

“[Local] publicity is huge.”

4. Marketing & Outreach

- a) Establish and maintain communication channels at various levels throughout the community.
- b) Establish collaborative networks throughout the community.
- c) Enhance the Library’s website including creation of a website committee comprised of Library staff.
- d) Enhance the Library’s social media presence.
- e) Create internal infrastructure to manage The Library’s digital footprint.
- f) Draft a social media policy.
- g) Establish a targeted program for print media.
- h) Obtain customer emails during card registration.
- i) Implement a print media outreach planning/protocols.
- j) Implement an annual “Community Budget Presentation” framework.
- k) Create a newsletter for distribution to users and the community at least once a year.
- l) Reach out to donors at least one time in addition to the annual appeal letter at the end of the calendar year.

Building and maintaining awareness is a constant for the Library. A lot of our survey respondents indicated they find out about what is happening at The Library by social media. Just as significantly a large number of respondents indicated they are unaware of programs and find information in printed form as they are using The Library to be a valuable communication tool. With an improved online presence, particularly on social media, the Library is enhancing its methods of outreach and communication with donors, prospective donors, Library users, and potential Library users.

5. Investing in Staff and Facility

- a) Enhance staff training and staff support and continue to send staff to conferences and trainings where appropriate.
- b) Understand employee satisfaction and concerns through use of an employee engagement survey once per year.
- c) Generate a performance evaluation tool.
- d) Provide ongoing coaching conversations and performance feedback to employees.
- e) Review and address facility needs and concerns and establish a prioritized list of projects including cost and desired timelines for completion.
- f) Develop Social Media Policy for Library Staff and Trustees.

The Library would not be the valuable resource it is without the people inside The Library making things happen. 90% of survey respondents consider The Library to be a comfortable space. The Library is animated by the passion and dedication of the small handful of individuals who know how to tailor The Library's capabilities to the various needs of the community. By investing in Library staff, and closely monitoring the needs of the building and working space, The Library ensures a bright future of stellar community service.

The Library by the numbers:

- Population served: 64,081
- Number of active cardholders: 22,000
- Size of collection (print, AV, digital): 112,000
- Weekly hours of service: 55
- Annual Circulation (2022): 87,000
- Number of employees: 18 Full-Time Equivalents
- Size of building (sq. ft.): 30,500



Utica Public Library Community Survey

The Library is gathering input for its long range plan and feedback from our community is an important part of the process. Your response is appreciated!

***Indicates a required question**

1. Are you a library user? (Skip the next question if no)*

- Yes
- No

2. If yes, which service(s) do you use at The Library? (Check all that apply)

- Content (books, museum passes, DVDs, etc.);
- E-content (Libby, New York Times, Comics Plus, etc.);
- Event space (classes, group meetings, private/public events);
- Child programs/services;
- Adult programs/services;
- Notary services and printing services;
- Computer/internet access;
- Technology help (at The Library or 50 Memorial Parkway).
- Other..._____

3. Which programs/services do you associate with Libraries? (check all that apply)*

- Child education/programming;
- Adult education/programming;
- Technology use assistance;
- Printing and computer services;
- Borrowing items (books, DVDs, library of things);
- Community meeting space.

4. In your opinion, is there a service The Library does NOT offer which would be beneficial to the community?

- Yes No

If so, please indicate below:

5. Where do you get updates on The Library and what's happening there?*

- Social media,
 Print media,
 Library website,
 Community events,
 Word of mouth.
 Other..._____

6. If there were public events (haunted house, community celebrations, job fairs, etc.) held at The Library, would you attend?*

- Yes No

7. In your opinion, is The Library a comfortable space?*

- Yes No

8. In your opinion, is The Library a valuable community resource?*

- Yes No

9. In your opinion, is The Library in need of more funding?*

- Yes No

10. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about Utica Public Library?

Thank you for your feedback.

If you'd like to be entered into a drawing for one of three \$25 Visa gift cards, please provide your e-mail/phone number below:

Utica Public Library (Biblioteca Pública de Utica) Encuesta Comunitaria
La Biblioteca está recolectando opiniones para su plan a largo plazo y los comentarios de nuestra comunidad son una parte importante del proceso. ¡Su respuesta es agradecida!

*Indica una pregunta requerida

1. ¿Es usted usuario de la biblioteca?
(Salte la próxima pregunta si su contestación es “no”)*
Sí
No

2. De ser usuario de la biblioteca, ¿qué servicios utiliza en la misma? (seleccione todos lo que apliquen)
 - Contenido (libros, pases de museo, DVDs, etc.);
 - Contenido Electrónico (Libby, New York Times, Comics Plus, etc.);
 - Programas/Servicios para niños;
 - Programas/Servicios para adultos;
 - Servicios de notario y servicios de imprenta;
 - Computadoras/Acceso al internet;
 - Asistencia Tecnológica (en la Biblioteca o 50 Memorial Parkway);
 - Otro: ____

3. ¿Qué programas/servicios asocia usted con bibliotecas? (seleccione todos los que apliquen)*
 - Educación/programas para la juventud;
 - Educación/programas para adultos;
 - Uso y asistencia tecnológica;
 - Espacio para eventos (clases, reuniones de grupos/eventos públicos/privados);
 - Servicios de computadoras e imprenta
 - Prestado de elementos
 - Espacio donde la comunidad se reúne

4. En su opinión, ¿hay algún servicio que la biblioteca NO ofrece que sería de beneficio para la comunidad?
Sí, No
De ser así, por favor indique en el espacio provisto: ____

5. ¿Dónde consigue usted noticias acerca de la Biblioteca y lo que está sucediendo allí?*

 - Redes sociales
 - Medios impresos
 - Página web de la biblioteca
 - Eventos comunitarios
 - Comentarios de otras personas
 - Otro: ____

6. De haber eventos públicos (casa embrujada, celebraciones comunitarias, ferias de empleo, etc.) en la biblioteca, ¿asistiría?*

Sí, No

7. En su opinión, ¿es la biblioteca un espacio cómodo?*
- Sí, No
8. En su opinión, ¿es la biblioteca un recurso valioso?*
- Sí, No
9. En su opinión, ¿necesita la biblioteca más fondos?*
- Sí, No
10. ¿Habrá alguna otra cosa que le gustaría compartir con nosotros acerca de la Biblioteca Pública de Utica?

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Gracias por sus comentarios.

Si le gustaría ser entrado en un sorteo para uno de tres certificados de regalo VISA de \$25, por favor provea su e-mail y/o número de teléfono en el espacio provisto:

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