

Athol Public Library

LONG RANGE PLAN OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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2017-2022

Reaching for the future, preserving the past.

- 1 -

Table of Contents

Mission and Vision Statements	3
Introduction.....	4
Trustees and Library Staff.....	4
Acknowledgments	4
Evolution: Outlining the Process	5
The Community of Athol	7
Library Description	15
Minimum Standards for Library Service	22
Library Core Values	22
Public Library Service Responses	23
Focus on Service Response: Stimulate Imagination.....	24
Focus on Service Response: Satisfy Curiosity.....	25
Focus on Service Response: Connect to the Online World.....	27
Focus on Service Response: Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy.....	27
Plan of Action FY2017-2022	28
Plan of Action FY2017.....	31
Completed FY2011-2016 Action Plan Items in FY 2016.....	32
Resources	33
Appendix A: Community Survey Results	
Appendix B: Focus Groups Report	
Appendix C: Technology Plan	

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees 21 September 2016

MISSION STATEMENT

The Athol Public Library is a welcoming and vital community center where people of all ages and abilities can satisfy their curiosity, become informed, increase their knowledge and skills, connect to the online world, stimulate their imagination, and enrich their lives.

VISION STATEMENT

Responding to the needs of an evolving population, the Athol Public Library will be the first and best choice of the community for information and inspiration in an environment that is accessible to all.

INTRODUCTION

The Athol Public Library has historically had a long range plan that was regularly updated each year, relishing each goal reached and moving new ones to the fore front. Last May, we decided the time had come to determine if we were still on task and in synch with what the community wants to see in their library services. We also wanted to investigate and integrate new technologies and innovations with an eye toward future service.

To this end and after much input, this document was created to cover the period from 2017 through 2022. It is meant to be a fluid document, updated as needed and responsive to the desires of the people served by the library.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with all library planning, many opinions are needed to create the document necessary to guide a library in developing the services essential to its own particular community. All ideas, grand and practical, mesh together to breathe life into a workable plan for the future. I would like to thank all those individuals who gave of their time to ensure that their library understands and is committed to this future vision.

- The Board of Library Trustees
- The Staff of the Athol Public Library
- The Friends of the Athol Public Library
- ATAC (Athol Teen Advisory Council of the Athol Library)
- The many residents who came to the focus groups and completed our survey
- Barbara Friedman, Consultant, Focus Group Leader
- Athol Daily News
- Athol Orange Community Television Bulletin Board
- Shaun Suhoski, Town Manager

Thank you all for your valuable input – your support is appreciated!

Jean Shaughnessy, Library Director

EVOLUTION: OUTLINING THE PROCESS

The Library Director with approval from the Library Trustees, selected the publication Strategic Planning for Results by Sandra Nelson for the Public Library Association as the primary tool for conducting this study.

Prepare: Planning to Plan

It was decided that the Director and Assistant Director would work with the staff, Friends of the Library, Town Manager, and Library Trustees to compile the final document, after conducting a number of focus groups and carrying out a town wide survey. Having over 35 years experience at the Athol Public Library and with previous Long Range Plans for the Athol Public Library available as a basis, it was believed this was the most efficient way to proceed. Barbara Friedman was hired to conduct the focus groups. A survey was compiled by the Director and Assistant Director after soliciting suggestions from the staff. The final survey was distributed at town meeting, at the library, at the Senior Center, in the Selectman's Office, and other various outlets around town. It was also on our website via Survey Monkey. The Friends of the Athol Library provided pens and flashlights as incentives and tokens of our appreciation for completing a survey and/or attending a focus group.

Envision: Imagining the Future

Questions asked of the many citizens addressed their vision for the future of library service in Athol. Good conversation in the focus groups held in April and May 2016 identified many issues and comments generated on the written survey added more. We have a beautiful new, renovated, and larger building in which to provide services for our community. The need for and planning for this recently completed building project were the focus of the previous two Long Range Plans. This Long Range Plan focuses on making the best use of this wonderful space to provide materials, services, and programs that are needed and will be of interest and use to members of this community.

Design: Inventing the Future

As stated in the above section, the Mission Statement grew out of the same process as the Vision Statement. Our mission reflects the dialogue that occurred through written and verbal statements from the community as to their thoughts for the future of library services. This also drove the selection of the service roles that we are challenged to fulfill.

Build: Assembling the Future

Based on a review of the information gathered during the fact finding stages, the director developed the goals and objectives for the library throughout the summer of 2016. The draft was presented to the Library Trustees and Staff for further comment and final approval.

Implement: Moving into the Future

While the ideas of a community can be gleaned and recorded, the economic reality must also be taken into account. Some of the goals involve additional funding and mechanisms, such as grant writing. Each year the Director and the Library Trustees will develop a plan of action to include perusal of other avenues of financial support to accomplish the tasks at hand.

Communicate: Inform the Community

The library has attempted to involve and inform the community at each stage of the process. The plan as approved will be distributed through a variety of channels to make it accessible to all groups and individuals. Copies will be presented and explained at various town boards such as the Selectmen, Finance Committee and Planning Board. We typically use several methods of media delivery from the newspaper, radio and local community television to get the word out to the town residents. As always, library staff will be available to listen to and document customer's comments and suggestions. We have always used our website to post documents of this type for 24 hour access by the public, but the staff also now maintains a Facebook page and Twitter account to appeal to another segment of our population.

Evaluation and Update

This five year plan which was accepted and approved by unanimous vote of the Board of Library Trustees at their September meeting, will guide and direct our activities and actions as outlined in our goals which include measurable objectives. The Director is responsible for monitoring the evaluation processes and assisting the staff in conducting such evaluations. Any results will be reviewed by the Board of Library Trustees and discussions with the Director as to appropriate action will be held. An annual examination of the successes and failures of the Long Range Plan will occur and from this, the Annual Plan of Action will be adjusted. A report will be issued to the community outlining the results.

The Community of Athol

"We love our town"

Physical Characteristics

The Town of Athol is part of Worcester County, and is located in the North Quabbin region of north central Massachusetts. The town lies between the picturesque Tully Mountains to the north and the Quabbin Reservoir to the south. It is bordered on the southwest by New Salem, on the west by Orange, on the north by Royalston, on the east by Phillipston, and on the southeast by Petersham. Athol lies 38 miles north of Worcester and 71 miles west of Boston. Athol's 32.34 square miles support a population of 11,584. The population density is 358 persons per square mile.

The soil of Athol is rough and stony, and the terrain is wooded and hilly, with elevations ranging from 500 at the edge of Millers River to 1282 feet at the top of Pratt Hill near the Bearsden Forest. The Millers River is Athol's most significant waterway and flows through the downtown area from northeast to west.

History

Five families first settled in an area named "Pequoiag" in September 1735. When the township was incorporated in 1762, the name was changed to Athol. John Murray, one of the proprietors of the land, chose the name because the hills reminded him of his ancestral home of Blair-Atholl, Scotland. "Athol" means "pleasant place."

Early residents subsisted on agriculture and hunting. By 1791, Athol had four grist mills, six sawmills, a fulling mill, and a shop with a trip hammer, all of which were operated by water power. The Athol Cotton Factory, built in 1811, was one of the first industries to serve a market beyond the local one. Through the 1800s, textile, leather, wood, and metal industries further expanded the market for goods produced in Athol. The construction of the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad in the 1840s fostered so much industrial growth that a second line connecting Athol and Springfield was constructed in 1870. Construction of the Fitchburg Railroad, an east-west line, came through Athol in 1879, on its way to the Hoosac Tunnel and the Berkshires.

The Athol Machine Company was established in 1868 in order to manufacture a chopping machine invented by Laroy S. Starrett. In 1881, Mr. Starrett established the L.S. Starrett Company, known for making quality precision tools. The company remains the town's largest employer to this day, and thus does Athol live up to the nickname "Tool Town."

As industries developed along the river valley, homes and stores grew up around the common located on the hill southeast of the factories. This area, today called "Uptown," was the location of the first bank. The first trolley lines, established in 1894, ran from Athol to Orange, and additional lines soon provided efficient transportation to surrounding areas. Because of its development of industry, commerce, and transportation, Athol was the center of activity for the entire area at the turn of the century.

During the 1930s, the trolley lines closed due to the increased use of private automobiles, bus service, and the generally difficult economic times. When four Swift River towns were flooded to create the Quabbin Reservoir, the Springfield railroad route had to be abandoned. Consequently, Athol's growth leveled off as commerce became increasingly dependent on the interstate highway system. Population reached a peak of 12,186 in 1955.

The Route 2 bypass of Athol was constructed in the 1950s, further limiting direct access to the downtown business district. The following years showed population decline, falling to a low of 10,634 in 1980. However, Athol's population has risen gradually since that time and shows every indication of continued growth

Government

Municipal government is by open town meeting. Athol is divided into three precincts. The first Monday in April is the date for the annual town election. The annual town meeting is held in June, and a fall town meeting occurs in October. Additional town meetings are held as needed. Administration of the town's business is carried out by a five-member elected board of selectmen and a town manager following the Town Charter, which was passed in 2000. Other important town boards are the FWAC (Finance and Warrant Advisory Committee), the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, the EDIC (Economic Development and Industrial Corporation), and the Zoning Board.

The Athol Fire Department and Athol Police Department provide fire protection and public safety. In addition, a Massachusetts State Police barracks is located in Athol near the high school. The Department of Public Works takes care of roadways, water works, sewage treatment, parks, and cemeteries.

The towns of Athol and Orange cooperate with each other as neighbors, in spite of the county line that divides them. Some service providers for Athol are based in Franklin County, even though Athol sits in Worcester County. Regionalization of services between Athol and Orange and between Athol and other area towns continues to be discussed. Regionalizing dispatch services for fire and police in Athol and Gardner is in the planning stage,

Population Characteristics

Athol's population is 11,584 according to the 2010 census, a slight increase from the 2000 census figure of 11,299. The figure is likely to rise with increased economic growth and continued low housing prices.

Athol's residents are of varied ancestries, including French, Yankee, Irish, French Canadian, Italian, German, Polish, and Lithuanian. Minorities (Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians) make up less than 5% of the population. The median age in Athol in 2000 was 37.4 years.

83% of Athol's residents are high school graduates. Only 17% have college degrees.

The median household income was \$33,475 in 2000. The average sale price of a house in 2013 was \$118,400. Many residents do not work in Athol. The average commute to work takes 24.6 minutes.

Communications

Athol has its own daily newspaper, *The Athol Daily News*. In addition, the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, the *Greenfield Recorder*, and *The Gardner News* cover Athol events and news. Newspapers from Boston, Springfield, and Fitchburg are also sold in local stores.

Time Warner Cable provides service to subscribers in the Athol-Orange area. The two-town area also benefits from the work of the Athol-Orange Community Television, Inc. (AOTV), which is a nonprofit cable casting corporation. AOTV trains people to produce their own local TV programs, and it records and airs public meetings and events through the Time Warner system. There is a store front between Athol and Orange, however all management functions and personnel were moved to Albany New York five years ago as a cost saving measure.

WJDF 97.3 FM and WAHL 99.9 FM are the local radio stations in Athol and Orange. Additional broadcasting from Gardner, Greenfield, Keene (NH), Springfield, Worcester, and Boston can be heard.

Broadband and DLS is spotty in the Athol/North Quabbin Region. Services such as Verizon and Time Warner Cable provide this service but outlying areas use dial-up access numbers based in Petersham, which is a local telephone call from Athol as broadband is not available yet. Many area residents with dial up frequent our library for downloading large files or to speed up their work process.

Transportation

Though residents can often walk to businesses in the downtown and uptown districts, Athol is primarily dependent on the automobile for out-of-town transportation. Route 2A runs through Athol's business districts and provides access to Orange to the west and Gardner to the east. Route 2 provides access to Greenfield (30 miles to the west), Gardner (15 miles east), Fitchburg (25 miles east), and Boston (71 miles east). Worcester is 34 miles from Athol via Routes 32 and 122 in Petersham. Keene, New Hampshire, is 25 miles north via Route 32.

Athol is served by several bus lines. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA), based in Greenfield, has daily runs from Athol to points west. The Montachusett Area Regional Transit (MART), based in Fitchburg, can take residents to points east of town. Community Transit Service buses provide dial-a-ride service for those people in Athol, Orange, and Winchendon, who are in need of transportation to work, medical appointments, shopping, or other errands.

An active freight rail line runs through Athol however it does not have a stop here. To connect with a passenger rail system, Athol residents can go travel to Fitchburg (a 30 minute ride) to catch the trains of the MBTA, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, which serves the Boston

metropolitan area. Amtrak stations are located in Amherst, Springfield, Worcester, and Brattleboro, Vermont.

Pilots and passengers of private planes can access the nearby Orange Municipal Airport. Athol residents who intend to fly long distances generally commute to Logan International Airport in Boston or to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, which is south of Springfield.

Economic and Commercial

Athol's economic climate has changed drastically since its own post-Civil War industrial revolution. A number of the large brick factory buildings along the Millers River are now vacant or in only partial use. The L.S. Starrett Company continues to be the major employer in town. The Athol Memorial Hospital is the next largest employer. Other significant workplaces are Hannaford, Market Basket, Quabbin Valley Healthcare, North Quabbin Physicians, Whipps Incorporated, Adams Farm, Vegetation Control Services, Niagara Cutter, Girardi Distributors, Athol Daily News, Castine Movers, Athol Credit Union, and Athol Savings Bank.

In the early 1980s, the state targeted the North Quabbin region (and principal towns Athol and Orange) for funding to promote economic development as the area had the highest unemployment rate in the state. Small cities grants and other government funding provided a promising start of economic growth until a recession hit. At that time, several large and small Main Street businesses closed.

Citizens of the two towns formed alliances to work together at revitalizing the area. The Orange-Athol Industrial Development Commission began in the 1960s to bring businesses to the area near the Orange airport. The Millers River Community Development Corporation, North Quabbin Housing Partnership, and a banking alliance also grew out of collaborative efforts. These groups succeeded in financing housing to middle-income residents, natives and others who were not accepted by traditional lending programs.

Retail and wholesale businesses, generally stretching along Main Street and Route 2A, provide most of the remaining jobs in town. The downtown business district features shops, banks, eateries, and an Ocean State Job Lot store. A new Senior Center opened in 2012 next to Ocean State. The uptown area provides restaurants, convenience stores, a bank, and a CVS pharmacy. A McDonald's restaurant and a convenience store sit at the main intersection west of the town center. The Athol-Orange border on Route 2A features two small shopping plazas, a large grocery store, and a lumber store. A Wal-Mart store is another mile further toward the Orange town center. The newly constructed Market Basket plaza contains a Marshalls, Maurice's, shoe store, and a soon-to-open Starbucks.

Athol residents who wish to take in a big-screen movie, eat at popular chain restaurants, or shop at large department stores must travel to Gardner, Fitchburg and Leominster, Amherst and Hadley, Greenfield, or Keene, N.H.

Education

The Athol-Royalston Regional School District educates young people from grades pre-K to 12. The four elementary schools previously serving Athol students: the Pleasant Street School (K-5), the Riverbend School (K-5), the Sanders Street School (K-3), and the Silver Lake School (preK-3) will be replaced this fall with one new elementary school, ACES (Athol Community Elementary School) for grades Pre-K - 4. Royalston Community School (K-6) serves children who live in that town. The Athol-Royalston Middle School consists of grades 5 to 8, and the Athol High School is made up of students in grades 9 through 12. District enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year was 1522 students. Interested individuals may attend the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School in Fitchburg on a tuition basis, subject to the approval of school authorities.

The closest community colleges are Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner and Greenfield Community College in Greenfield. Programs leading to a Bachelor's degree and higher courses of study can be found in Amherst, Fitchburg, Worcester, and Keene, N.H. A few students choose to further their education at institutions elsewhere in New England, around the country, or online.

Private day care centers and nursery schools provide stimulation and social learning opportunities for the young child. Each week, the Athol Public Library holds several preschool activities which invite caretakers and small children to visit the library, play with educational toys, read or hear stories, do crafts, and interact with others. The Athol Area YMCA also schedules activities appropriate for children ages 6 months through kindergarten, and has a preschool and nursery school, as well as after-school daycare.

Culture

Athol is geographically isolated from the major cultural centers of Massachusetts; consequently, its residents tend to create their own entertainment. Productions and programs are initiated by such organizations as the Athol Area YMCA, the Athol Historical Society, the Athol-Orange Rotary, the schools, and the Athol Public Library. The Athol Cultural Council provides funds for some of these programs.

Since the Athol Public Library has inadequate facilities for seating, its largest annual program is presented in conjunction with and at the home of the Athol Historical Society. The adjacent Town hall is also used but lacks air conditioning and has poor acoustics. The Friends of the Athol Public Library also provide funds for smaller programs held at the library, like young adult craft workshops and author visits and book-signings.

In the summer and early fall, "Tool Town Live!" weekend concerts are held in the Uptown Common and at Fish Park in the western part of town. Begun in 2004, this popular series features talented groups from around New England who represent a variety of musical genres. The concerts are offered free of charge, supported by fund-raisers held earlier in the year and generous sponsors.

The Athol Historical Society, a group of private citizens, occupies the old town hall in the uptown area. The building houses a museum exhibiting articles from Athol's storied past. Additionally, the society sponsors talks about local history, provides guided tours of historic sites,

and holds special events. The L.S. Starrett Tool Museum, located at the company office, has on display machine tools of the past. Visitors are admitted by appointment only, made with the personnel department of the company.

The Millers River Environmental Center houses the Athol Bird and Nature Club and Athol Garden Club and contains a museum of natural history items, including animals, birds, and rocks and minerals.

Nearby, the Fisher Museum of Forestry at Harvard Forest in Petersham features dioramas portraying the history of central New England forests. The North Quabbin Natural History Museum is located on the second floor of the Orange Historical Society building in Orange.

Recreation and Entertainment

Athol and its surroundings offer unlimited opportunities for enjoying the outdoors. Clubs like the Woodsman Rifle and Pistol Club and the Athol Bird and Nature Club focus on specific outdoor interests.

Some of those activities center around the Millers River. The River Rat Race, an annual canoe race held each spring, draws participants from all parts of New England. The six-mile race begins at Cass Meadow in Athol and ends at Hachey's Landing in Orange. This event attracts a large crowd of observers and usually features a parade and a carnival.

Six historic public nature areas are administered by the Athol Conservation Commission. The largest of these is Bearsden Forest in the northeastern part of Athol. It contains hiking trails, camping areas, bridges, paths, old quarries, ponds and brooks. Plans are also underway to create a greenspace / biking trail between Athol and Orange.

Eco-tourism and supporting environmental interests are popular throughout the North Quabbin region. The Millers River Environmental Center is located in a former elementary school building on Main Street. It offers exhibits and events and is also the home of the Athol Bird and Nature Club. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, based in Athol, protects significant natural, agricultural, and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations. Organizations such as these help to preserve the beauty and natural resources that bring people to the Athol area.

The southern part of Athol, bordered by the Harvard Forest and the Quabbin Reservoir, offers some of the most beautiful hiking trails in the area. The town owns Fish Park, Silver Lake, and Lake Ellis, where people can swim, skate, play tennis, or play ball.

Athol has additional recreational facilities. The Ellinwood Country Club offers an 18-hole golf course, banquet facilities, and a clubhouse for its members. The downtown Athol Area YMCA includes an Olympic-size pool, gyms and workout equipment. Courses are offered in sports skills and practical arts. A Y-sponsored camp for local children, Camp Wiyaka, is located just across the border in New Hampshire.

Recreational activities for children and young adults are provided by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scout. The Athol Recreation Department sponsors summer programs for youths at the high school. Social and fraternal organizations such as the Athol Women’s Club, the Elks, Lions Club, Rotary, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Masonic Lodge, offer a wide range of activities for families and individuals.

Group Facilities

Four municipal auditoriums are available for large group events in Athol. They are:

	Seating	Location	Parking	Acoustics & Visibility
Middle School	400	Uptown	Good	Excellent
Memorial Hall	525	Central	On-street + lot	Poor
Liberty Hall	300	Central	On-street + lot	Fair
High School	642	Uptown	Good	Excellent

Churches, lodges, and the Athol Area YMCA have facilities for small group functions. The library has an activities room available at no charge. The library is located at the same intersection as the town hall and the YMCA. A parking lot is located beside and behind the library, and another municipal lot is a block behind the YMCA building. Otherwise, parking is available along the streets.

Churches

A variety of churches serve area residents. Two Catholic churches are here. The Church of Our Lady Immaculate was originally “the Irish church,” and Saint Francis of Assisi Church was “the Lithuanian church;” but those distinctions are no longer stressed.

Protestant churches include the Congregational, Baptist, Episcopal, New Testament Church, North Quabbin Bible Church, United Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, Salvation Army, and Seventh Day Adventist. Temple Israel serves the Jewish community in Athol and nearby towns. Each church offers a wide range of activities for its members in the form of religious education, Bible study, choirs, and social groups.

Social Services

Historically Athol has had many publicized social problems, and several local organizations are still on hand to remedy these situations. Chief among the problems are high rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and alcoholism, with a rising rate of opioid addiction and related issues.

The Athol Memorial Hospital provides hospital care, screening clinics, educational classes, home nursing care, out-patient counseling and a sleep clinic. A medical arts facility is located directly behind the hospital. The hospital has recently combined with Heywood Healthcare of Gardner and a major expansion of the facility here in Athol is in progress.

The North Quabbin Community Coalition is headquartered in a building on Exchange Street and is funded by state and federal dollars. Its membership is derived from local agencies, churches and organizations and is committed to providing a forum for sharing, advocacy, legislative lobbying efforts and to avoid a duplication of services. This coalition has been a model for the development of other similar initiatives around New England. Its task forces focus on such issues as child abuse, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and lack of affordable housing to come up with some real solutions. One of its groups sponsor the Literacy Volunteers of Orange / Athol, who provide free, confidential and private one-to-one tutoring for improving reading, writing, and math skills.

Children and families are served by additional agencies with Main Street offices. Athol-Royalston Community Partnerships for Children maintains an informational resource center for parents and a link to the Title I program in the schools. Valuing Our Children also targets children and families with services that promote education, child care, and family support. The Greater Athol Area Advocates for Families with Special Needs administers family support services for those who have a family member with a developmental disability. Clinical Support Options (CSO) maintains a Main Street office with numerous counselors meeting with clients, often at the library.

The Athol Council on Aging, in conjunction with Franklin County Home Care Corporation, provides hot meals, clinics, transportation, and recreational programs for the elderly. Three local housing complexes provide apartments specifically for senior citizens.

The Catholic Social Services trains and employs homemakers to assist in homes where care is needed. An interfaith council made up of ministers, priests and other religious leaders provides spiritual counseling and advocacy. It currently runs a Food Bank, as does the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army and the Congregational Church run free meals several times throughout the year for anyone wishing to attend.

LIBRARY DESCRIPTION

The Athol Public Library *"We love our library"*

Library service in Athol dates back to 1830, when the Athol Social Library offered books to local readers. Between 1850 and 1860, the Athol Agricultural and Mechanical Library served various groups. Area churches also maintained their own small libraries to serve the members of their congregations.

On November 13, 1878, an organization calling itself the Athol Library Association was formed. To this early group the Athol Public Library is directly related, for in 1882, the association offered its book collection to the town on the condition that municipal funds be appropriated to provide housing for the collection and to purchase additional books. In April 1882, the town voted to accept these resources (1063 books) and appropriated \$300 to support the new Athol Free Public Library. A library committee of five to seven elected members oversaw the institution until 1886, when the number of committee members was established at six.

This first public library was located on the second story of the home of Joel M. Doane, 268 School Street, and Mrs. Doane served as the librarian. Under town management, the library soon outgrew "the front parlor up one flight." In 1887, the committee leased Mr. Doane's vacant barn and hired as the librarian his daughter-in-law, Mercie S. Doane. The library was moved to the barn, the Dewey Decimal system was adopted, and a card file was developed. By the turn of the century, the committee considered those quarters inadequate and vowed that no additional materials would be purchased for that location. Library patronage declined accordingly.

At that time, Wilson H. Lee of New Haven opened negotiations with Andrew Carnegie to fund a new library building. Mr. Lee had grown up in Athol and still had an affection for the community. Though Carnegie offered the town a \$15,000 grant, and Lee had gotten a \$1500 private pledge to buy a parcel of land, the townspeople refused the deal.

The library still needed a new home, preferably one that was closer to the business district of Athol. Space opened up in the Academy of Music building on Exchange Street; the collection was moved into it, and the library opened for service on December 5, 1903. Mantie R. Hinman became the librarian. This new site offered shelves open to the patrons, a separate children's section, and a new charging system. Local appropriations remained low in comparison to library funding in surrounding towns, but circulation of library materials increased. Book deposit stations in South Athol and at Miss Grace Pitts' store uptown were established for a short time in an effort to reach more of the public.

In 1914, local businessman Laroy S. Starrett generously leased land on which to build a new library. Wilson H. Lee again opened negotiations with the Carnegie Corporation. Two years later, the town of Athol accepted a \$22,000 Carnegie grant to erect a free public library building. The new library was turned over to the town on August 16, 1918. Designed by W.H. & Henry McLean of Boston, the library was built in a simplified Classical Revival style by Fellows & Ducworth Co., Inc., of Brookline, and follows one of the floor plans suggested by the Carnegie

Corporation. One large room on the main floor contained the collection and accommodated all the patrons. A hardwood floor was laid in the downstairs hallway at the expense of L.S. Starrett. The main floor featured an historic fireplace mantle from the old Humphrey residence in Dorchester, the site of the birth of the first ordained minister in Athol. A large grandfather clock was donated by Wilson H. Lee.

Several librarians served in the new library until Gladys Greene was appointed head librarian in 1927. Miss Greene served tirelessly for the next thirty years, promoting service to children by offering summer reading programs and school book deposits, and initiating plans for a separate children's room at the library. In 1953, Miss Greene saw her plan become reality, for in that year the ground-floor children's room was dedicated in her honor. That space, originally designed as an assembly hall with stage, had been occupied by the local Red Cross chapter since the library opened in 1918. Miss Greene resigned as head librarian in 1957.

As library needs have increased, a number of physical improvements have been made to the original 1918 structure. To provide increased space, a two-story addition was built onto the rear of the library in 1965. It included rest rooms, a staff lounge, and enlarged reading and stack areas. The library was the first Athol town building to have air-conditioning, which was added in 1969, using library trust funds. In 1978, the ground-level storage room was renovated and turned into a multi-purpose room, which served for 34 years as an activity room for events for all ages. The library became handicapped accessible in the late 1980s; a designated parking space and a rear-entrance ramp were created in 1985, and an elevator, handicapped rest room, and children's entrance ramp were added in 1988. Those amenities pre-dated the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, demonstrating the commitment of a forward-thinking library board. In January of 2011, after many years of groundwork, the library began preparations to renovate and expand the old library. Successful votes in January, donation of land by the L.S. Starrett Company, the award of an MBLC Construction Grant, hiring of a project manager and architect all preceded the move to a temporary location in the heat of July and ground breaking on construction. The beautiful new, renovated and expanded LEED Platinum library reopened on December 30, 2013.

Library staff members have always responded to community demand for services. To meet the growing need for children's services, Myrtle Scribner was appointed the first full-time children's librarian in 1965, and that position remains full-time today. A Friends of the Library group was chartered in 1980, and this group is still active today. In the early 1990s, circulation and cataloging of library materials became computerized. Internet access for patrons began in 1995. Teaching public computer classes using a wireless lab began in 2001. In 2004, the "On the Same Page" reading initiative began and has continued to this date. The library continues to offer a wide variety of children's, young adult and adult programs. Many are or were funded with grants received from IMLS through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Nine head librarians / library directors have served the Athol Public Library since Miss Greene's time: Elsie White (1957-1960), Alice Newton (1960-1976), Elise Dennis (1976-1978), Ronald Latham (1978-1981), Mary King Cross (1981-1985), Christine P. Rose (1985-1988), Arlene Jacobs (1989-1990), Debra Blanchard (1990-2015), and Jean Shaughnessy (1915-present). These individuals have helped the library become one of the busiest small-town libraries in Massachusetts.

Administration

The constitution of the Athol Public Library names the Board of Library Trustees as its governing body. Two of the six trustees are elected each year for three year terms, and the Board elects a chairman and a clerk each year. The Director serves as the executive secretary. Responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the public is delegated by the Board to the Library Director. The Director is appointed in accordance with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners regulations, is directly responsible to the Athol Board of Trustees and is an employee of the town of Athol. The Board maintains institutional memberships for the library in the American Library Association, the Massachusetts Library Association, and the Massachusetts Library Trustees Association.

Under its bylaws, the Board meets once a month, except in July and August, unless additional meetings are needed. The November meeting is devoted to budget planning for the coming year. All meetings are posted and held under the Open Meeting Law.

The powers and duties of the Board are:

1. Serve as strong advocates to promote library interests.
2. Establish policies.
3. Repair and maintain the physical facility.
4. Recommend pay salaries of employees.
5. Replace employees as needed, with the approval of the Town Manager.
6. Review the budget annually with the library director and present it to the Town Manager.
7. Distribute state aid funds.
8. Manage trust funds and endowments.
9. Suggest an interim replacement for a departing Board Member to the Town Manager.

The Athol Public Library Board has endorsed the American Library Association Bill of Rights. They also update written job descriptions for all full- and part-time positions and policy statements. Salary grades for employees are determined by the union contract and are voted upon at the annual Town Meeting.

Personnel

The Athol Public Library employs a director, an assistant director, a children's librarian, adult three full-time technicians, four part-time technicians, two part-time pages, two substitutes, and a part-time custodian. The number of FTEs is 8.8. Brief descriptions of the job requirements for permanent full-time employees follow.

The position of Library Director is a professional supervisory position that requires a master's degree of library science from an American Library Association-accredited graduate library school. It requires administrative and supervisory experience. The Director is responsible for management of all aspects of library services in conformity with policies established by the Library Board of Trustees, the regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the bylaws of the Town of Athol, and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Director is responsible for planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting of all library services. S/he is also responsible for grant writing and building maintenance. The Library Director is under separate contract with the Town Manager and is placed at Grade 15 on the town's salary scale.

The position of Assistant Director is a professional supervisory position that requires a bachelor's degree, with a master's degree in library science preferred. A paraprofessional certificate of librarianship and a general understanding of the various phases of library operations are also necessary. The position involves assisting the Director with planning, implementing, and managing library services in accordance with established principles and policies of library operation, local policies and procedures, and pertinent local, statewide, and national laws, regulations, and practices. In consultation with the Director, the Assistant Director is particularly responsible for programming, providing computer classes, managing volunteers, overseeing and providing reference services, training and supervising staff, and for day-to-day management of the library. S/he also serves as Acting Director in the Director's absence. The Assistant Director is classified at Grade 11 on the town salary scale.

The position of Children's Librarian is a professional supervisory position that requires a college degree, with additional coursework toward a master's degree in library science or study in juvenile literature or elementary education. A paraprofessional certificate of librarianship and a general understanding of the various phases of library operations are also necessary. The Children's Librarian is responsible for the overall operation of the children's department. Duties include: conducting and coordinating public service to children and their families, day care providers, and school groups; developing and maintaining quality programs and collections of children's materials; cataloging and circulating library materials; providing reference service; training and supervising children's staff; and managing the children's department. The Children's Librarian is classified at Grade 9 on the town salary scale.

Each of the three full-time technician positions requires a high school diploma supplemented by college coursework and appropriate experience, though a bachelor's degree is preferred. The positions involve performing specialized public service, circulation, cataloging, interlibrary loan, library-related clerical, technical, and computer-related duties, in support of the effective operation of the town library. The Library Technicians are classified at Grade 7 on the town salary scale.

The library also employs four part time technicians who provide important support services in the adult and children's libraries. These positions require a high school diploma and some college. Part time Library Technicians are classified on Grade 4. There are two pages, currently working in the children's room and two substitutes on call to cover hours when needed. These four positions are minimum wage positions, as is the part-time custodian position.

Physical Description

The Athol Public Library is located on Main Street near the downtown shopping area and is convenient to the business district, factories, residential areas, and the town offices. A parking lot is located to the rear and side of the building and is accessible from Island Street and Marble Street. The parking lot is within Miller's River Park, which is part of the greenway along the Miller's River. The park features an amphitheater area for concerts and programs, a walkway along the flood wall of the river, a detention pond and rainwater garden to ecologically handle runoff from the library and parking lot, plus a butterfly garden area, two raised garden beds for community planting, compost area, native plants, and picnic tables. Several other public parking lots are within walking distance. Metered parking spaces are available along Main Street.

The main entrance leads from the parking lot into the approximately 20,000-square-foot building. This entrance features a handicap accessible walkway from three directions, automatic doors, and a short distance across the lobby to the elevator which connects the two floors. The original front door entry faces Main Street, has high granite steps to reach the main floor, and used primarily as an exit. A rear entrance, also with a handicapped ramp which can be reached from the rear parking area, provides access to the service and emergency stairway. The library has five rest rooms: two on the main floor near the computer area, two on the ground floor outside the program room, one in the children's room, and a staff bathroom next to the staff room on the main floor.

The main floor houses the adult and young adult collections and includes several casual reading areas, a reference area, public computers, a computer lab alcove, two quiet study rooms, a stack area, director's and assistant director's offices, and a staff workroom plus a staff break room.

The original Carnegie building houses public computers, the large print collection, microfilm reader and reels, periodicals, and newspapers, in addition to space for reading and tables for working. The computers in this area were years ago with a grant from the Gates Foundation and are energy efficient Studio Hybrids.

The new addition features the quiet study rooms that can be reserved by patrons and quiet seating areas overlooking the parking lot and the river/park areas. The stacks for the fiction and non-fiction collection are in the center of this addition, and the staff areas and circulation are located near the center where the new meets the old building. Tables with chairs and comfortable upholstered chairs are located around the perimeter of this space, as well as in the Carnegie space. The public copier and public card catalog computers are located near the circulation desk which is just outside the staff workroom and offices.

The young adult room is located in the rear corner of the new addition with an unusual window and great view of the river and park area. This space contains two computers for teen use, teen fiction book collection, and colorful, teen friendly furnishings and carpet that were purchased several years ago with an LSTA Teens and Tweens grant.

The ground floor of the library houses the children's room, the archives room, the program room with kitchen area, a conference/meeting room, two large restrooms, small storage spaces, and building system/equipment spaces, all off the large lobby.

The children's room occupies most of the end of the new addition and looks out onto the park, river, and rear parking lot. The play area is located at this windowed end along with four comfortable chairs for reading. Book shelves are on both sides of the room between the play area and the circulation desk. There are four tables with chairs in the center aisle. The circulation desk, office, and a storage room are located at the end of the room with the entrance to the lobby. The children's room has its own restroom. One catalog computer and three patron access computers are available for use.

There is a large program room with an entrance off the children's room and an entrance from the lobby. This large room can be divided into two smaller rooms in order to hold two programs at one time or just to provide a more manageable or intimate space. The smaller space has a sink for crafts and hand-washing while the larger space has the commercial kitchen which was purchased for the old library in 2005.

Across the lobby from the children's room in the Carnegie portion of the building is the Archives Room. More than 400 books of local and regional history are kept there, including town directories, town reports, and street lists. Patrons who wish to use this locked room on their own must register at the circulation desk on the main floor. The shelving is compact, rolling shelves which are hoped to provide enough space for any expansion of this collection. The local town historian Richard Chaisson has left his extensive local history collection in his will

A conference/meeting room is located on one side of the Archives Room and is available for use by the public. This is also the primary art display space, equipped with a hanging system attached to the walls. The Literacy Volunteers and Friends of the Library share a small office space next to the Friends' Book Sale Room. On the other side of the Archives Room is the room that houses most of the building's operating systems, including the computer server room, air exchange units, and fire alarm, security system, and fire suppression system.

Finances

The Athol Public Library is financed with municipal appropriations. State aid and the accumulated interest from a number of endowments are used for larger projects. Trust fund interest has restrictions as to its use and is not used for routine library expenses.

Multiple downturns in the economy and no noticeable recovery periods, have had taken a toll on town finances and on library services and hours. The typical work-week for an Athol town employee was cut from 40 hours to 37 hours approximately 15 years ago and hours have not been restored. There are only three employees at the library currently employed full time at 37 hours. All others work 34 hours or less, much less. We were without an assistant director for more than a year and the position was reinstated and filled in 2010, but only at 30 hours and we have lost some part time hours from other positions to do it. During the past decade, the library has seen a reduction in both open hours and staffing due to diminished funds. While state mandates are still being met for a library of this size, any further cuts could affect certification of the Athol Public Library.

The Friends of the Athol Public Library provide about \$5,000 annually to purchase videos, support programming and cover other miscellaneous expenses.

The library has a strong history of seeking grants to fund programs and services not normally provided through our regular budget. Almost all of our computer equipment and technology has been purchased through grants such as the Gates Foundation and Niagara Cutter.

Collaborations

In 1993, the Athol Public Library became an online affiliate member of C/W MARS. Central / Western Automated Resource Sharing, Inc., is a library consortium dedicated to efficient resource sharing and rapid access to information. It networks more than 140 libraries in central and western Massachusetts and provides an easy interlibrary loan method among them. While affiliate members have access to the information and the network, they do not circulate materials directly through C/W MARS. In 2012, the library joined CWMARS as a full member with access to all its services.

In spite of its location on the border of two counties, the Athol Public Library maintains a good relationship with the other town libraries in north central Massachusetts. Librarians from outlying smaller towns may choose selections of books on tape, DVDs, and videos to borrow on a long-term loan basis. We help to promote programs at area libraries by posting flyers and being knowledgeable about regional events. A number of our regular patrons also use other libraries in the area and understand the strengths of each one. Museum passes are loaned to patrons in good standing with no restriction on residency. Because of its size and variety of materials, the Athol Public Library is an important resource to both the libraries and residents of surrounding towns.

The children's room and young adult staff do their best to meet the needs of area students, especially knowing that all of the local schools except the high school do not have staffed libraries or certified librarians. Upon teacher request, the librarians host student visits for library orientation, book selection or instruction; visit classrooms to promote reading or the library; provide deposit collections for classroom use; supply suggested reading lists; place materials to meet assignments on reserve; and put summer reading list titles on reserve shelves for easy browsing. Library staff may help school staffs and parent-teacher organizations with projects in the school libraries. They organize Community Reading Day for children in grades K-8 and arrange for 'local celebrities' to participate. Library staff members also keep students in mind when making book purchases so that the public library can meet many of the needs of this audience.

Athol's Friends of the Library group was organized in April 1980. Dues range from \$5.00 for individuals to \$100 for sustaining members. The group's income is derived from dues as well as from book sales of discarded library materials and special fund raisers. The income is used to support many library programs and projects. Members who actively participate in the Friends have remained basically the same since its inception, and a membership drive could be started to recruit newer members.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR LIBRARY SERVICE

Administered through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts General Laws lay out the foundations for minimum library standards. The Code of Massachusetts regulations 605 CMR 4:00 address the requirements for basic provision of library services by population group.

The minimum standards for Athol are:

- ✚ Be open to all residents of the Commonwealth.
- ✚ Make no charge for normal library service.
- ✚ Be open a minimum of 40 hours per week, including some evening hours.
- ✚ Employ a library director with a professional degree from an approved library school and professional certification from the MBLC.
- ✚ Spend a minimum of 16% of the total annual budget of books and other materials.
- ✚ Extend borrowing privileges to holders of cards issued by other certified public libraries.
- ✚ Appropriate municipal funds for library service which is at least 2.5% above the average library appropriation for the last three years.

LIBRARY VALUES AND MISSION

In order to develop our public service responses and our goals and objectives for the next five years, we, as a staff, examined our values and mission as the Athol Public Library. We took into consideration the desires of the community, both library users and non-users, as expressed in surveys and focus group responses. According to Sandra Nelson in *Strategic Planning for Results*, “values are principals or standards that library staff and board members use to guide their actions and decisions” and “values apply to all service responses (76).

Core Values of the Athol Public Library

The Athol Public Library believes in -

- **Excellent customer service**
- **Open and free access to all**
- **A welcoming, pleasant environment**
- **Intellectual freedom and personal privacy**
- **Respect for every patron and every staff member**
- **Planning for the future in order to continually improve our services, programs, and collections to meet the changing needs of our community**
- **Acting with initiative, creativity, flexibility, and enthusiasm**
- **Responsible and efficient management of library resources**

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE RESPONSES

All of the information gathered from the community must now be placed into a set of goals, objectives and action or activity statements. Appropriate service responses must be selected based on the expressed needs of the residents. What is a service response? To quote the Strategic Planning for Results by Sandra Nelson, page 143, “*a service response is what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet a set of well-defined community needs.*”

There are eighteen service responses to select from and they are:

- Be an Informed Citizen – Local, National, and World Affairs
- Build Successful Enterprises – Business and Nonprofit Support
- Celebrate Diversity – Cultural Awareness
- Connect to the Online World – Public Internet Access
- Create Young Readers – Early Literacy
- Discover Your Roots – Genealogy and Local History
- Express Creativity – Create and Share Content
- Get Facts Fast – Ready Reference
- Know Your Community – Community Resources and Services
- Learn to Read and Write – Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy
- Make Career Choices – Job and Career Development
- Make Informed Decisions – Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices
- Satisfy Curiosity – Lifelong Learning
- Stimulate Imagination – Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure
- Succeed in School – Homework Help
- Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information – Information Fluency
- Visit a Comfortable Place – Physical and Virtual Spaces
- Welcome to the United States – Services for New Immigrants

Although the Athol Public Library does offer some facets of each response and needs were expressed that fell within every category, with continuing budget restrictions, tough decisions must be made as to how our energies and resources are expended. Based on the various data collected and analyzed, the following four are appropriate for Athol at this time.

Satisfy Curiosity – Lifelong Learning

Stimulate Imagination – Pleasure Reading, Viewing, and Listening

Connect to the Online World – Public Internet Access

Learn to Read and Write – Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy

Focus on Service Response:

Stimulate Imagination – Pleasure Reading, Viewing, Listening, and Learning

The Athol Public Library is literally at the heart of the community. Physically it is located in the nest of downtown, across from the other bustling hub of activity – the local YMCA and also adjacent to the Town Hall. The library provides meeting room space to the community and activities for young and old to connect people with each other. The library provides programming to stimulate learning and enrichment. The library provides materials to stimulate reading, viewing, listening, and learning. The Athol Public Library seeks to make available exciting new materials from best sellers to the hottest movies and provide a forum for people to discuss them. A monthly Mystery Discussion group has spawned the lunchtime group to discuss books on other topics and also a writer's group that is meeting twice a month. Physical distance from cultural attractions also plays a huge role in our importance as a provider of entertaining and informative programs for adults and children.

Recent events that captured the interest and participation of residents include our annual "Community Reading Day" event, which brings volunteer readers from all walks of life into the schools to read a book and share the importance and love of reading with students in grades Pre-K to Grade 8. This past year the books were: *What's for Lunch? How Schoolchildren Eat Around the World* for older students, *It's Disgusting and We Ate It* for middle grades, and *Yoko* by Rosemary Wells for the youngest children. Our Super Hero Night last summer brought children, parents, and grandparents to the library and library's park for a super night. It also was a great opportunity to collaborate with YMCA staff, the Police Department, and the Fire Department who all volunteered to participate. An Author Expo, art exhibits, coloring club, and chess clubs for teens and for adults have appealed to new audiences with great success.

Limitations to realizing the full potential of the library as an imagination stimulator and a community center for learning revolve around money and time. Goals and objectives were fashioned, however, as if we were fully funded with the idea that grants and benefactors can always be solicited.

Goal 1: Users will have easy access to a wide selection of popular materials.

Objective 1: Improve or replace display units for exhibiting new materials (ongoing).

Objective 2: Increase staff to plan and implement attention-grabbing displays

Objective 3: Establish a budget line item for acquisition of non-traditional items in demand (FY18).

Goal 2: The library is recognized by the town as a center for community activities and meeting space.

Objective 1: Plan more educational and imagination sparking programs for all ages.

Objective 2: Promote and publicize new library programs in new ways to reach more people.

Objective 3: Promote community use of library's meeting spaces (ongoing).

Objective 4: Add enough staff and/or rearrange staffing to cover more hours and programs. (FY18)

Goal 3: Establish the library’s reputation for innovation and explore new avenues for educational messages.

Objective 1: Create “learning stations” of the green features of the building with self-guided or interactive stations (June 2017)

Objective 2: Organize a location for a Creation Station or Maker Space, solicit local interested individuals in putting together proposals and seeking funding (May 2017).

Goal 4: Continue to expand the library’s outreach into community.

Objective 1: Begin planning for library’s 100th anniversary in 2018.

Objective 2: Organize a Library Gardening Club to oversee the new park and to provide learning programs on a variety of gardening topics (April 2017).

Objective 3: Continue to provide a community wide reading initiative with programs of interest to the community related to the selected book (ongoing).

Objective 4: Encourage artists to use display areas for exhibits (ongoing).

Objective 5: Investigate ways to establish outreach services beyond our walls for elderly and disabled patrons.

Objective 6: Promote visitation by all classrooms in every school in Athol, at least every other year (ongoing).

Goal 5: Secure support and finances to achieve goals.

Objective 1: Increase membership in the Friends of the Library by 10% through publicity materials and direct solicitation by FY18

Objective 2: The Trustees, Director and library staff will follow the criteria and deadlines set by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in order to receive available state and federal funding (ongoing).

Focus on Service Response:

Satisfy Curiosity – Lifelong Learning

The ability to continue learning upon leaving the formal school setting is one of the most important functions of a library. Every other service response relates to this one, as curiosities and needs arise from the desire to learn more. That’s where the library comes in! From providing young children with interesting story hours to foster the love of reading to directing a senior citizen through the maze of genealogy research in the Archives collection, the library aids and supports people in their quest for knowledge.

Being designated by the state as a disadvantaged community demonstrates the real need for the library to provide materials and services for the many low income residents. Unemployment is historically higher than the state average but many of the services to address this are located at least a half an hour’s drive. The library tries to assist by providing computers and access to a high speed Internet connection as well as basic computer skills instruction.

Because of the remote physical proximity to larger metropolitan areas with their corresponding services and attractions, the Athol Public Library has sought numerous grants over

the years to provide access to print and online information to assist residents in their knowledge and skill pursuits.

Residents typically need current information on how to do it projects, job searching skills, health, education and governmental agencies to name just a few. Many need staff intervention to fully utilize the tools we provide. To assist those working from home, we developed and maintain a website full of useful information.

Goals and objectives concentrate on renewing and keeping up to date with the resources currently available to allow citizens the opportunities to continue learning regardless of age, economic hardship, and distance from larger communities' amenities.

Goals and objectives in this area relate to increasing the materials available, customer service training and skill enhancement for the staff and providing adequate materials and technology for self-directed study for gaining knowledge and skills.

Goal 1: Customers' informational needs and requests for assistance in using technology to find resources are met by qualified, friendly and helpful staff.

Objective 1: Employ an appropriate number of proficient, experienced and welcoming personnel (ongoing).

Objective 2: Provide professional development opportunities for staff in reference techniques using traditional resources and emerging technologies (ongoing).

Objective 3: Provide technology training and workshop opportunities for staff (ongoing).

Goal 2: The library meets patron needs for information in all formats.

Objective 1: Provide adequately funded budget line items for identified formats and technologies (ongoing).

Objective 2: Encourage staff to keep abreast of emerging technologies (ongoing).

Goal 3: Customers will have current and up to date services available to satisfy their knowledge pursuits.

Objective 1: Update and monitor technology plan to continue to provide computers suitable for patrons' needs by FY17.

Objective 2: Keep abreast of current trends and needs by frequently surveying patrons.

Objective 3: Advertise and promote online databases available through programs, publicity materials and on the library website (ongoing).

Goal 4: The library will collaborate with schools and homeschoolers to familiarize children and young adults with services offered and make them feel comfortable in a library setting.

Objective 1: Conduct at least two school visits in FY17.

Objective 2: Create an informational brochure to distribute to home schooling families by FY17.

Objective 3: Distribute a letter to teachers informing them of new services and materials at the beginning of the school year (ongoing).

Goal 5: The library will maintain and make accessible a secure, climate controlled area for the library's genealogical and local history materials.

Objective 1: Organize and improve access to materials in Archives collection.

Objective 2: Increase staff hours or add staff with archival expertise and increase hours devoted to the Archives collection.

Objective 3: Digitize newspapers currently on microfilm – FY19.

Objective 4: Digitize other important materials for easier access – FY19.

Goal 6: Non-English speaking residents of town will have a range of services available in their native tongue.

Objective 1: Identify ethnic groups residing in Athol for language areas in need of materials and generate title list by FY18.

Objective 2: Seek funding to begin building a collection of identified language(s) by FY18.

Objective 3: Provide programming of interest to the identified groups in their native language by FY18.

Focus on Service Response:

Connect to the Online World – Public Internet Access

Goal 1: The library will provide an adequate number of computers and online access opportunities as requested by customers.

Objective 1: Add new technologies to keep up with innovations – chrome books for adults and students to use in study areas in FY18.

Objective 2: Increase the number of staff hours to provide additional assistance with computers, whether one on one or in a classroom setting by FY18.

Objective 3: Monitor condition and usage of equipment to keep on a maintenance, replacement and new acquisitions schedule (ongoing).

Goal 2: Library staff will provide assistance and training on computer equipment and resources to library customers.

Objective 1: Provide training opportunities so that all staff are equally equipped to assist customers (ongoing).

Objective 2: Offer one on one (ongoing) or classroom instruction for patrons on using computer technology and online tools.

Focus on Service Response:

Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy – Learn to Read and Write

Competency in reading skills, and therefore, writing and learning competency, are an issue in the Athol area. A high drop-out rate and high rates of unemployment, single parent families, and

poverty all contribute to literacy challenges. Several agencies in the area, including the Literacy Volunteers of Orange and Athol (LVOA), Community Partnership for Children (CPC), Valuing Our Children (VOC), and the Community Coalition are striving to address this problem. The library has also always been active in this area. However, it is an ongoing but important issue that could use renewed concentration.

Goal 1: The library will work closely and cooperatively with the Literacy Volunteers staff person to promote literacy.

Objective 1: Recruit volunteer tutors (FY17).

Objective 2: Investigate new means to recruit and retain students for LVOA program (FY17).

Objective 3: Collaborate with LVOA on publicizing the program.

Objective 4: Publicize our meeting spaces for use by tutors and counselors (FY17 and ongoing).

Goal 2: The library will address family literacy through a variety of avenues.

Objective 1: Provide Baby Book Bags to families with new young children in collaboration with LVOA and/or Friends of the Library.

Objective 2: Promote programming for babies, toddlers, children, and stress the importance of reading with children.

Objective 3: Find sources for books to give away as incentives at library programs and at community programs.

Goal 3: Reach teens and tweens with the importance of literacy.

Objective 1: Continue the Community Reading Day program in the schools, grade K to grade 8, by securing funding for purchase of the books and finding enough enthusiastic volunteer readers.

Objective 2: Work with the ESL program in the schools to provide resources for students in FY17.

Objective 3: Seek funding to increase staff hours for young adult services FY19.

PLAN OF ACTION

ACTIVITIES FOR:

FY 2017 – FY 2022

STIMULATE IMAGINATION -

Reading, Viewing, Listening, and Learning for Pleasure

- Improve display areas and materials to encourage use.
- Purchase more popular, high demand materials.
- Add non-traditional items to circulating materials collection.
- Increase budget for materials, including new formats.
- Plan more programs and programming for different audiences.

- Try new methods of publicity to reach different audiences.
- Promote and facilitate library meeting room use to community.
- Create “Learning stations” of some of the green and unique and interesting features of the new library.
- Find space, time, equipment, and supervisors for a creation stations or maker space.
- Plan the library’s 100th anniversary for 2018.
- Organize a garden club or committee to maintain and utilize the park space.
- Explore new ways to provide outreach beyond our walls for elderly and disabled patrons.
- Outreach to artists to provide art exhibits.
- Encourage classroom visits by schools
- Select a book for On the Same Page community wide reading and related events.
- Search out and apply for available grant funding for goals and objectives listed.

SATISFY CURIOSITY – Lifelong Learning

- Maintain and/or increase staffing to provide experienced and welcoming personal service.
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff.
- Provide technology training and workshop opportunities for staff.
- Update and monitor Technology Plan.
- Promote library databases through publicity and the website.
- Conduct school visits – Children’s Room and Young Adult staff.
- Create an informational brochure to distribute to homeschool families.
- Organize and improve access to the Archives collection.
- Explore resources to begin digitizing newspaper microfilm collection.
- Identify ethnic groups and languages in the community.
- Build a collection to address language needs of identified populations.
- Provide programming of interest to identified groups.

CONNECT TO THE ONLINE WORLD – Public Internet Access

- Add new technology to keep up with innovations – chrome books for adults and students to use in study areas.
- Increase staff hours to provide additional assistance with computers, either one on one or in a classroom setting.
- Monitor condition and usage of equipment to keep on a maintenance, replacement and new acquisitions schedule.
- Plan and execute technology workshops and programs for public.

ADULT, TEEN, AND FAMILY LITERACY –
Learn to Read and Write

- Collaborate with Literacy Volunteers of Orange and Athol with planning and promotion.
- Recruit volunteer tutors.
- Recruit and retain students for LVOA program.
- Publicize library's meeting spaces for use by tutors and counselors.
- Provide Baby Book Bags to families with new young children in collaboration with LVOA.
- Promote programming for babies, toddlers, children, and stress importance of reading.
- Find sources for books to give away as incentives at library programs and at community programs.
- Continue the annual Community Reading Day program in the schools by securing funding for books and finding volunteer readers.
- Collaborate with ESL program in schools to provide resources for students.
- Seek funding to increase staff hours committed to young adult services.

Plan of Action

Activities for FY17

STIMULATE IMAGINATION – **Reading, Viewing, Listening, and Learning for Pleasure**

- Improve display areas and materials to encourage use.
- Add non-traditional items to circulating materials collection.
- Plan more programs and programs for different audiences.
- Try new methods of publicity to reach different audiences.
- Promote and facilitate library meeting room use to community.
- Create “Learning Stations” or some of the green and unique and interesting features of the new library.
- Find space, time, equipment and supervisors for a creation station or maker space.
- Plan the library’s 100th anniversary for 2018.
- Organize a garden club or committee to maintain and utilize the park space.
- Outreach to artists to provide art exhibits.
- Select a book for On the Same Page community wide reading and related events.
- Search out and apply for available grant funding for goals and objectives listed.

SATISFY CURIOSITY – Lifelong Learning

- Provide technology training and workshop opportunities for staff.
- Update and monitor Technology Plan
- Conduct school visits – Children’s Room and Young Adult staff.
- Create an informational brochure to distribute to homeschool families.
- Organize and improve access to the Archives collection.
- Explore resources to begin digitizing newspaper microfilm collection.

CONNECT TO THE ONLINE WORLD – Public Internet Access

- Monitor condition and usage of equipment to keep on a maintenance, replacement, and new acquisitions schedule.
- Plan and execute technology workshops and programs for public.

ADULT, TEEN, AND FAMILY LITERACY – Learn to Read and Write

- Collaborate with Literacy Volunteers of Orange and Athol with planning and promotion.
- Recruit volunteer tutors.
- Recruit and retain students for LVOA program.
- Provide Baby Book Bags to families with new young children in collaboration with LVOA.
- Promote programming for babies, toddlers, children, and stress importance of reading.
- Continue the annual Community Reading Day program in the schools by securing funding for books and finding volunteer readers.
- Collaborate with ESL program in schools to provide resources for students.

Completed action plan items in FY16 from Long Range Plan 20011-2016

COMMONS

- Conducted many tours of the new green facility, highlighting the LEED components and energy efficient features (ongoing).
- Applied for grant funding for goals and objectives listed in the Long Range Plan (ongoing).
- Organized and completed a new Long Range Plan for FY17-FY22 by October 2017.
- Organized a Library Garden Committee to help maintain the new park (ongoing).
- Provided learning programs on garden topics (ongoing).

CURRENT TOPICS AND TITLES

- Presented a budget to the Finance Committee that requested a two percent increase in materials spending for FY16 and FY17.
- Created learning opportunities for children to relate to the environment through science, hands-on experience, and nature kits, utilizing the new library Millers River Park.
- Furnished space in the new library for local artists to display art work and hold receptions (ongoing by Art Committee).

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Collaborated with local organizations, YMCA, Friends of the Library, and Rotary Club, to provide literacy opportunities for children (ongoing).
- Provided opportunities for users of all ages to engage others in learning and educational ventures (ongoing).
- Investigated cost to digitize items in the archives room (\$100 per reel of newspaper microfilm).

LIFELONG LEARNING

- Collaborated with the Miller's River Environmental Center to plan nature and science programs for the new Miller's River Library Park – pruning workshop, garden beds, fairy house building, explanatory signs for plantings and drainage system.
- Worked with the Energy Committee and the North Quabbin Energy Group to provide a series of programs promoting green technologies and energy saving tips.
- Ordered and installed new shelving for Archives room.
- Met with contractors and specialists to provide climate control for Archives room.

RESOURCES

The Citizens of Athol.

The staff, Trustees and Friends of the Athol Public Library.

The Town Manager, Town Boards and community organizations.

Athol Economic Development and Industrial Corporation. *Athol Economic Development Plan*.

Athol, Mass., September 12, 2005.

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2002, reissued February 2004.

Caswell, Lilley B. *Athol Massachusetts, Past and Present*. Athol, Mass., 1899.

Lord, William G. *History of Athol, Massachusetts*. Athol, Mass., 1953.

Nelson, Sandra. *Strategic Planning for Results*. Chicago, American Library Association, 2008.

Nelson, Sandra. *The New Planning for Results*. Chicago, American Library Association, 2001.

Talcott, Martha T. *Athol Public Library 1882-1972, 90 Years of Service*. Athol, Mass., Transcript Press, 1974.

Young, Allen. *North of Quabbin Revisited*. Athol, Mass., Haley's, 2003.

**" Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap
compared to that of an ignorant nation. "**

Walter Cronkite