



Wollaston Public Library Strategic Plan

2018-2021

Imagine. Discover. Connect.



BUILDING A LIBRARY

GROWING A COMMUNITY

Wollaston Public Library Strategic Plan

A WORKING DOCUMENT

Covering the period from 2018 to 2021, this document presents the vision and strategies that the board and staff deem necessary for the Wollaston Public Library to enhance its role in the fabric of the community.

Summary: Focussing on two main goals will help the library serve its community best:

- **A new building.** Finalizing a location, designing the space, fundraising to build a welcoming, accessible, environmentally and fiscally sound facility.
- **Developing stronger ties with the community** in order that the library be perceived as a neutral and supportive “go-to” place for sharing knowledge, organizing initiatives, and engaging in literacy activities.

Introduction

“Tell us what you would like your library to do.”

That was the question and the challenge the Board and staff of the Wollaston Public Library put to the community in a [2017 survey](#).

A total of 149 library patrons and residents took the time to answer 10 questions – either online or on paper. That input helped us understand how the public views the library’s role in Wollaston Township. It also explored how they felt about the current library services and whether the aging portable structure had outlived its purpose.

Their answers have helped shape this strategic plan. The plan is also informed by guidance from the Friends of the Wollaston Library (FOWL) and input from staff. Those voices, as well as the assessments our board has made during its term, tell us what the Library can achieve. There is broad agreement about its importance to a small, rural community in the 21st century¹.

A handful of respondents to the survey said the library service was “a nice bonus”. More than 85 per cent deemed the library to be an “important service” to the township. We agree.

This strategic plan outlines a pragmatic vision to enhance the role the library plays in this community. Our resources might be considered limited, but we have a lot going for us:

- a supportive Council that believes in literacy and community development and that stands behind the library
- a Friends of the Wollaston Library group that consistently supports the library through programs and fundraising
- a committed board of directors that believes in a hands-on role to reach creative solutions and engage as many stakeholders and citizens as possible
- individuals who have offered their time and ideas to reinvigorate the library so that it can reflect the needs of a rural community in the 21st century.

¹ Jeffrey W. Hancks (2012) Rural Public Libraries' Role in Community Economic Development, Public Library Quarterly, 31:3, 220-236, DOI: [10.1080/01616846.2012.707108](https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2012.707108)

Challenges

Library staff and volunteers have had a “can-do” or “make-do” attitude and that results in a facility that attempts to be as welcoming as possible. However, there are physical limitations that can’t be overcome as things stand:

- **The building:** the current location is a portable that is 40 years old. It is poorly insulated which means clients using the computers keep their jackets on in winter but still complain of cold feet. It is overly hot in summer which is our busiest time. It has no toilet facilities or running water which is an issue for those cold computer users, not to mention young children. There is no place for community members to hold small, informal meetings like book clubs or organizing committees. The energy costs have become a drain on our modest budget. Plans for a new location have been discussed for years – and there were even plans drawn. Up until now, the community has not been asked to actively engage on replacing the building. The results of our survey show they are ready to participate.
- **Community Engagement:** Respondents to our survey outlined multiple library services they valued. They also set down ideas that they would like to see in the future. With limited resources, the library must prioritize such services and make decisions about how to best serve the widest community possible: children, youth, seniors, business people, parents, and those with disabilities and limited mobility. For a library to be a hub it needs to nurture relationships with stakeholders – bringing in new individuals and groups who view the library as a place that supports their needs and goals.

Mission Statement:

The Wollaston Public Library provides access to an organized collection of print and non-print materials. The library aims to support the Township's cultural, informational, educational and recreational needs and acts a community hub.

The Pillars:

Collections, Programs and Services – We maintain collections that reflect the diverse tastes and needs of our patrons. And we work with other libraries and professionals to maintain the widest access possible. Listening helps us provide access to events and programs that reflect the interests of the community and help bring people together to share knowledge, experience and fun.

Technology - We strive to provide access to, and information about, current technologies to narrow the accessibility gap that exists in rural communities.

Community Engagement – Connection with local stakeholders helps us identify needs, issues and opportunities to expand our patron base. Our volunteers are a valuable resource and support many of the “extras” that would not be possible with our operating budget.

A Space – Our aging school portable has hosted valued library services for many years. However, it is hindrance to fulfilling our mission. We need to find a new space that will be welcoming, accessible and safe.

The Goals:

A modern rural library needs to engage and connect. It needs to be creative, resourceful and accessible. The community has expressed a need for a place to connect, learn and share. We accept the invitation to work towards creating a new space for the Wollaston Public Library which reflects our community.



Focussing **on two main goals** over the period of this strategic plan will make the plan easier to achieve:

A new building: This goal will be supported by a workplan which includes finalizing a location, designing the space, fundraising to build a welcoming, accessible, environmentally and fiscally sound facility.

Stronger connections: This goal will be supported by a workplan that actively seeks to identify stakeholders within the community and then explore, develop and nurture partnerships and connections with them.

Making It Happen: A Plan for Action

Every day, there are dozens of tasks, projects and ideas that present themselves. However, our Library Board has learned from decades of combined experience in public service, business, outreach and administration that success is achieved by assessing resources and prioritizing goals. That doesn't mean that there isn't room for flexibility if an opportunity presents itself. But it does mean that decisions about what we work on are made through the filter of maintaining a good collection, finding a new home for the library and broadening our reach into the community. Making hard choices and sharing those choices with the community is a leadership role that the library has chosen to take. Incorporating benchmarks and a method for evaluating progress will help us reach our goal.

This is the formula for success. Here is how we can make it happen:

A New Home

Imagine. Discover. Connect. Those are the three important words that make up the Wollaston Library's motto.

For decades, we've operated from an aging portable. Little insulation, no washroom facilities and lack of meeting space has created an atmosphere that discourages lingering, much less connection. The current library building is owned by the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, and while we have a great relationship with them, the costs associated with occupying the building are about to increase substantially.

The current facility does not lend itself to the improvements that a new space could provide, including programming and shelving space, washrooms and adequate heating and cooling.

The library board and staff have had discussions and explored options for a new space, and Wollaston Township Council has approved the new library space in principle.

The 2017 community survey "*Tell Us What You Would Like Your Library to Do*" showed there is strong support for a comfortable, safe space for library services and programmes. We want to seize this momentum.

This strategic plan is designed to tackle this challenge. The workplan for this goal appears as Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Collections, Programs and Services

Borrowing books and other library resources was listed as the #1 reason our patrons want a library. That's the "Imagine and Discover" in our motto.



Nourishing literacy and fostering a love of reading remains at the core of our mission.

The Wollaston Public Library is proud of its collection of new works, classics, resource materials and DVDs. The installation of a new cataloguing system will make it easier to track and analyze user needs and tastes. And our inter-library loan partnerships with other libraries help provide patrons with books we can't afford to buy. A small part of our operating budget is used for collections.

It is supplemented by cash donations from FOWL and public donations of books. Our librarian constantly balances the need to be frugal and efficient with the need to be current so that patrons – young and old – aren't at a disadvantage.

We aim to attract new patrons to the library with programming such as the Family March Break events. Our capacity to do so depends on our FOWL volunteers and on available space. In the summer of 2018, the library will have no access to the Community Centre. This severely limits our capacity to provide programming because the portable has limited space and no running water.

Outreach: Engaging and Connecting the Community

The “Connect” part of our motto is integral to our mission. Research shows that a modern, rural library strengthens and enhances community and economic development.² Residents of Wollaston Township innately know this. In our [2017 survey](#), 85 per cent of respondents said the library was an important community asset. This strategic plan aims to consolidate that support and give voice to those who want the very best for residents of all ages.

² Heather Reid & Vivian Howard (2016) Connecting with Community: The Importance of Community Engagement in Rural Public Library Systems, Public Library Quarterly, 35:3, 188-202, DOI: [10.1080/01616846.2016.1210443](https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2016.1210443)

Conclusion



This is not a project for the faint of heart.

But literacy, knowledge-sharing, community-building and the pleasure of reading are important to this community. Its longstanding support of the library shows that.

This plan helps the library and the community focus on a clear goal that can benefit young and old, working or retired, full-time residents and visitors, businesses and not-for-profit groups. It

is a project that can unite and strengthen. It will result in a space where the community can meet, learn, play and even celebrate!

This plan also includes goals and timelines to help us stay focussed. As a volunteer board and a part-time librarian, we welcome the expertise and positive contributions of stakeholders to help us mark our goalposts; measure our progress and adjust our course.

Appendix 1

Guidelines and Workplan for Finding a New Home

Goals	Tasks/Steps	Timeline/Progress
<i>Develop concrete proposal</i>	<i>Explore Options/ Develop Rough Drafts</i>	<i>April 2018 onward</i>
<i>Presentation of proposal to stakeholders, potential partners</i>	<i>Presentation to Council Motion of Support from Council</i>	<i>May 2018</i>
<i>Active discussion/debate of options</i>	<i>Form a committee, choose venue, information package</i>	<i>August 2018 onward</i>
	<i>Public Consultation</i>	<i>August 2018 onward</i>
<i>Giving voice to community need for library/hub space</i>	<i>Media outreach</i>	<i>Bancroft This Week, Moose June 2018 onward</i>
	<i>Opinion piece</i>	
	<i>Social Media</i>	
	<i>Post Strategic Plan on website, present at Council</i>	
<i>Exploring and pursuing grant and funding options</i>	<i>Seeking partnerships with community stakeholders</i>	<i>August 2018 onward</i>

Appendix 2

Collections, Programs and Services

Goals	Tasks/steps	Timeline/Progress
<i>Improved administration of collection</i>	<i>Installation and training on JASI</i> <i>100 per cent of materials labelled and catalogued</i> <i>Clear, user-friendly signage</i>	<i>May-June 2018</i> <i>May 2018 onward</i> <i>July 2018</i>
<i>Knowing our users</i>	<i>Up to date user database</i> <i>Regular contact/information updates</i>	<i>August 2018 onward</i>
<i>Continuing to Develop our Collection and Services</i>	<i>Continue to consult on how best to serve the community through the collection.</i> <i>Spend budget dollars on the collection to make it even more valuable to the community.</i> <i>Continue to consult on how best to serve the community through library programs, whether through staff, volunteers or FOWL.</i> <i>Deliver programs and initiatives that are of value to the community.</i>	<i>September 2018 onward</i> <i>September 2018 onward</i> <i>September 2018 onward</i> <i>September 2018 onward</i>
<i>Provide On-Line Services for the Community</i>	<i>Continue to provide 24/7 access to the internet through the library building.</i>	<i>September 2018 onward</i>

Goals	Tasks/steps	Timeline/Progress
	<i>Continue to explore enhancements to the Internet services and ensure that they reflect best practices.</i>	<i>September 2018 onward</i>
	<i>Continue to explore training options for the community that enhance patrons' comfort and on-line literacy.</i>	<i>September 2018 onward</i>

Appendix 3

Public and Media Outreach

Goals	Task/Steps	Timeline/Progress
<i>Broaden library's visibility.</i>	<i>Develop new website</i>	<i>Launch August 2018</i>
	<i>Create and maintain online community calendar</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	<i>Maintain and populate Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	<i>Advertise regularly in What's Happening Wollaston; Media Plans surrounding each of the library's events</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	<i>Organize/host public consultation for new home</i>	<i>August 2018 onward</i>
	<i>Media release/pitch about the new library project.</i>	<i>September 2018 onward</i>
<i>Organize/host Municipal All-Candidates Meeting</i>	<i>September 2018</i>	
<i>Strengthen existing relationships with current members.</i>	<i>Creating a user database that enables contact with patrons</i>	<i>June 2018 onward</i>
<i>Increase membership numbers.</i>	<i>Membership Drive</i>	<i>July 2018 onward</i>
	<i>Book Sale Cookie Promotion</i>	<i>June 2018 book sale</i>
	<i>Attendance/Talks at Group Gatherings</i>	<i>June 2018 onward</i>
<i>Maintain and nurture current stakeholder relationships and partnerships.</i>	<i>Explore new ways to partner in programming and fundraising</i>	<i>May 2018 onward</i>

Goals	Steps/Tasks	Timeline/Progress
<i>Maintain and nurture current stakeholder relationships and partnerships.</i>	<i>Monthly attendance at FOWL meeting</i>	<i>March 2018 onward</i>
	<i>ATV Club Fundraiser</i>	<i>June 2018</i>
	<i>Explore book drops at Bear Ridge and Red Eagle.</i>	<i>September 2018</i>
	<i>Bear Ridge Fundraiser</i>	<i>September 2018</i>

Appendix 4

A Brief History of the Search for a New Library

When the Wollaston Public Library Board was appointed, we immediately discovered that we had our work cut out for us. The community needed a new building for the library - one with washroom facilities and improved accessibility. It needed to be safer and more secure for staff and patrons. We needed a facility that was warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Patrons wanted a library that was inviting, welcoming and inclusive. Small, rural libraries have been proven to improve social connections and economic development. They don't have to be fancy. But they do have to have a plan, a mission and a good space for people to gather.

We've set out to achieve this and here is the chronology of the efforts (in quick note form) of our volunteer board.

- We created a [survey](#) to ask the public what they wanted.
- We met with Hastings Prince Edward District School Board Facility Services to discuss options for sharing the library space with the Coe Hill School library. We were told a separate entrance and separate washroom would be required. We would have to use the school board's architects, engineers and contractors but the community would be responsible for the costs associated with those improvements. We also discovered we would be charged rent on the shared space as well as the entrance addition. The bottom line was that we would incur substantial cost but could lose the space if the school closed or circumstances or policies changed at the school board. The board concluded that this option was neither wise nor a good use of money.
- After that meeting, the board met and considered options including building an addition to the township building.
- The library board sent a member to talk to the Township Clerk to explore the idea. We were met with an encouraging response. She informed us that Councillor Dave Naulls was researching the idea of larger council chamber addition to the township office.
- The board invited Councillor Naulls to a board meeting to share ideas. We talked about additions and improvements that would create a new library, improve offices and storage space for township staff, make a larger council chamber that could also be used for programming and other community uses.

The proposed improvements included a new upgraded septic system, insulation and siding, in-floor heating for the library and council chambers. Radiators connected to a boiler system would service the rest of the building. This would improve the energy efficiency of the building as well as making it a comfortable place to visit. Additional parking and an outdoor area with Wi-Fi were also on the list. We used this information to prepare a plan for a new facility.

- A preliminary floor plan was designed to improve the township building. It incorporated the concept of a community hub with a library, a larger council chamber/multipurpose room, and storage space and offices for the use of township staff.
- The plan is presented to council. Council passes a motion agreeing in principle.
- The school board informs the township that they will begin charging the Library \$9.14 sq. ft. annually beginning in the fall of 2018.
- We increase and focus our efforts to find the library a new future home.

And now here we are determined to make it happen. The plan for the new library facility has several benefits:

- It is affordable. The township has money in reserves that would pay for their portion.
- It is an investment in our own township's assets and can play a major part in the development of our community.
- It is a plan that takes into consideration that residents want to play their part to create this space. This project can bring community together and takes advantage of the skills and passion that make Wollaston Township a good place to live.
- It will result in a safe, comfortable facility for staff and patrons. It would be welcoming and accessible for people using the collection or enjoying library programs.

The township owns a tract of land at and around the township office. The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority confirms that site development falls within all current regulations. If a future plan is formulated for a new building on the main street, then the township office would have improvements making it more desirable for sale or rent.

This idea could be completed in a short time, and the library board unanimously and enthusiastically recommends it to the Wollaston community.

Appendix 5

Surveying the Public

In the summer and autumn of 2017, the Board of the Wollaston Public Library, in collaboration with the Friends of the Wollaston Library, undertook a project to help us understand how the public felt about our current library.

Reaching out to people with both online and paper versions of the survey, we wanted to know if they felt a library was important to the community, what we could do to provide better service, and what their priorities were. We set up tables at several community events, provided the survey at the reception desk at the library, and encouraged participation through our

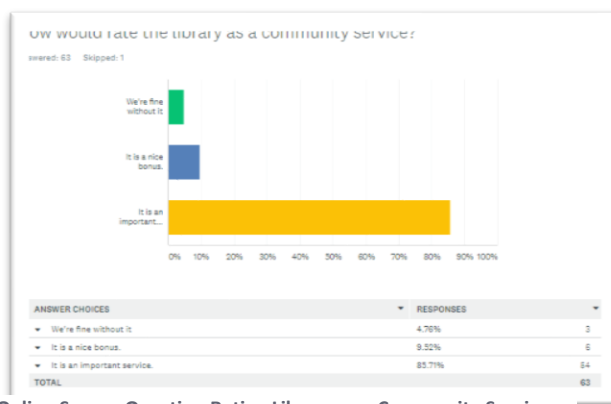
Facebook page and our website.



Opening page of the online survey

A total of 149 people responded. Sixty-two percent of the respondents to the survey identified themselves as permanent residents. In both versions, most respondents said they used the library regularly. Nearly all said they, or members of their family, had been in the library building in the past year.

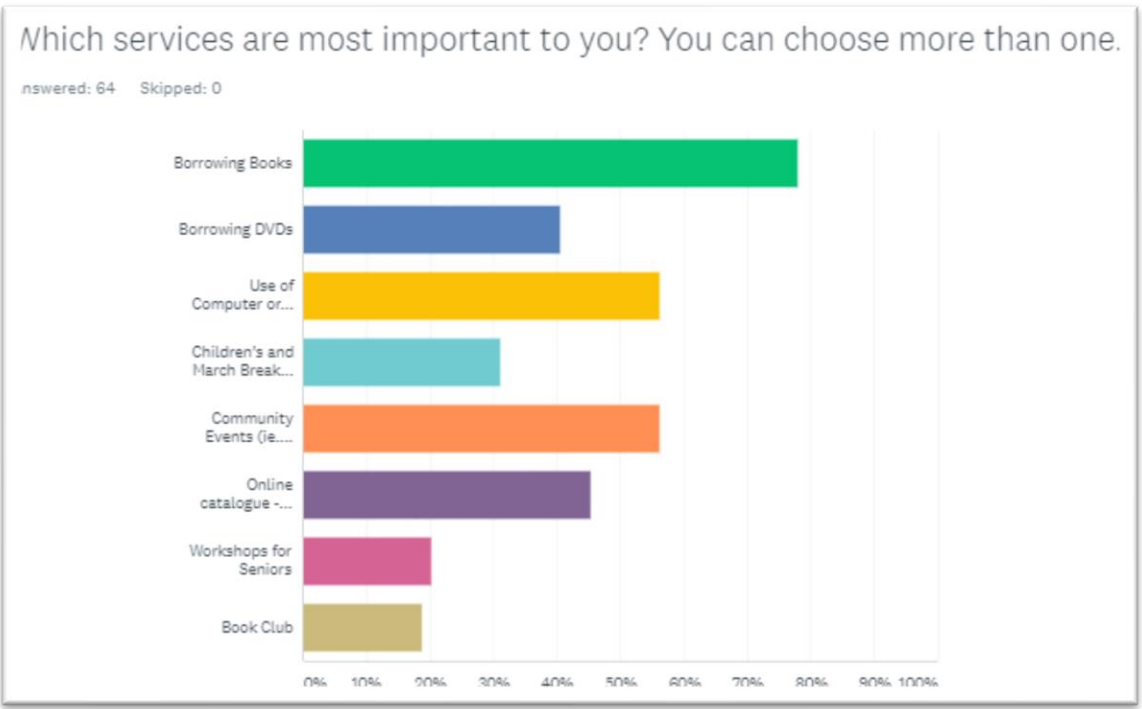
Full-time and seasonal residents appreciate the role of a small, rural library in the life of their community.



Online Survey Question Rating Library as a Community Service

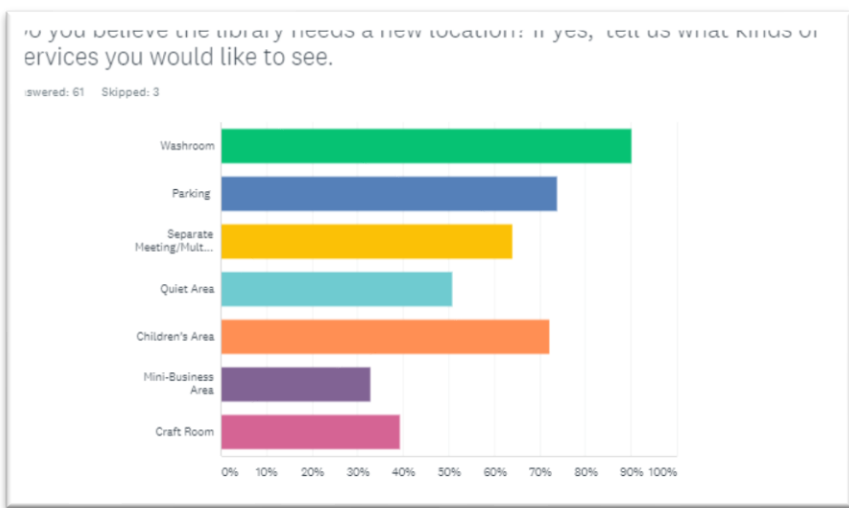
A total of 85 per cent of respondents felt that the library was an important.

Most respondents said that it was the adults in their households who most visited the library in the previous year. A good proportion indicated they brought children or grandchildren along.



Online Survey Question - Usage

Many respondents, especially in the written surveys, complimented the library staff for making the space welcoming, accessible and tidy. But you don't need a survey to tell you that a library needs a washroom. Several wrote notes pointing this out. We also asked them what other facilities they might like to see. A children's area and a multiple-purpose meeting room/mini-business area were high among the suggested resources in both the online and paper surveys.



Online Survey Question - Facilities