

*The Avon Free Public Library*

# **Strategic Plan 2007-2010**

Developed by:

**The Avon Free Public Library**

Library Staff

Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Directors

Adopted by Avon Library Board of Directors  
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# **AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **Our Vision**

**To excel as the community's link to ideas, information and resources.**

## **Our Mission**

**To serve as the center of enrichment for the Avon community providing free and convenient access to information, literature, culture and the arts through a variety of media and technologies.**

To fulfill this promise, the library will provide:

- Free and convenient access to a diverse and growing collection;
- Knowledgeable and responsive staff;
- Technology that connects our community to the global information world;
- A variety of library services and programs for all ages; and.
- An expanded, up-to-date facility

## **Library Roles**

### **The Community's Information Resource**

The library will increasingly become the community's navigator to information and resources, both online and in print. Staff will play a larger instructional and mentoring role in assisting the community to use the information tools available at the library. The library will:

- Provide tools and resources by which people can get information
- Instruct people on how to effectively use these resources
- Assist in their use when needed
- Nurture a desire by residents to obtain valid information and become experienced information seekers

### **A Community Hub and Gathering Place**

The library will continue its role of being the center of the community; the touchstone for all residents, a public place and destination for its residents. It is the nexus in Avon for all information for students, businesses, parents, retirees, children and all residents and the place where residents can gather to explore new ideas and to enjoy similar ones. The library will foster a "magnetic" attraction through its willingness to host the community and serve its needs.

## **A Center for Cultural Enrichment and Entertaining Programs and Resources**

The library is uniquely positioned in Avon as the public institution capable of offering both enrichment and entertainment and as the center of discovery and communication for community residents. The Avon Library will become more multifaceted in various resources that can benefit the entire community. From artwork and programs for all ages, to popular videos, best sellers, CDs and DVDs, to a core collection of classical literature – the Avon Free Public Library should have the resources, staff and facility to excite and inspire all residents.

## **An Educational Support Center**

The library will continue to play an important role in helping the community achieve its educational goals. It will remain a place where preschool children can obtain early literacy skills that prepare them for a successful school career through their participation in library sponsored story times. Older children will know that they can find a wide assortment of material to support their need for homework related materials. And adult learners can find information on a wide assortment of topics to support their information literacy. The library will continue to foster a strong relationship with the education process by providing curriculum support to Avon teachers and school librarians.

## **Strategies for Success**

The Avon Free Public Library faces a number of challenges over the next few years in fulfilling its mission and newly defined roles. Intrinsic to this would be providing a level of staffing and a library facility that would enable the library to provide the best services possible to the community. The strategies and activities that follow provide a framework for how the library can best meet some of these challenges.

### **Strategy 1: Ensure that collections and resources reflect current community needs**

**The Need:** Community residents rely on the library for current books and media. They want the library to have an ample supply of materials to satisfy their needs in a timely manner, and be current with new formats and trends.

**Objective:** Improve, update and provide increased access to the library's collection which will reflect the varied interests and needs of the community.

**Activities:****Immediate:**

- Weed the collection to maintain currency and good condition of all library materials. (ongoing)
- Review and upgrade at least one broad subject area annually. (ongoing)
- Work with the schools to identify curriculum needs and purchase material to support the K-12 instructional program within budgetary constraints. (ongoing)
- Expand the number of summer reading list books available to students. (ongoing)
- Increase the young adult book collection and include a larger selection of current DVD's and music.
- Reevaluate magazine and newspaper titles to keep up with patron interests. (ongoing)
- Increase collection of audio books and DVDs.

**Near Future:**

- **Assess the community's information needs by conducting a survey of residents, analyzing collection use and studying national trends,**
- Start a DVD collection that is similar to the Rapid Reads for books.
- Gather in one location items on careers, resumes and job hunting (career collection).
- Start an ESL (English as a Second Language) collection with books, CDs and instructional classes.
- Expand the special collections such as large print and foreign language.
- Expand the Rapid Read collection to include book group titles as well as current titles and ongoing popular books.
- Expand the Oldies but Goodies section.
- Continue downloadable audio books and look into downloadable movies, explore MP3 and iPod options.

**Long Range:**

- Set up a collection for the "tweens", ages 11 – 13, including books, music, movies and books on CD or in other current formats.
- Digitize the Avon History Room collections of local history, maps, photographs and oral histories to preserve as well as make them available on the internet via the library website.
- Expand the Avon History Room collections and have a display area.
- Have a 'New materials' area in Children's and YA.

## **Strategy 2: Continue to be a hub of the community, a touchstone for all residents**

**The Need:** Residents view the Avon Library as the center of the community. They desire a central location where people can enjoy many of the social, cultural and intellectual benefits of living in Avon. They want a friendly, comfortable place where they can browse or quickly find the information or materials they need. They are looking for a destination that creates a sense of belonging to their community and a place to meet other residents. There are increasing demands for the library to provide not only study space for individuals and groups but also social and public place for meetings, casual conversations and quiet reflection as well as space for technology, listening and viewing. Without significant space enhancements the library will be unable to deliver the level of library service expected by the community.

**Objective:** **Provide a facility conducive to the role as a community hub and continue community outreach activities to encourage broader library use.**

### **Activities:**

#### **Immediate:**

- Hold more library card sign-ups offsite and at library programs.
- Begin planning an ESL program to help new residents with language and cultural needs.
- Continue monitoring the changing demographics of the Farmington Valley.
- Review ways that the library is ‘green’ and implement them into services.
- Conduct a survey to determine program interests of residents.
- Continue to provide basic programming which appeals to all age groups and interests.
- Develop pilot project to evaluate day-time programming.

#### **Future:**

- **Implement recommendations of program interest survey as staff time and budget allow.**
- Survey needs of telecommuters and address what issues would be raised in promoting the library as a telecommuting center.
- Implement ESL program to address changing demographics of residents
- Based on results of survey, establish a program budget and secure additional staff time to plan and promote enhanced programs.
- Address issue of noise in library.
- Continue to explore temporary parking to alleviate crowded parking conditions.

## **Long Range:**

- Renovate library to be a more ‘green’ building in a way that is reflected in service and appearance to public and as a civic model.
- Renovate Library space to provide for more comfortable seating and tables for working.
- Beyond ADA requirements, make the library comfortable and functional to accommodate patrons with special needs
- Provide an area where people can socialize with café service, separate from quiet areas.
- Provide additional space to accommodate and market library print and media collections.
- Provide additional community display and exhibit space.
- Provide new spaces that are flexible and multi-purpose, offering additional space to accommodate large and small group meetings.
- Increase parking.
- Add more public restrooms.
- Create more seating on the lawn.
- Expand History Room and its services.

## **Strategy 3:**

### **Ensure a strong focus on improving the convenience and use of the library for Avon residents**

**The Need:** Avon residents have increasingly high expectations for service. Considering that current lifestyles, especially in younger families, are especially hectic and time-starved, the library needs to respond with convenient and value added services to optimize visits to the library. The Avon community expressed their desire for expanded library services that will contribute to the overall quality of life in the community.

Currently the library relies on a predominantly part-time staff to deliver services. The Library staff strives to make each patron interaction a positive and rewarding experience that promotes closer relationships with the library and fosters community support. If services are to expand significantly and community demands are to be met, the library needs to transition from part time to more full time staff.

**Objective:**     **Enhance the convenience and value of library services.**

#### **Activities:**

##### **Immediate:**

- Evaluate current hours of operation.
- Maintain and promote the website for 24/7 access.
- Promote availability and accessibility of databases, including remote access: market to niches (business, genealogy, etc)
- Promote automated services such as email notices for overdue items, programs, new materials.

- Promote the value of our services to these groups/interests: Genealogy, business, ESL, book clubs, teens, and baby boomers
- Meet the staff's needs for continuous training and development through on and off site training and cross training throughout the library.

**Near Future:**

- *Increase the number of full time personnel.*
- Create weekly calendars for library events, in print and online.
- Re-evaluate staff deployment to provide increased points of contact with patrons in library.
- Plan daytime lectures and speakers during accessible times to increase attendance.
- Explore establishing “pick up and go” collection/service (enhancing convenience)
- Start a blog.
- Create an electronic newsletter.

**Long range:**

- Install more self checkout workstations
- Create book drop access that is available to residents 24/7
- Increase meeting room space for varied sizes of groups.
- Improve signage to be more user friendly
- Provide instructions for patrons in all of our self-service systems
- Improve access to print collections with wider aisles, accessible shelves.

## **Strategy 4:**

### **Guarantee a welcoming place for Avon's youth**

**The Need:** Avon's child population has surged in the last 10 years and continues to grow. The heavy use of the library for children's programs and resources has created waiting lists for book and audiovisual materials, pre-school storytimes, book discussion groups, computers and special programs. Teens can be assisted by the Library to make the transition to adulthood by developing the habit of lifelong learning and skills for information literacy. More resources, space and staff are critical to the success of every child's future as we accommodate high interest and high numbers.

**Objective:** Assure the library's ability and capacity to meet the demands for fundamental and indispensable service to children and teens.

**Activities:**

**Immediate:**

- Continue emphasis on the pre-school door to learning by providing weekday story times throughout the year, and by offering special events at night and on weekends.
- Conduct monthly book discussion groups for grades 1 through 8.
- Enhance staff assistance for reader's advisory services after school & on weekends.
- Engage children in special programs such as chess club and volunteerism.
- Continue Teen Advisory Board and Teen Nutmeg Book discussions.
- Provide outreach to community and home daycares and nursery schools.
- Activate and reinforce school-public library cooperation with all Avon schools.

**Near Future:**

- Strengthen and support existing services and programs through staff development including training, workshops, and conferences.
- Bolster relationships with daycare centers and nursery schools serving children.
- Investigate service to home-schooled children and other underserved populations.
- Offer increased programming on nights and weekends for working families.
- Visit other libraries to examine children's services and structures.
- Involve teens in planning new space for their age group.

**Long Range (Children):**

- Space: enlarge the children's room to create distinctly individual and comfortable but educationally challenging areas for children and parents to browse, read, play, and connect with others. Create independent area as safe room for babies and toddlers, featuring early childhood toys and activities.
- Increase book shelving capacity for picture books, fiction, and non-fiction.
- Provide flexible shelving and storage for non-book formats.
- Expand story time programs to include 12 – 18 months, and additional groups for preschool ages 2-5 to meet needs of growing waiting lists.
- Add 2nd story time/program room with dividers for multi-function.
- Increase popular circulating materials and online resources. Increase complementary literature-based activities for grades K – 6.
- Technology: develop additional computer access by increasing computer availability and capability; offer most current and popular educational online resources as well as recreational games.
- Increase staff to facilitate impact of changes.

### **Long Range (Young Adult):**

- Space: create a dedicated teen room for pre-teens and teens devoted to collections, social areas, technology, and popular in-demand media types.
- Provide unique independent quiet study rooms and/or areas for group study.
- Services: hire Full-time Teen Librarian to dedicate effort and professional talent to this special age range, to manage, supervise, and oversee students, collection development, technology, and programs.
- Technology: incorporate popular new and changing media types as well as technology to be the center of attention and attraction; acquire state of art equipment including but not limited to wireless, with maximum capability and capacity. Feature a host of online services and sources that serve individuals and students in small groups.
- Provide interactive social area, including such specialty areas as a music listening corner, sound proof disc jockey booth, mini art and poetry gallery, TV & Satellite Chat Station, snack bar.

### **Strategy 5:**

#### **Build community awareness of the library's programs and services**

**The Need:** Avon residents can be better informed about the variety of programs and services available from the library. Focus group results indicate that the community has a fairly traditional view of what the library can offer. Building greater community awareness about the library should result in increased use and support.

**Objective:** **Ensure that the Avon community is fully aware of the library's programs and services.**

#### **Activities:**

##### **Immediate:**

- Continue to build a library brand with logos, library colors, and the website.
- Continue outreach events with Avon schools, the senior center, homebound residents, assisted living facilities, annual events such as Avon Day.
- Maintain and promote Event Keeper, the website, email alerts,
- Develop more daytime programming in response to Fall 2006 focus group requests.
- Survey patrons on additional program interests and convenient times to attend.
- Promote wireless computer access.

##### **Near Future**

- Develop a marketing and promotion plan to inform the community about the library, targeting different users: Genealogy, business, ESL (English as a Second Language), book clubs, teens, book club members, and baby boomers

- Use the Community Organizations list to market and develop programs, including marketing databases to remote users, in addition to targeting schools and art centers.
- Establish a marketing budget.
- Develop an electronic newsletter.
- Create a strategic and uniform way of advertising library events so that staff, Friends members, and volunteers all follow the same format/steps.
- Participate in more community events to build partnerships with local private and non-profit groups to promote common goals.
- Explore the potential of connecting with Internet communities to promote library services.
- Explore the possibilities and potential of creating a library blog or other online communication methods.

## **Strategy 6:**

### **Provide access to current technology as a library resource**

**The Need:** Today's library users expect to find the latest information technologies available to them in the library. This includes an ample number of computers with high-speed internet and e-mail access, word processing, spreadsheet, publishing, and PowerPoint capability. They need to access digital content available through the library's subscription online databases and iCONN, Connecticut Digital Library's e-resources. The challenge is to provide enough computers for children and adults to meet the demand without sacrificing premium space that is needed for other uses. Due to lack of space, the library cannot expand computer services until the building expansion occurs, but we can continue to recognize new formats and provide the best possible service within current limitations, and do ongoing investigation and planning for technology in the future building, where we plan to double existing computer and printing services.

**Objective:** **Provide up-to-date technology to ensure that library users will have access to the information they need when they need it.**

#### **Activities:**

##### **Immediate and on-going:**

- Continue upgrading existing computers on a four year rotation schedule, and replace printers, scanners, digital cameras, wireless bases, and other peripherals as needed.
- Continue to keep security, antivirus and Spyware, MS Office, and other software as current as possible on all networked computers.
- Increase the budget in order to be more responsive to online databases and electronic resources in existing and new formats ( i.e. downloadable audio books, e-books)
- Market our wireless capabilities to encourage patrons to bring in their own laptop computers, which will offset our inability to add more hardwired computers.
- Market the library's website and its valuable resources.

- Market the library's online databases.
- Provide electronic filing of income tax returns through the VITA tax assistance program.
- Explore and implement new technologies as they become available
- Explore options for new adaptive and assistive technologies.

**Near Future:**

- Set up a stand alone printer for wireless laptop users.
- Investigate the feasibility of installing an integrated library system for print management, PC reservation, and statistical tracking.
- Secure budget funds for staff training on existing and new technologies.

**Long Range:**

- Develop a plan for and implement doubling the existing computer and printing services for the newly expanded library building.
- Develop a plan and implement a new secure and climate controlled area for Network & Telecommunication Services for the expanded library.
- Implement a part-time Technology Support position to improve network and telecommunication services by adding a part time computer technician at 20 hrs. /wk.
- Upgrade the library's telephone and voicemail system equipment and software, including the use of cordless phones.
- Implement a wireless phone system for staff use for improved staff communications
- Increase wireless capacity in the expanded library.
- Implement RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology for circulation and materials management.
- Implement a security system at library entrances and exits.
- Explore the possibility of providing audio/video listening rooms (for music, audio books, ESL, foreign language audio, movies) in the expanded library.
- Implement more self-service technology and/or touch screen technology and provide training for patrons in their use.
- Install smart board or electronic bulletin board technology to alert users of calendar events, programs, and special exhibits.

## **Strategy 7:**

### **Explore opportunities for resource development**

**The Need:** Like most libraries, the Avon Free Public Library cannot rely solely on tax support to expand and enrich the library program and building facility. Library staff, the Board and Friends need to explore opportunities for grants, program sponsorship, fundraising, and affiliate relationships with other for profit organizations to expand the amount of funding available to support library activities. The major fundraising task and most immediate will be to support the expansion of the library facility.

#### **Immediate**

**Objective: Raise funds for library expansion**

Board: Establish fund-raising committee consisting of community members  
Consider hiring development professional and/or PR/marketing professional to conduct feasibility study to insure successful outcome.

Work with Town officials to insure that referendum is passed.

#### **Long-range**

**Objective: Attract alternate sources of revenue to enrich the library's program**

Develop dependable sources of public & private funding to sustain the content, services & programs of the library.

- Develop long-range plan designed to provide adequate funding to accomplish this, including increasing Endowment Fund. This may include establishing an annual library fund drive.
- Work with Friends to increase membership /contributions.
- Improve reporting & analysis of fundraising efforts.
- Evaluate the way we recognize and communicate with donors.
- Increase the number of grants received each year from the State Library and area foundations and local community groups.