



CHARLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

COMMUNITY MEMBERS' FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY REPORT 2024

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS = 17

- **Focus Group #1** (2/6/24 10:00-11:30 am) = 10
- **Focus Group #2** (2/7/24 6:00-7:30 pm) = 7

1. WHAT ARE THE VERY FIRST TWO WORDS YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU THINK OF THE CHARLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY?



- Accommodating (2)
- Beautiful
- Books (2)
- Community
- Community Space
- Engaging (2)

- Extremely Helpful (2)
- Family
- Friendly (4)
- Fun
- Good Resource
- Great Librarians
- Information
- Inviting
- Kid Space
- Knowledgeable
- Learning
- Professional
- Programming (2)
- Resourceful (2)
- Resources
- Warm
- Welcoming

2. WHICH LIBRARY RESOURCES OR MATERIALS DO YOU USE MOST FREQUENTLY? MOST FREQUENTLY USED RESOURCES OR MATERIALS

- **COLLECTIONS (22):**
 - **Reading-Related Services/Materials (16):** Books (15) || Large print books
 - **CDs and DVDs (3):** Movies DVDs (2) || Children's CDs and DVDs
 - **Library of Things (2):** Library of Things || Children's Library of Things
 - **Misc. (1):** Kits

- **FACILITY (6):**
 - Community Spaces (3)
 - **Misc. (3):** Meeting spaces || Playspace || Study Rooms
- **PROGRAMS (10):** Events (7) || Activities and programming (3)
- **SERVICES (17):**
 - Ability to place books on hold (7)
 - Museum passes (6)
 - Faxing and Printing (4)
- **TECHNOLOGY (8):**
 - Computer with Internet access (4)
 - Digital loans of eBooks and audiobooks (2)
 - **Misc. (2):** Ability to place books on hold || Wi-Fi Network

LEAST VALUED LIBRARY RESOURCES OR MATERIALS

- **COLLECTIONS (5):**
 - eBooks (likes holding a physical book better) (2)
 - Library of Things Equipment (2)
 - Music CD Collection
- **FACILITY (7):**
 - **Local history room (4):** Local history room (3) || Local history room because she has never used the room.
 - Book sale room (3)
 - Children's room

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (1): A participant heard the Library is not getting any more children's CDs and DVDs. As a grandparent, she doesn't want this part of the collection to dwindle.

3. HOW CAN THE LIBRARY IMPROVE ITS PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES?

FACILITY IDEAS (2): Increase the use of the outdoor space for programs. || Keep the children's space open and available for moms to connect with other moms and caregivers. It helps moms get support from fellow moms.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS IDEA (1): Change the policy that currently restricts external groups' use of Library space for events involving money, including fee-based activities or fundraisers that don't directly support the Library.

MARKETING AND OUTREACH IDEAS (2): Co-sponsor events with outside groups, like the homeschooling community. || Create a new author alert communication program in which you can receive emails when your favorite author releases a new book.

PROGRAMS IDEAS (53)

- **Music Programs (11):** More music programs (10) || Music classes (singing, instruments)
- **Children’s Programs (8):** Introduce kids to dancing (3) || Add more children’s author visits || Afterschool STEM learning programs || Art programs for tweens and up that are more than simple crafts. || Daytime tween programs for homeschoolers. || Mindfulness programs for kids.
- **Exercise and Movement Programs (5):** Introduce children and adults to dancing (3) || Dancing classes (fun exercising, Zumba, line dancing, dance lessons) || Yoga. Participant wants to keep that physical movement available. Keep the outdoor yoga going.
- **Adult Programs (4):** “Antique Roadshow” type program || History programs with the Sturbridge Historical Society and Charlton Historical Society || How to manage your documents (saving, retention guidelines, etc.). || Tax preparation program with standard forms.
- **Arts, Crafts, and Hobby Programs (4):** Crafting programs || Crocheting group for beginners or intermediates || Gardening is big in town. Keep it going. || Make a chess club || Paint night for adults or families
- **Health and Wellness Programs (4):** Cooking healthy || Mindfulness program for adults || Self-defense for women. Contact Worcester Sheriff’s Office regarding its free program. Possibly offer the Sheriff’s program onsite. || Yoga
- **Adjust Program Schedules (3):** Offer music programs later at night for those who work (2) || Conduct programs later in the evening so working people can attend.
- **Books and Reading-Related Programs (3):** Author speakers || Banned books program for adults. Learn more about the books and why they were banned. || Program on rare books and what to do with book collections.
- **Skills Training Programs (3):** Collaborate with Quinsigamond Community College to offer programs like GED classes, SAT classes, and college degree courses. || Life skills training || Skill or trade programs/series
- **Food Programs (2):** Cake decorating || Cooking programs
- **Media Literacy Programs (2):** How to separate fact from fiction.
- **Opportunities to Socialize (2):** Social programs for young adults, like the seniors’ NYE party. || Socializing get-together activities/parties that enable you to meet people in the community, especially non-parents.
- **Misc. Programs (2):** Offer a series of topic—or learning-specific presentations or workshops to delve deeper into program topics. || Environmental/ecology programs, like a hiking club, wildlife information, bird identification, and animal track identification.

SERVICES IDEA (1): Offer a document shredding event.

TECHNOLOGY IDEAS (9): Provide access to more technology programs (e.g., 3D printing, new software). (7) || Instructional programs on emerging technologies (e.g., AI). || Online educational programs (college et al.)

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (1): Make sure the Library expands all these programs for all ages.

4. HOW CAN THE LIBRARY'S PHYSICAL SPACE BE IMPROVED? BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.

INTERIOR IMPROVEMENT IDEAS (19)

- **Optimize the Utilization of the Book Sale Room (3):** Convert the book sale room to a classroom, a comfortable seating area, or a better meeting space. A cart by the children's room with books for sale is sufficient for the used book sales. (3)
- **Add Meeting/Study Space (2):** Offer classroom space. || Make the local history room available for meetings during the day.
- **Enhance the Community Room Décor (2):** The community room is extremely uninviting. Warm up the space with additional lighting and new paint.
- **Improve Dexter Hall Acoustics (2):** Soundproof Dexter Hall so noisy groups (e.g., children) don't disturb the rest of the Library's users. || Upgrade the sound system in Dexter Hall. It always seems to have problems.
- **Offer Social Gathering Spaces (2):** Add space for groups to gather and chat without feeling like they're too noisy for the main Library that's warm and comfortable. || Create a tween gathering space in the children's room away from little ones', so they're not sitting on the windowsill.
- **Misc. (8):** Add a deck off the main floor. (2) || Add more comfortable soft seating. || Add remote workspace || Address air conditioning issues. || Offer a real café with food and drinks. || Reduce the number of books to create more space with more comfortable seating. || Utilize the original café space outside the book sale room for couches, comfortable seating for book groups, or noisy groups.

EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT IDEAS (19)

- **Add Parking (9):** Need more parking, especially during sports events. (5) || Parking is really tough when there's any kind of sports activity. (4)
- **Create Seating and Social Gathering Areas (7):** Add more outdoor seating, picnic tables, umbrellas, and space for larger groups to gather. (4) || Add a greenhouse with seating space. || Offer a community grill area. || Make the outdoor space more inviting and comfortable for meetups, chats, etc.
- **Misc. (3):** Add a book drop in front of the building. || Enhance the landscape lighting to highlight the beautiful building. || Improve pedestrian safety crossing Main Street (e.g., flashing lights or a traffic light).

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT IDEAS (6)

- **Enhance Signage/Wayfinding (2):** Add better signage regarding what's offered on other floors. || It's easy to get lost when trying to leave the Community Room. More signage is needed.
- **Expand Access to Library Offerings (2):** Be able to connect Playaways, Wonderbooks, and other audio devices to hearing aids. || Stream events online for those who can't attend programs in person.
- **Improve Physical Access to the Space (2):** Add ramps to the front of the building || Consider people in wheelchairs so all the Library's spaces can be accessed easily.

UNRELATED IDEA (1): Update the policy regarding external groups' use of the Library's rooms to allow private groups to use the storytime room.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (4)

- A family member who is physically challenged has used our Library and had a positive experience getting in and out.
- Keep the books!
- Librarians are helpful when finding items
- Tables and chairs in hallways are not inviting.

5. WHAT TWO WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE THE STAFF WHO ASSIST YOU??



- Engaging
- Friendly (6)
- Fun
- Funny
- Good Team
- Great Recommendations
- Helpful (6)
- Kind
- Knowledgeable (4)
- Outgoing
- Passionate
- Patient
- Personable
- Warm
- Welcoming (2)
- Accommodating
- Amazing Resources
- Creative Marketing
- Dedicated

VERY COMFORTABLE ASKING STAFF FOR HELP (5)

- A participant said she's "forever grateful" that the children's librarians helped her feel welcome when her family moved here.
- A participant's kids are comfortable asking librarians for help. The children's librarians are always listening to kids and are proactive in helping them. Despite helping so many different families, the librarians are aware of the relationships.
- All the children's room staff understand how to interact with children. Participant only uses the children's room.
- Everyone is super responsive. The librarians try to get to know their patrons, and it's really nice once they know you.
- The staff are the best. They rock!

6. WHAT DIGITAL RESOURCES OR TECHNOLOGY OFFERINGS DO YOU THINK THE LIBRARY SHOULD FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIONS IDEAS (12)

- **Add Devices (6):** 3D printer || Engineering kits || For older kids, a microscope that hooks up to a computer. || Laptops for borrowing with software to make them safe/confidential. || Robotics kits || Tablet/iPads for borrowing
- **Expand Library of Things Items (3):** Household tools || Instruments || Microscopes
- Offer Adobe Suite Applications (3)

TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM IDEAS (13)

- **Add Children's Technology Classes (3):** For older kids, offer classes in video editing, how to use a 3D printer, etc. || For tweens and teens, offer Raspberry Pi coding (programming). || Programs on robotics and engineering kits.
- **Offer Application and Programming Classes (3):** Classes on new applications. || Coding software/classes || Conduct basic computer/technology classes (Word, PowerPoint, etc.).
- **Increase Awareness and Usage of Library Technology Offerings (2):** Classes on what technology resources and services the Library offers (Libby et al.). || Information regarding how to access the Library's online books and the Library's other digital resources.
- **Internet Safety Classes for Parents (2):** How to keep your children safe. || Keeping pre-teens and teens safe on the internet (geared toward parents).
- **Provide Device Training (2):** Information on AI and drones || Cell phone training
- **Misc. (1):** Collaborate with technical schools to offer technology-related programs/workshops.

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES IDEAS (2)

- Add an online chat room patrons can use to ask questions and receive feedback.

- Offer more online movie streaming.

7. ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS TO SERVICE THAT IMPEDE YOUR ABILITY TO UTILIZE THE LIBRARY? WEBSITE (29)

- **Online Book Reservations (9):** Participants reserve books online. (7) || Sometimes, it can be challenging to put things on hold. However, the participant said it could be a user error because she doesn't do it often. || Participant would like to have linked family accounts so she can figure out all the books her kids have checked out.
- Visited the Library's website. (9)
- **Improve Accessibility/User-Friendliness (9):** The website is easy to navigate. (5) || Finding where to go on the site can be difficult. Often, she can't find what she wants on her first visit to the site. || Programs and events are "underpublicized" on the site. You don't know everything that is going on when you visit the site. || There's a ton of information on the website. There's so much going on, but it's buried on the site. It's overwhelming. She gets lost on the site. || The website needs better organization and navigation (e.g., better headers and categorizations).
- **Online Services (2):** Booking meeting rooms is easy. || Getting museum passes via the website is no problem.

OPERATING HOURS (12)

- Hours are Convenient (8)
- **Add/Adjust Hours (4):** Hours are not convenient. Open a half hour earlier. She must sit in the car with little kids for half an hour because she's done with school drop-off and has time to kill. || Offer more evening hours || Offer Sunday hours, even if the Library offers limited services. It's a quiet place to retreat to and/or work. || Open on Saturdays during the summer. People are looking for a place to cool off and offer working people more access.

UNRELATED IDEAS (5)

- **Programs (3):**
 - Reservations for some children's programs fill up too quickly. By the time the participant sees them, they're already filled. If it's a popular program, offer the program twice or use a bigger space so the activity can accommodate more kids. (2)
 - Rotate event meeting times between days and nights to enable people who work and those who don't to attend.
- **Misc. (2):** Distribute a weekly email promoting current and upcoming events. || Friends of CPL need evening meetings so working people can attend.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (5)

- A participant expressed confusion regarding the request process from other libraries. Where is she in line for an item she requested? How long will it take to receive the item? Do they send request status updates?
- Libby is great, but the availability of audiobooks is limited. Many of the books the participant looks for are not available.
- Not enough people see the Library's Facebook posts. Use other marketing platforms and tools.
- Participant said she doesn't know how to sign up for the Library's email list.
- The wait times for reservations are reasonable.

8. THERE ARE A LOT OF EVENTS GOING ON IN CHARLTON, INCLUDING LIBRARY EVENTS. IS IT EASY TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING LOCAL EVENTS?

- **Accessibility of Information about Local Events (10):**
 - It's challenging to find upcoming events for the town. (6)
 - Participant reaches out to her older friends to see if they know about events, but getting the information is challenging.
 - Town's webpage is difficult to navigate.
 - The electronic sign is not helpful.
 - Library's newsletter is helpful, but town-wide information is lacking advertising
- **Centralized Local Events Calendar (8):**
 - The town needs a centralized events calendar.
 - There's no centralized place for local activity information.
- **Community Board (2):**
 - A community board at the Library that lists the town-wide events would be helpful.
 - Use a bigger, more obvious community board to promote town and Library activities.
- **Email and e-Newsletters (2):**
 - In a participant's old town, she could sign up for "push" email notices about Library events she's interested in.
 - Maintain an email list to promote current and upcoming events

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (4)

- Children's Room staff does a great job marketing programs on the windows, in a monthly paper list, and via staff who update patrons personally.
- One participant appreciates the hardcopy monthly events flyers available on both floors. The flyers promote Library offerings.
- The *Charlton Villager* has been a good source of Library information
- There are too many local events for the Library to be able to advertise everything effectively.

9. WHAT ISSUES NOW FACING THE TOWN DO YOU THINK MAY IMPACT THE LIBRARY?

- **Economic Issues (5):** Budget cuts/financial pressure (2) || Funding may be reduced. Make the case to the community that our Library is important, so our funding should not be cut. || Money will be increasingly tight. The Library should start absorbing other departments and collaborating more with them. Make the Library more of a community center. || Pursue other funding sources, more fundraisers, and community financial support.
- **Book Banning Initiatives (3):** Banned book groups || Book banning. Participant hopes the Library continues welcoming and accepting everyone and advocating for the freedom to read, which should be protected. || Parents' concerns regarding their children being exposed to select books.
- **Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness (3):** Develop and promote emergency response plans for community members and staff (e.g., COVID readiness). || It would be helpful for the Library to offer programs that address environmental and climate issues. || Prepare the space and resources for natural disasters and keep the community informed.
- **Insufficient Staff (2):** Not enough staff results in closing areas of the building.
- **Misc. (5):** Be inclusive. The Library needs to welcome all (race, religion, LGBTQ, etc.). || Increased interest in digital resources will push out the desire for actual books. || Maintenance of the town's physical buildings. || Need to ensure technology is safe and protected || The growing homeschool population has impacted the Library. Ensure the Library can accommodate the group's continuing growth.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (2)

- Senior Center's collaboration with the Library was positive.
- Surprised there are not more Friends to support the Library.

10. WHAT COULD THE LIBRARY DO TO SERVE THE CHARLTON COMMUNITY BETTER? WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE?

FACILITY IDEAS (2): Prioritize maintaining a safe and welcoming space for youth/teens. || There are historical portraits somewhere in the Library that should go up on display.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS IDEAS (2): The Library could serve as a hub to connect people with groups. || Remain aware of the town's growth and changing demographics and how they impact the Library (more staff? larger space?).

MARKETING AND OUTREACH IDEAS (3): Cultivate a strong community advocacy program. || Improve the connection between the town hall and the Library. || Increase the number of partnerships with local organizations, people, and groups. Also, develop connections with libraries and resources in neighboring towns.

PROGRAM IDEAS (4): Alzheimer’s support group has been really helpful. Would like the Library to have more support groups. || Develop a “Welcome Wagon” program for new residents like communities used to have. Perhaps sponsor an annual “Welcome to Town” event. || Enjoyed last year’s art show, which was a collaboration with another organization. We hope they do it again. || Need to help educate current and potential voters. Provide more election information and have candidates speak at the Library.

SERVICES IDEAS (2): Bring the bookmobile back. It’s a great service for community members who can’t visit the Library. || The Library is a centralized resource in town. More clubs should meet there, and those clubs should have their events better publicized to connect with the community.