



## Strategic Plan 2024-2028

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The George F. Johnson Memorial Library's Strategic Planning process took place throughout 2023, led by a committee of library trustees and staff members. This committee worked to collect data from the community via assessment tools to gauge the library's current and future needs. (Summaries of these reports can be found in the appendices.) In June 2023, the library conducted a survey of staff members of which there were 13 responses. A survey of the community was held both online and in the library from late June through July; this survey had 123 responses. Three focus groups were held for members of the public and the Friends of the George F. Johnson Memorial Library in July. These were facilitated by staff from the South Central Regional Library Council, and there were a total of 14 focus group participants. We also received feedback from community members who wanted to contribute but were unavailable to attend the focus groups. In August, five members of the Library's Board of Trustees attended a retreat at the Four County Library System, which was hosted by Executive Director, Steven Bachman. An informal SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) was conducted, and the trustees' feedback in the Board Retreat Summary represents their needs assessment of the library. The information obtained from these four methods was used in crafting the strategic plan goals for this document.

Three areas were identified in this process, which will be the focus of the goals for this strategic plan.

1. Building Improvements
2. Services & Collections
3. Outreach & Marketing

### MISSION STATEMENT

The George F. Johnson Memorial Library exists to provide materials in varied formats, information from technological and traditional sources, and services from trained and qualified employees for library users of all ages for their recreational, educational, and lifelong learning needs. We promote policies, practices, and resources that will help people of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses to have meaningful opportunities to learn and thrive and to ensure that the library is an environment where everyone is valued and respected. We vow to uphold the rights of all people of all ages under the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the guidelines of the library Bill of Rights adopted by the American Library Association Council of January 23, 1980.

## STRATEGIC PLAN AREA ONE | Building Improvements

**PURPOSE:** Our ability to best meet the needs of our patrons and library staff is limited by the physical space of our building. Undertaking building improvement projects will work to address the use of space in the library including accessibility, safety, and productivity.

**PERSONNEL:** GFJ Leadership Team (Director & Department Heads), Library Board of Trustees, Project Architect or Building Planner, Project Contractors

**GOALS:**        **2024-25**    Renovation of media room to improve energy efficiency, safety, aesthetics, and increase the circulation and selection of adult AV materials. Capacity of materials will increase by 25%.

**2025-27**    Work with an architect and/or building planner to evaluate the physical space and layout of the library. Determine if it is possible to establish a better area for teens, add electrical outlets, and better delineate social and quiet spaces within the library. Other building improvement areas for potential inclusion are new reference desks, carpet replacement, and wall repair.

**2025-27**    Perform a cost analysis of the options determined in the second goal. Work with the State Historic Preservation Office and representatives from the Four County Library System to determine what projects are feasible within the scope of the NYS Aid for Library Construction program and the Library's budget.

**2025-28**    Create a timeline to implement projects determined possible from the above cost analysis. Begin to complete these projects within this four year strategic plan cycle.

## STRATEGIC PLAN AREA TWO | Services & Collections

**PURPOSE:** Library services and collections should continually evolve to anticipate and meet the needs of the community.

**PERSONNEL:** GFJ Leadership Team, Library Board of Trustees, Additional Library Staff

**GOALS:** **2024-25** Improve the Adult AV collection by adding additional materials and different types of materials once construction of the Media Room is completed.

**2026-28** Evaluate digital collections and database options, and enhance them based upon what is currently available from New York State, Four County Library System, South Central Regional Library Council, and other outlets.

## STRATEGIC PLAN AREA THREE | Outreach & Marketing

**PURPOSE:** Fostering relationships with library patrons and creating new relationships with non-library users are crucial to the future success of our library.

**PERSONNEL:** GFJ Leadership Team, Library Board of Trustees, Community Organizations

**GOALS:** **2024-26** Explore the possibility of having community social work organizations in the library e.g., Catholic Charities, Addiction Center of Broome County, Southern Tier Independence Center, Broome County Mental Health Department, Broome County Office for Aging. If partnerships are possible, give the group(s) space to meet and conduct their work. This will help to provide equitable access and allow our patrons to better reach these services in our community.

**2026-28** Explore the feasibility of a book delivery program. If possible, implement the book delivery program by utilizing mailing or delivery services to provide homebound patrons with library materials.

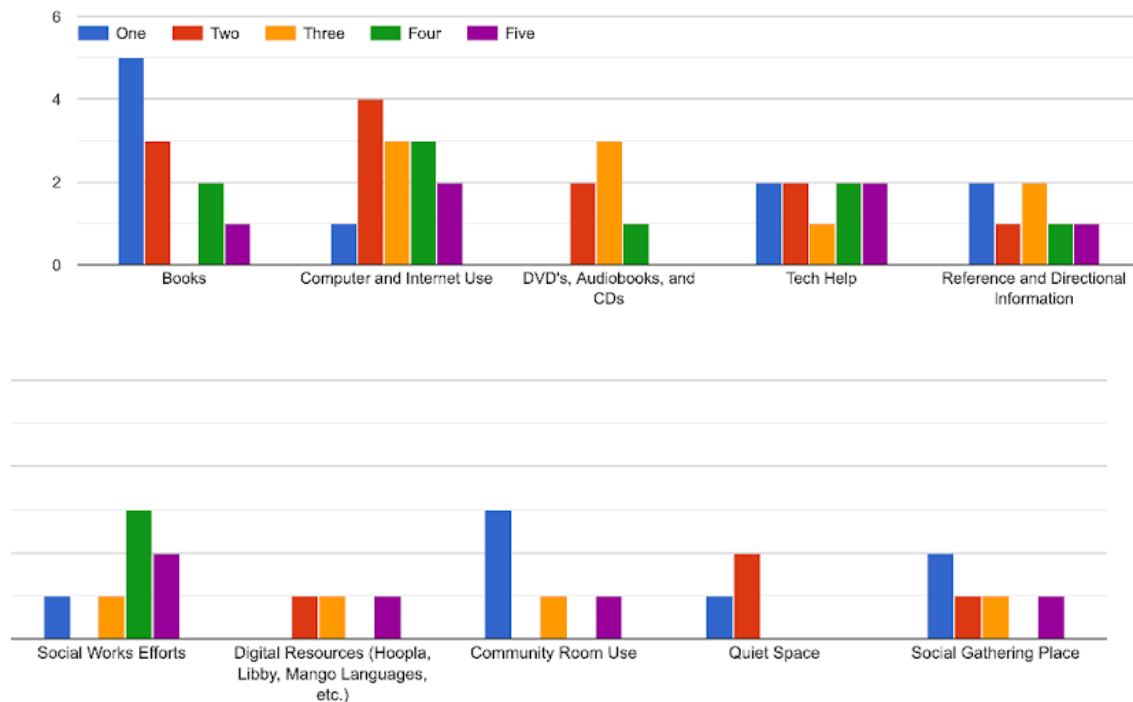
## APPENDIX A | Staff Survey (June 2, 2023)

### 1. In your opinion, what are the main priorities or aspirations of the community?

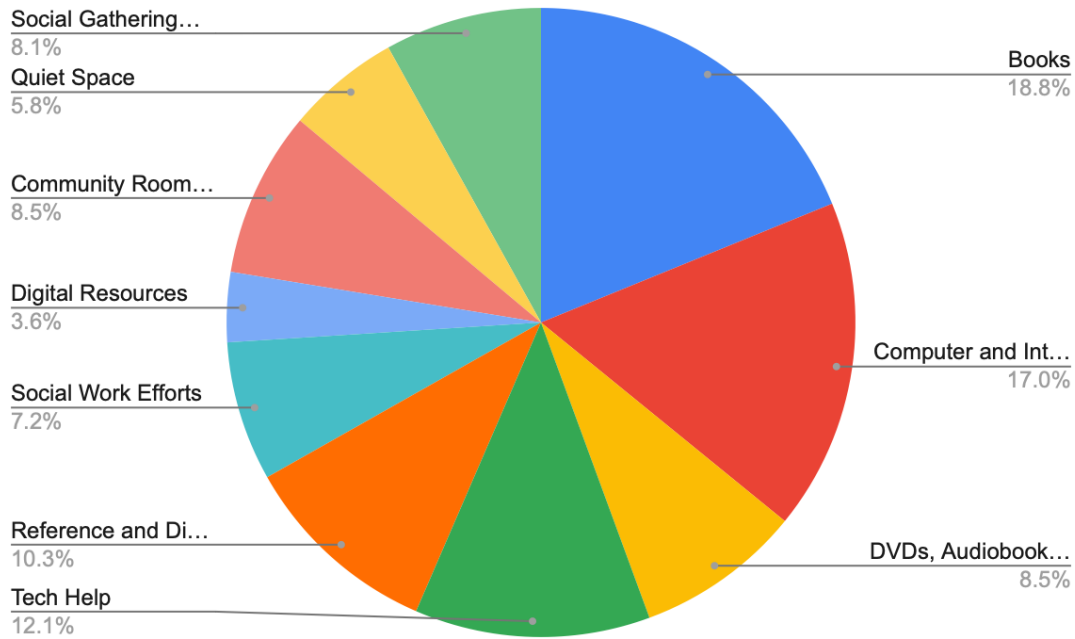
- Safe, clean, opportunities for entertainment and employment, good schools
- Improvements in social and economic standing. Equitable access to internet and technology. Safety.
- a safe and pleasant place to be.
- Provide qualities to support all people.
- Providing a safe, free space where people can feel welcome.
- safety (children/teens, DV victims, elderly etc. need a space and help). Entertainment. Saving Money. Community building and combatting loneliness.
- Finding good books and media, introducing children to books, summer reading programs, fun community events.
- I'm not sure. I don't live in this community.
- Improve quality of life for themselves and community
- Community meeting spot, as a safe refuge for education, enrichment, entertainment and gathering point.

### 2. What do you feel are the five most important services that the library currently offers? (Of those five, rank from 1-most important to 5-least important)

Raw results:



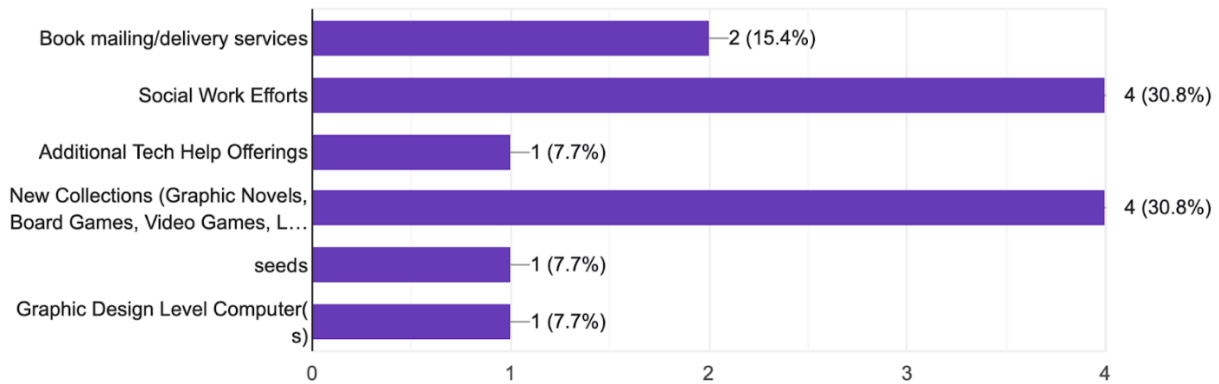
Ranked results:



3. What is one new service or program that you would like to see offered by the library? (check one)

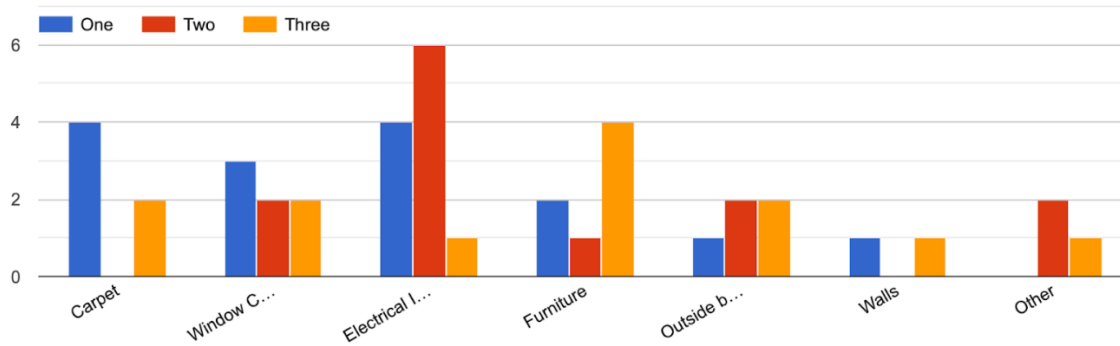
What is one new service or program that you would like to see offered by the library? (check one)

13 responses

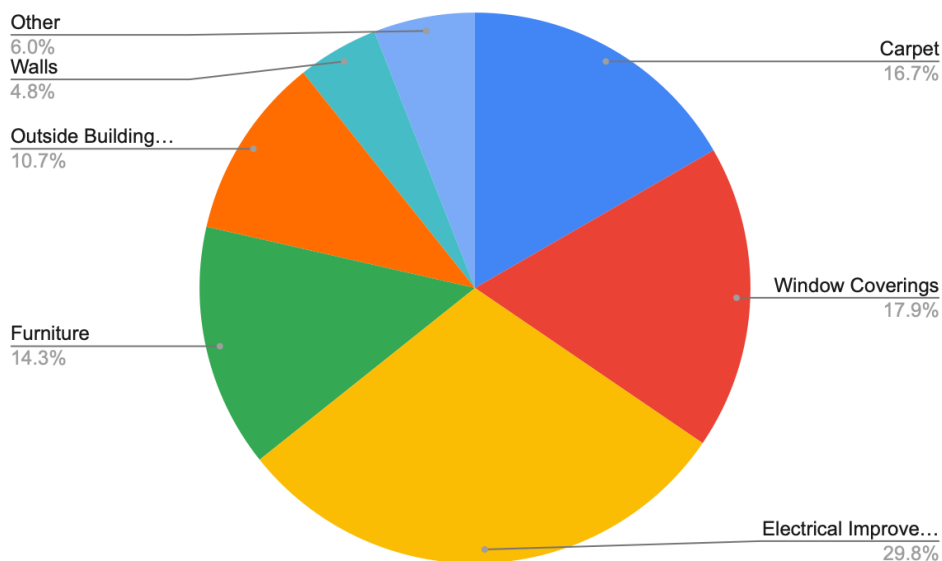


4. What physical aspects of the library would you most like to see improved? (rank your top 3 from 1-most important to 3-least important)

Raw results:



### Ranked results:



### If you selected other, why?

- New shelving/end-caps
- Arrange seating and work areas to improve accessibility, create group work areas and improve access to books
- More Computers

### 5. Do you have any other ideas for items that could be added to the library's next strategic plan?

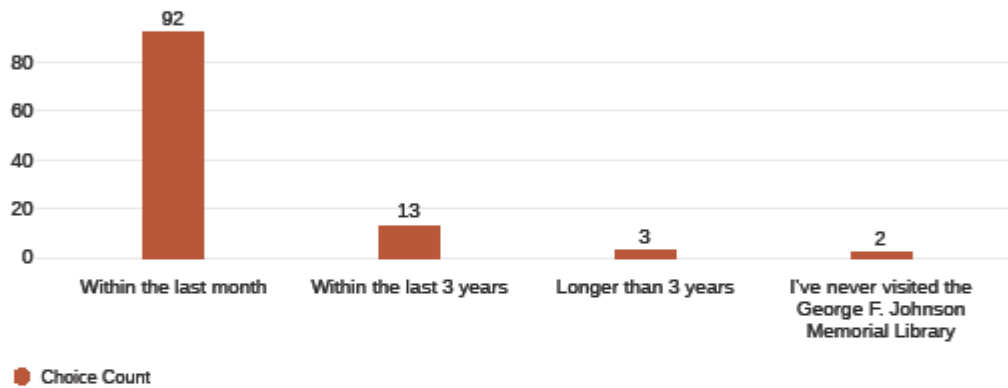
- Story hour/ Events room off Youth Services room.
- Training for staff in social work, resources, etc.
- I can't think of any
- I feel more public relations outside the walls of the library would be a good idea. More attempts should be made to reach people who do not realize what is offered for free at the library. all residents should be offered a library card.
- Wall up circ desk drop off return. More programs quarterly focused on CEES (cultural educational, entertainment, social). At least one computer capable of graphic design level use and 3D printing.

## George F. Johnson Memorial Library Community Survey Summary

123 Responses received

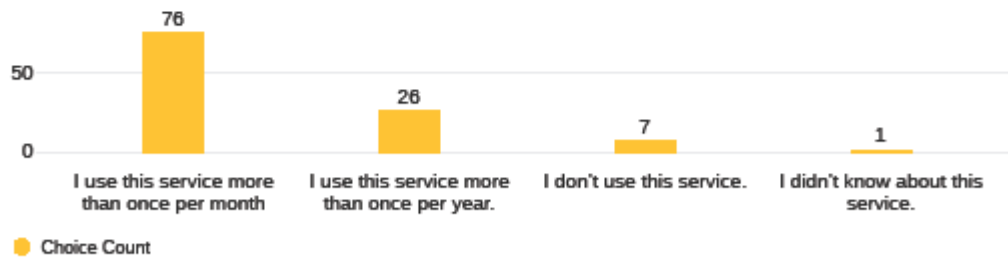
- 80 online
- 43 paper

Q1 - When was your most recent visit to the George F. Johnson Memorial Library? (please choose one)

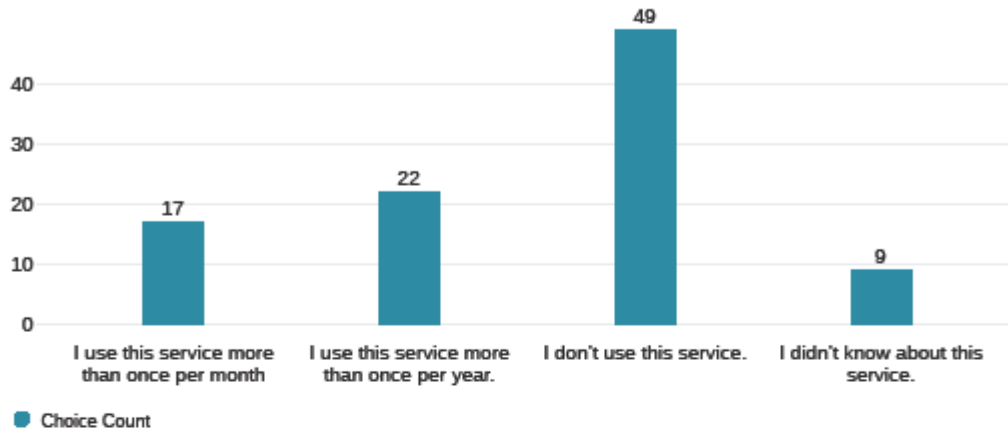


Q2 - How often do you use the current services that George F. Johnson Memorial Library offers? (please choose one answer for each service)

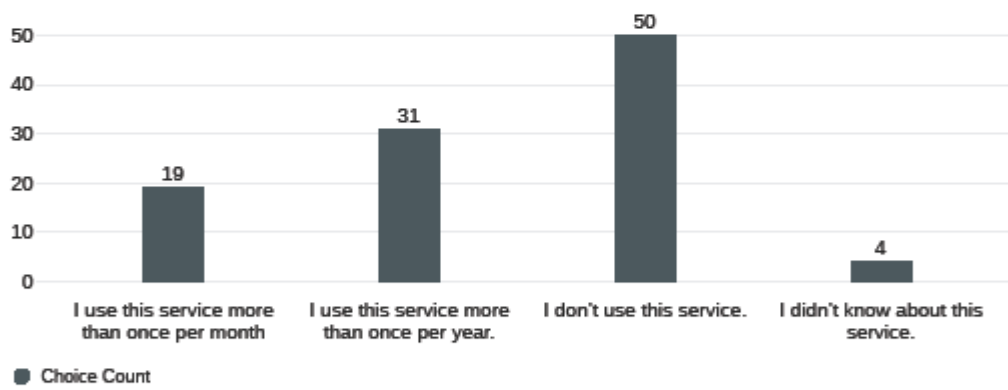
Borrowing books



## Borrowing Audiobooks & Playaways

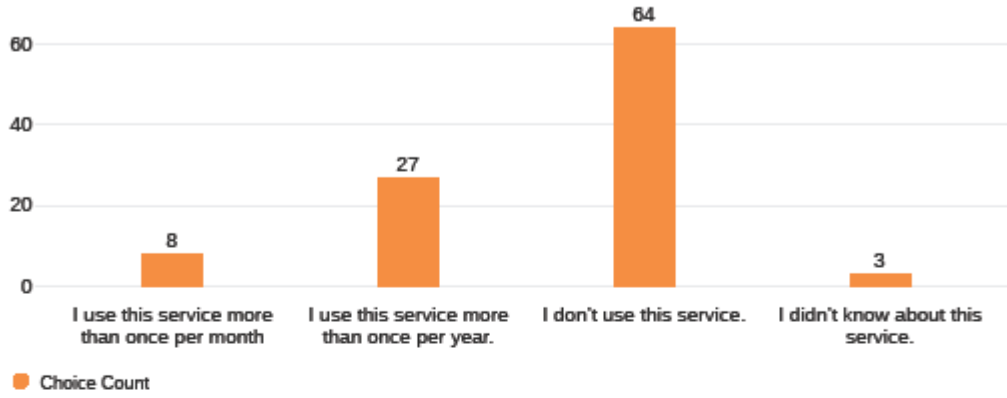


## Borrowing DVDs

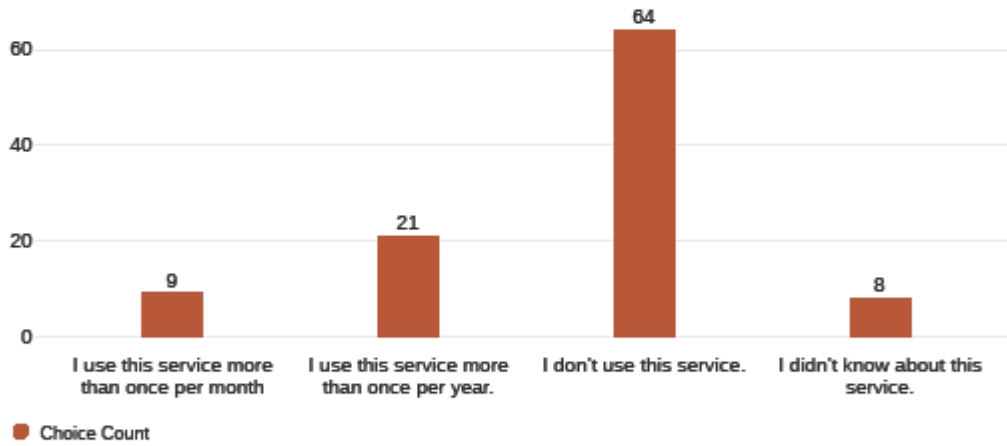




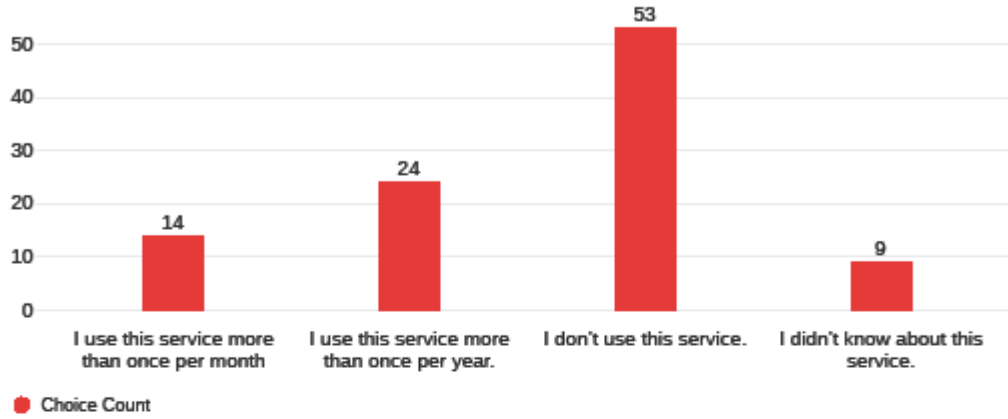
### Public computer use



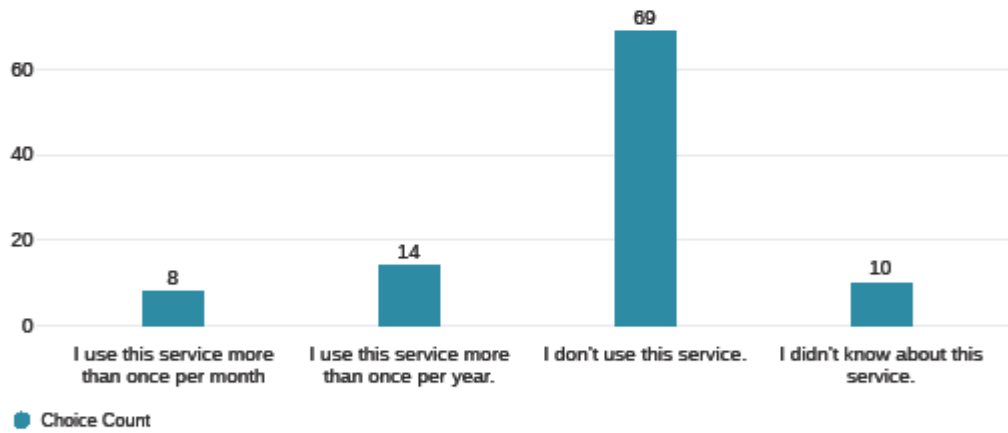
### Printing, copying, faxing & scanning



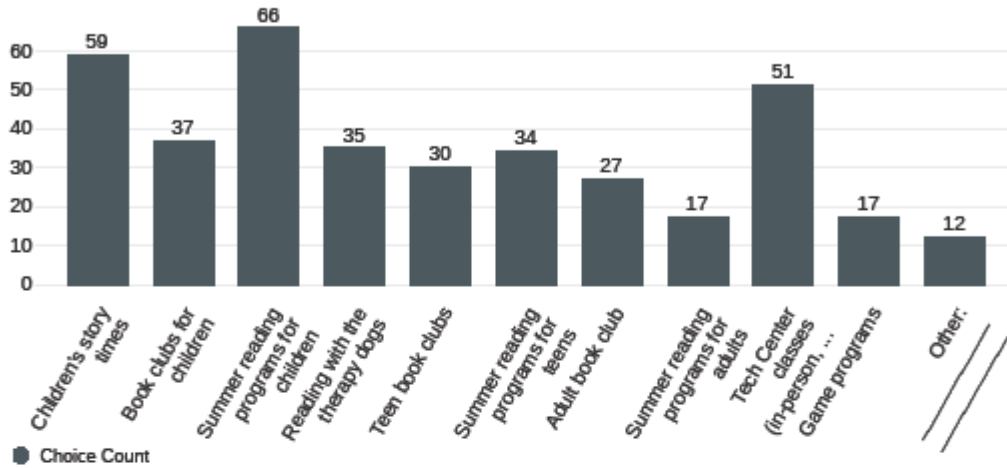
### Study, meeting, or work space



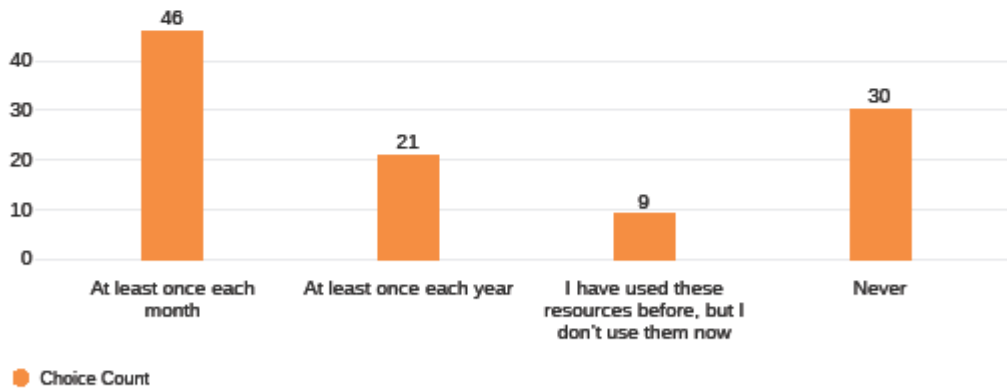
### Tech Help



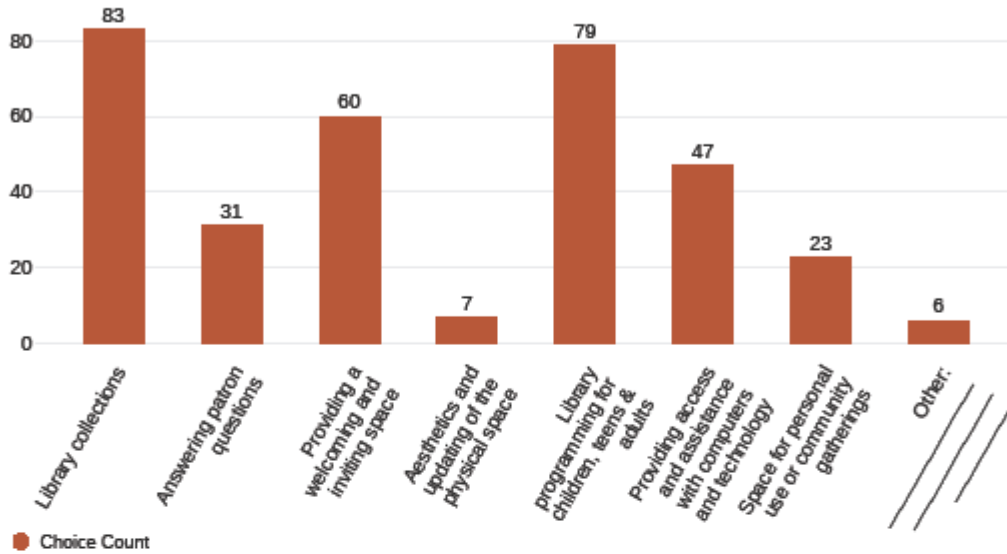
Q3 - Which programs that the library offers do you think are most important? (please choose up to three)



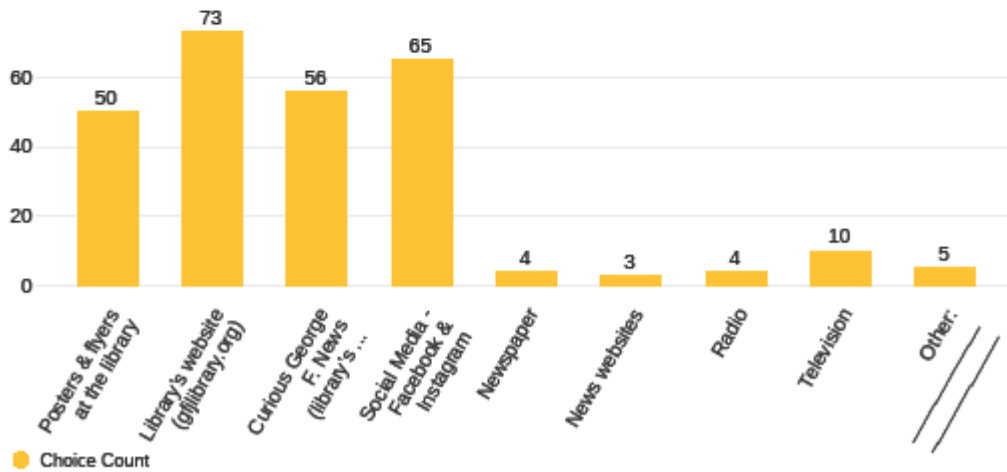
Q4 - How often do you utilize our online resources such as e-books, audiobooks, and databases? (Examples - Libby, Hoopla, Four County Research Center, Mango Languages)



Q5 - What do you think are the most important priorities for the Library?  
(please choose up to three)



Q6 - What are the best ways to inform you about news and events at the George F. Johnson Memorial Library? (please choose up to three)



## Q7 - Do you have any additional comments, suggestions, or ideas about the library?

Do you have any additional comments, suggestions, or ideas about the library?

All the staff has been wonderful here love the programs offered. You all are doing fantastic. Paper Entry KR

Some of services available- while I haven't used them recently, I like to know that they are available. Paper Entry KR

Love the library. Paper Entry KR

Nice collection of newer books. Paper Entry KR

Libraries are one our only hope for society. please keep them highly funded as long as possible.

Classes (Art) Paper Entry KR

Great place to spend quiet time, very helpful staff. Paper Entry KR

I think that the library should add a place for vending machines. Paper Entry KR

Love the librarians!!! So Helpful! Paper Entry KR

Unreadable comment Paper Entry KR

Answering patrons questions! Paper Entry KR

Whatever other patrons will benefit the most from. Be open sundays pleeease. Paper Entry KR

Paper Entry KR

Pretty bookmarks for free Paper Entry KR

More infant programs. Paper Entry KR

Keep up the great work! Classes. Paper Entry KR

We Love the library! Paper Entry KR

Good Refuge from thunderstorms! Art Classes when offered

I'm new to the area and I'm looking forward to making use of the Library.

My kids love the little toys and therapy dog days. Great children's book selection.

I'd be in more often but can't find my library card

Link library resources and clubs to the schools to foster early interest in reading and study.

When is D&D coming back?!

Somehow you need to improve the funding model to include the local populations just outside of Broome. We reside in Tioga County, yet we would be required to pay \$50. Do you receive any funding from UE School taxes. If so, we do pay them and deserve consideration. At this point we have other library options (FLLS, NYPL), but we did like GFJ.

Really enjoying the children's programming this summer, for example Dino dig in July was great (could've used more space and materials because it was so popular) thank you for keeping things fresh at the library!

The library is the absolute best community resource and offers so much more than just books, and something for all ages. It would be awesome if the library could offer local cultural passes to check out, like some other libraries have.

Renew audiobooks on lobby for Harry Potter, they are expired. Everyone who works there is incredibly friendly, knowledgeable and just wonderful!

GFJ is a terrific library. One constructive criticism, mow the lawn. the library always looks great inside, sometimes parts of the lawn, not so much. I don't know who is responsible for lawn mowing, but with relatively little effort it can be greatly improved. Maybe even a librarian could volunteer!?! Remember, the outside is the first impression people get!

One of the most important things about the library is the built-in community offered in general, as well as helping community members to find other resources that could be helpful to them.

Updating the physical space would be very helpful. I love the library and the people are great but the environment is sad and too outdated

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE be open on Sundays

GFJ is my favorite library. The staff is always extremely friendly and helpful. The space is beautiful and a calming place to read a magazine or newspaper.

Having a well run library is a critical resource for our community! Gfj library seems to work hard at providing that resource!

Fix the lights \*on\* the back of the library building.

Try to obtain more museum passes.

No suggestions. Great services!!

I've been coming to the GFJ library since I was a child and this is still my favorite library as an adult! The summer reading programs really helped kick start my love for reading at an early age and I'm ever so grateful!!

I support all your services, even those for which I have no personal need. I support the library in general. Don't let the conservative fatheads of this increasingly stupid town inhibit the programs you offer.

Thanks for hosting the Dungeons and Dragon's events!

I greatly enjoy the book sales.

In-person activities and checking out books are vital to community. Libraries are an irreplaceable asset to a community.

I have often had negative interactions with

There is a good section of new fiction and nonfiction. We love the children's summer reading program.

I love to be able to download and ebook to listen to. I would love to see the collection available increase. Thank you !

I want to see more programming aimed at millennial adults. I have no need for learning the basics of how my devices work. I want to learn practical skills.

D&d and board game days could be more inclusive for childless adults

Thank you for providing an inclusive, welcoming space to all community members.

I think the library should partner with local scouting organizations, like Girl Scouts, to offer badge related programming and library/reading challenges that could be connected to fun patches

# George F. Johnson Memorial Library

Endicott, NY



## Report on Focus Groups July 13, 2023

**Conducted by South Central Regional Library Council**

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## **Introduction**

The George F. Johnson Library, which first opened its doors on 16 March 1915, serves the community of Endicott, New York and the surrounding areas. According to its [history page](#), the library was formed after a group of 40 residents “raised the necessary funds to establish a library association.”

The library’s [mission](#) is “to provide materials in varied formats, information from technological and traditional sources, and services from trained and qualified employees for library users of all ages for their recreations, educational and lifelong learning needs.”

They “promote policies, practices, and resources that will help people of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses to have meaningful opportunities to learn and thrive and to ensure that the library is an environment where everyone is valued and respected.” They also “vow to uphold the rights of all people of all ages under the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the guidelines of the library Bill of Rights adopted by the American Library Association Council of January 23, 1980.”

## **Purpose of the Focus Group Series**

On July 13, 2023, South Central Regional Library Council (SCRLC) conducted three focus groups for the George F. Johnson Memorial Library to add further nuance and depth to the information being collected to inform their strategic planning process. The questions were aligned to a recent survey and other activities, and allowed more time for thoughts, anecdotes, and sentiments. This is the second series of focus groups that SCRLC has conducted for the George F. Johnson Memorial Library in recent years, the first one being in 2020 just before the pandemic.

## **Participants**

Altogether, 14 persons participated in the focus groups. The groups were multi-generational and included at least one person from the Friends of the Library. Like the last time, some of the participants were long-time users beginning in childhood; others were newer to the community. The participants were informed that their responses would be confidential and any remarks/quotes, anonymous.

## **Results**

As in the 2020 series of focus groups, the input received from participants in July was very positive. They are passionate library users and offered many suggestions and strong input.

As indicated, the 2020 sessions were held just before the pandemic that changed so much about our, world including the way people interact with libraries (at least, for awhile). We were not sure how recommendations presented in that report would work post-pandemic.

The pandemic did come up occasionally in the 2023 focus group sessions, e.g., a few participants felt that something has changed but no one knew exactly what. The former “coziness” was mentioned in this context. The Library may want to investigate this. Seating? Spacing? Perhaps it is also a change within the participants.

The recommendations are presented below, followed by responses to the individual questions, which will provide insight. The list of questions and sub-questions asked is included at the end of this report.

When considering the recommendations, a wonderful aspect of the library community is being able to share strategies, bounce ideas off each other, and adapt them to our own space and use. As Dr. R. David Lankes once said about innovation, “It is not necessarily big inventions, business, technology, or makerspaces, though it can be. Innovation is quite often small improvement and positive change.”

## **Recommendations**

- Investigate Library Construction Aid for some of the projects involving space reconfiguration.
- Improve the teen space. Perhaps consult with Chicago Public Library to see how they created theirs and how it is monitored. The focus group participants feel that the teens are out in the open and do not really have a space to call their own.
- Develop the outdoor space. The participants are very interested in the outdoors and had several suggestions for developing the Library’s outdoor space, including planting a community garden. Groton Public Library had a community garden, and it might be worth a conversation with their director, Sara Knobel. Others had mentioned the Cornell Cooperative Extension as a potential partner for the library. Revitalizing the outdoor space, combined with programming, could be energizing and practical. Maybe include a butterfly garden. There is also much discussion among libraries on sustainable practices and green space—see the [American Library Association’s resources for libraries](#) for more ideas.
- Expand the Library’s multilanguage resources. Arabic and Ukrainian materials were mentioned as needs. Check with UHS or Lourdes to see what languages are being requested for their translation services. Several years ago in the Binghamton area, it was Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Chinese Mandarin.
- Provide more signage for the oversized book collection—some participants forget they are there.
- Pursue partnerships. The participants had many suggestions for potential partnership organizations, which are listed on page 12. They would like to see senior citizens more involved in the Library, as well—not only as users, but as volunteers.
- Provide specific staff training on working with and interacting with the neurodivergent community; also offer generalized customer service training.
- Formalize a homework help program in partnership with volunteers, schools, and community partners.

## Responses to Individual Questions

### **1. What are some of your favorite activities outside of work or school, i.e., how do you spend your time?**

This design-thinking question helped identify potential library programs or services.

The focus group participants are busy individuals with wide-ranging activities, from butterfly-raising to editing. Five participants spend a lot of time transporting children to activities. Six participants volunteer for executive boards, or organizations including the Library. Eight mentioned the outdoors—hiking, walking, gardening, and being outside as much as possible. Other activities comprise reading and concerts, including those offered at the Library.

### **2. What Image do you have of the George F. Johnson Memorial Library? What comes to mind when you think of it?**

This question was asked the last time, and the Library continues to evoke primarily positive images. Helpful and friendly staff, great children’s programming, a place of learning and resources, and nostalgia were themes expressed by the participants. For some, it was the library of their childhood.

*“The kids’ space has really been transformed throughout the years and I love what they done recently to change the space. The staff is super helpful and friendly and I appreciate that.”*

*“[Their] technical support is fabulous.”*

*“The staff is so friendly and helpful; very personable because the librarians know you and what you like so make suggestions or even set a book aside for me”*

*“It is a very personal and safe place—it feels like home.”*

*“Kids can be kids, I’ve never seen anyone reprimand a child.”*

*“Awesome librarians; we have been blessed with awesome youth librarians.”*

*“I love the adult librarians, they are so helpful.”*

*“I am thankful for the resource and to have access to everything in it.”*

On the other hand, one participant mentioned being being traumatized from an experience they had at the library as a teen (being reprimanded). There was also concern expressed about some children and adults who are neurodivergent not feeling welcome, e.g., when they are loud or have outbursts—aspects that are beyond the individual’s control.

*“Some of my friends won’t come here because they said someone was mean to them and reprimanded them for being too loud.” (neurodivergence)*

As a part of this question, we asked, “when you walk into the Library, what is the first impression you have?” Again, the participants reiterated how much they love the library, the staff, and services, including the art gallery and changing shows.

There were some concerns expressed, e.g., some felt that the “cozy” feel is missing since the pandemic. Several felt that the entrance needed to be freshened up and that the library needs an interior decorator.

*“The cozy feel seems to be missing since the pandemic.”*

*“This library is unique with its entrances, but it not a very good entry way—it is not very welcoming walking into the bathrooms and walking in the front--it’s just a big empty lobby that is not welcoming.”*

*“The beautifully decorated cases in front you don’t see unless; you have to look for them if you even know about them.”*

*“I feel like I’m walking into the same library as when as I was a kid.”*

### **3. How do you use the library, i.e., for what purposes, programs, or services?**

The participants had varied responses.

Eight participants indicated that finding books is key for them—and in a variety of formats (print, Playaway, audio). Those that use Playaways feel that there is a nice selection of them. Four participants use the Library extensively for children’s programming and summer reading, while two participate in book clubs, and two meet with clients at the Library to do activities or introduce them to the Library and its services.

*“Sometimes I come to the Library just to be in a comfortable, quiet space in a different environment.”*

*“I don’t have to worry about [hearing] any bad language.”*

*“For information and reviewing books rather than spending money on something I might not like.”*

*“I like the support of community from library staff.”*

### **4. What do you think about the library’s physical space?**

As the last time, this group of participants was fairly happy with the Library’s physical space, though they had suggestions for improvement. This time there were fewer comments regarding the parking lot and more remarks on the teen space—even before we reached the question about the teen space.

A couple of participants mentioned how much they like the current space:

*“It is very nice and comfortable.”*

*“I never thought about it. I just love it here and the way it is set up.”*

Others remarked that space is limited because of the size of the building, and one participant would still like to see it more open and spacious. One participant struggles with the therapy dog program due to allergies and was thankful that the Library publishes the schedule so they know not to visit at that time.

*“There needs to be defined activity spaces with accessibility.”*

*“Have a separate space for homework.”*

*“Noise is tolerated in the children’s room but not the adult space--we were too loud while doing the puzzle.”* They suggesting setting up a specific time of day for noisier patrons.

*“This room [where the focus group was held] would be great for smaller groups.”*

**a. Is the library welcoming and inviting? Why or why not?**

The responses were overwhelmingly positive, though the experiences that some participants had while visiting the Library with neurodivergent friends who might yell out came up again—they did not feel welcome.

*“I meet a lot of the same people so it feels like community.”*

*“The book sales are outstanding.”*

*“Everyone is very friendly and helpful.”*

*“They have top notch staff.”*

*“Erin is fabulous.”*

**b. Does the library furniture meet your needs?**

There were not many thoughts regarding the furniture. The jigsaw puzzle table is a hit.

*“I don’t pay attention to the furniture because I don’t sit down. It seems comfortable and functional.”*

*“I miss the cozier sitting in the children’s section where we could sit and read with our kids.”*

Regarding the teen space,

*“There used to be beanbags in the teen section but they have not come back since the pandemic.”*

Indeed, the pandemic has meant that many public institutions, including libraries, have had to re-evaluate their seating to ensure that it is safe and easy to sanitize. Such furniture may not be the most comfortable or “cozy.”

**c. Does the library need more space for children or teens?**

There were comments about the children’s room but the most concern was expressed over the teen space.

*“The children’s space is a nice size and separating the younger kids from the older kids is useful.”*

*“The children’s room needs more tables.”*

*“I like the designated spaces for the children’s room and the reading space.”*

Several participants feel the teen area needs to be updated so that they truly have their own space. One participant suggested using the upstairs for teen space.

*“The teen section is not very welcoming and my kids want to go hang in the children’s room.”*

*“There is no place for them to sit and hangout and it’s out in the open in the middle of everything.”*

*“Teen space doesn’t feel like their own space; they are kind of on display, maybe they could be less in the middle of things or walled off a bit; is there a space they could have a book club or meeting?”*

**d. How do you feel about the typical noise level in the main area of the library?**

*“It is always quiet and peaceful.”*

*“It is very quiet, good.”*

*“Sometimes it quiet, sometimes not, sometimes it’s too quiet.”*

**5. How well do you think the library does with the programs and services it offers?**

The participants feel that the Library does an excellent job with their programs and services, though not everyone might use everything.

*“The quality and variety of books and the book sale are exemplary.”*

*“The Summer reading program is great at working with local schools.”*

*“The IT assistance is helpful.”*

*“The dinner book club is really nice and board game borrowing is a great addition.”*

*“There is a lot of programming already.”*

*“Erin’s availability and willingness to go out into the community is a huge instrument in why the programming is successful.”*

**a. Print Book/eBook collections—any gaps (adult, young adult, children, diversity, languages, large print, topics, etc.)? Too old, new, about right?**

Participants are happy with the offerings and the availability of interlibrary loan. They feel that the selection is good with a lot of diversity and topics represented. They also like the availability of material in different formats, including e-content (for children, as well), graphic novels, research materials, audio, Playaways, and video. Being able to check out board games came up as a positive, as well. One participant wishes that there were lower level reader books available for older children (i.e., more sophisticated content, just easier to read), and acknowledged this was an issue for all libraries. Participants in a couple of sessions mentioned having books available for both children and adults in languages beyond English and Spanish, e.g., Arabic, Ukrainian.

*"I appreciate the video section being organized and alphabetized."*  
*"The selection is pretty great!"*  
*"I love the Libby app."*  
*"The young adult section is more organized."*  
*"I love the displays on different subjects, Diversity, LGBTQ, emotions."*  
*"A lot of people don't know about the pass programs or the sheet music."*  
*"I forget that we have an oversize collection always have to be reminded."*

#### **b. Information/help finding answers to questions at Adult & Children's Reference Desks and the library's Circulation Desk**

The participants feel that the reference desk staff are very friendly and helpful. They are also glad that the reference desks are always staffed.

*"They have always come through for me."*  
*"We've had the library contact us if they know we're interested in a new book."*  
*"The librarians are great; Erin and Ken are always helpful and available."*

Regarding circulation, there were a few concerns.

*"It depends on the staff that are here."*  
*"The circulation desk could use some help on customer service; sometimes they're super friendly and other times not so much."*  
*"Circulation is the main staffing issue; all the librarians are super friendly and helpful."*

#### **c. Internet access & speed - no users**

There were not many comments about internet access, those using it feel it is good.

*"It's nice that there is public access to the internet."*

#### **d. Technology help and training in the library's Tech Center**

Some participants were unaware that the library has a Tech Center; others do not use it. Those who use it are very pleased. Some thought it was used for other purposes, e.g., book clubs.

*"It's outstanding-- I use them all the time. I've been to many classes, and if I have a question someone is there with an answer."*  
*"It is nice that time is capped on the computers."*

#### **e. Ample staffing?**

Participants feel that the staffing levels were good, with the following caveats:

*"We need more Kens and Erins; there are new programs that they want to develop but funding is an issue."*

*"Customer service training for the circulation desk might be useful."*

**f. Does the library offer adequate programs for children, teens & adults?**

Not everyone participates in the programming at the library, but no one said, "oh, you need more programming," and elsewhere (page 7), a participant mentioned that "there is a lot of programming already." Some participants were interested in knowing how the turnout is for the programs that are offered.

*"The librarians make it fun for the younger kids. I am not sure about the teen programming but I'm happy they offer some."*

*"They could offer teen-level personal finance, computer/tech and internet safety classes."*

*"Maybe offer financial aid application help (assistance)."*

**6. If money were no object, what would you like the Library to be like and to include?**

If money were no object, they would like to see some of their proposed ideas implemented including updating the overall space:

*"Update the interior, modernize it, and lighten it up."*

*"The building is all windows but it seems so dark in here."*

Ideas included a drive-through return window/pickup, maybe an expansion to provide more community rooms and space in general (this came up in two of the sessions) a tutoring space, a beverage bar, bigger and more comfortable study carrels, big leather chairs, and lighter-colored book shelves. A makerspace that included a 3-D printer came up in two of the sessions.

*"Make children's area bigger and have more comfortable chairs to read together."*

The teen area was of concern to participants in all of the sessions.

*"Improve the teen area--the books are good but it's not cozy."*

*"Update the teen section."*

*"The teen space needs more attention. There is a separate space for younger kids and adults but not them. You need to make it so it's not front and center, and it needs to be cozier; right now, there is no furniture for them."*

Service-wise, having more copies of popular titles to shorten the wait list was suggested, as was eliminating reserve fees as a matter of equity.



*“The Library is fine-free, so why are there reserve fees?”*

The outside of the building was also discussed, with all sessions wanting to see the outdoor space reworked.

*“[Create] a usable outdoor space with a garden, maybe a community garden for growing vegetables.”*

If funds were no limit, participants would also like to see transportation for people from nursing homes, senior centers, etc. One mentioned a library bus for seniors or those who are house-bound.

One participant mentioned a need for a better parking lot with space to back out.

**a. Specific electronic/online resources (Mango, Hoopla)**

There were not recommendations made for specific resources, though one participant suggested:

*“Offer software programs for teens/adults, something that is not super basic.”*

**b./c. Special programs (presenters, makerspaces, performers). (combined with specific topics)**

Specific topics. Financial literacy, internet safety, how to do 3-D printing, a Lego table, having adult coloring books, and sessions providing information on trades were suggested.

Having a sensory area for neurodivergent library users was also suggested.

Some participants mentioned being “Zoomed out,” preferring in-person programs.

*“Maybe a class on cyber security, privacy, and keeping children safe online.”*

**d. Homework help**

Participants think there would be value in having homework help/tutoring available at the Library, and that there was a community need:

*“There are people in the community that could really use that.”*

One participant suggested partnering with the Family Support Center; another suggested partnering with a college or high school for tutoring.

**e. Mobile hot spots.**

Although the focus group participants do not use the Library's mobile hot spots, they thought there was a need, wondering how often the currently owned ones are used.

*"There are pockets in the county that don't have access and if the library can help with that that's a plus."*

*"If they are used and need more they should get more. "*

*"It would be a very wise investment if they are being used."*

*"How would people know the library has this service?"*

## **7. What keeps people from coming to the library?**

As with the focus group participants of 2020, Saturday hours in the summer continue to be missed and are seen as a reason some community members may not visit the Library. The hours throughout the year are considered adequate, though the summer Saturdays are missed.

Participants this time around were less focused on societal shifts as a reason and more on practical possibilities, e.g., hours—especially the Saturday hours—plus lack of transportation, and lack of information about the Library's programs and services.

*"[They] need more communication letting the community know what's going on here, other services that are offered other than books."*

*"Not knowing what's available here--hotspots, Empire passes, museum passes."*

*"Some people don't have cards and don't know there are services that you don't need a card for."*

Participants saw promotion as key, including through organizations like the Family Support Center and the American Civics Association.

Parking, noise, and some staff at the circulation desk were other possibilities mentioned. One participant suggested that there is a stigma that libraries are for nerds, which could keep some people away (note: their words and this could also be seen as an attraction by others).

## **8. How could the library best reach out to the community? And to whom? What other community groups or organizations could the library collaborate with and on what?**

As with the 2020 focus group participants, public relations and marketing were brought up throughout the sessions, plus the newsletter—which everyone likes. One participant thought it would be good to look at whom the Library is missing and why. The newsletter came up in all three groups as an important way to reach people and organizations, i.e., send the newsletter to area organizations,

too. Not all of the focus group participants receive it, depending on where they live, and hope that there could be wider distribution.

*“Include the town of Maine in mailings.”*

*“I love the newsletter that goes to everyone; but not everyone in this group gets them.”*

Regarding groups and organizations to reach out to, suggestions expanded the ideas from 2020, which had been village government, Boys and Girls Club, and the Board of Elections to host primary elections. The 2023 focus group participants suggested:

- local politicians
- the county executive
- senior centers (one participant suggested bringing in seniors for special programs complete with transportation for them)
- Cornell cooperative extension
- Gigi’s Playhouse
- Schools/BOCES
- Family Support Center
- Youth councils
- Catholic Charities
- Local colleges
- Corporations for help with funding
- Visions (for help with financial literacy programming)
- American Civics Association

*“Maybe the library could provide volunteer opportunities to some of the clients of these groups.”*

*“We need to have closer ties with the colleges.”*

*“Send newsletters to these groups.”*

## **9. What should the library be i.e., what is its role in the community?**

Recurring themes were community center, learning, and a place to obtain information. There is overlap with the 2020 participants, who felt that the library should be a cornerstone, community hub, and a safe, enriching, welcoming community center/gathering space.

2023 focus group responses:

- a place to exhale.
- a haven and a place to learn.
- education and information partnerships within the community.
- a community center
- a center for intelligence and information

- a hub of information and services for the community
- an institution of sharing information

## **10. Is there anything else you want to say that hasn't been covered?**

The participants offered several additional suggestions:

*"Four County Library System has a warehouse library that doesn't let schools check the books out. It would be nice if they changed their policy and work on partnering with a wider community than just the libraries in their system."*

*"Maybe apply for special legislative grants for some initiatives."*

*"Create students and parents list of favorite books and why; coordinate with book sale books."*

*"Have a poster contest to promote the library; give book bags to students who win and let them buy \$5 worth of books [at the book sale]."*

*"Offer read-alouds for all ages."*

*"Have volunteer tutors."*

*"Provide gift cards to local restaurants and businesses to promote the library."*

*"Offer tech update classes."*

*"Work with Americanization classes."*

*"Provide free ice cream cones certificates to local shops."*

*"Have a table to assemble puzzles."*

*"They need to more bring reading dogs to the library more often" (though according to one of the other participants who has allergies, be sure to announce when the dogs will be in the house.)*

*"There are so many programs we wish they could offer if we had more funding."*

## Questions for Focus Groups @ George F. Johnson Memorial Library

### Introductory/Ice Breaker Questions

1. What are some of your favorite activities outside of work or school, i.e., how do you spend your time?
2. Image of the Library: (All responses should pertain specifically to the George F. Johnson Memorial Library).
  - a. What image do you have of the George F. Johnson Memorial Library? What comes to mind when you think of it?
  - b. When you walk into the library, what is the first impression you have?
3. How do you use the library, i.e., for what purposes, programs, or services?

### Space/Program/Services Questions

4. What do you think about the library's physical space?
  - a. Is the library welcoming and inviting? Why or why not?
  - e. Does the library furniture meet your needs?
  - f. Does the library need more space for children or teens?
  - g. How do you feel about the typical noise level in the main area of the library?

How well do you think the library does with the programs and services it offers?

- a. Print Book/eBook collections—any gaps (adult, young adult, children, diversity, languages, large print, topics, etc.)? Too old, new, about right?
- b. Information/help finding answers to questions at Adult & Children's Reference Desks and the library's Circulation Desk
- c. Internet access & speed
- d. Technology help and training in the library's Tech Center
- e. Ample staffing
- f. Does the library offer adequate programs for children, teens & adults?

6. If money were no object, what would you like the library to be like and to include?
  - a. Specific electronic/online resources (Mango, Hoopla)
  - b. Special programs (presenters, makerspaces, performers)
  - c. Specific topics, e.g., crafts, gardening, consumer education, financial literacy, health, adult education (what subjects?), early literacy programs/story hours, activities for teens (what ones?)?
  - d. Homework help (provide service differently, we don't offer it in an organized fashion)
  - e. Mobile hot spot (they have 3 of them with Endicott library cards and are planning to get more).

7. What keeps people from coming to the library? (Prompt with examples, e.g., hours, parking, or other reason if they need help).
  - a. Regarding the hours the library is open--are they convenient? Do you need more, or different hours? (Current hours: Mon-Thurs 9-8; Fri-Sat 9-5; late June-Labor there are no Saturdays).

### **Ending/Closing Questions**

8. How could the library best reach out to the community? And to whom? What other community groups or organizations could the library collaborate with and on what?
9. What should the library be i.e., what is its role in the community?
10. Is there anything else you want to say that hasn't been covered?

## APPENDIX D | Board of Trustees Retreat (August 17, 2023)

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**From:** Steven Bachman <[sbachman@4cls.org](mailto:sbachman@4cls.org)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 17, 2023 11:12 AM  
**To:** Seth Jacobus  
**Subject:** Retreat Summary  
**Attachments:** GFJ Board Retreat Summary 2023.docx

Hi Seth,  
I enjoyed talking with your board members last night.  
They were thoughtful and engaged.  
I have attached a summary of the discussions.

They identified the staff and collection as particularly strong assets for the library.  
Getting the word out about programs and services is still difficult- we all struggle with that.

Steve

\*\*\*\*\*  
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## George F. Johnson Memorial Library – Board Retreat Summary

### Phase 1 – Living Here

- **What Do You Love Most About the Community**
  - Food & Restaurants
  - Natural Beauty, mild weather
  - Fun stuff to do / local & pro sports
  - Small community feel / caring community
  - Art & culture
  - Strong libraries

### Phase 2 – State of the Library

- **What's Great About the Library**
  - Great Staff (x5)
  - Strong collection, (x6)
    - especially for J and YA
  - Tech Center (x5)
  - Programs/Services (x3)
  - Homey feel & convenient hours
- **What's Not So Great**
  - Building Issues (x4)
  - General outdatedness (x3)
  - Undetermined ownership (x2)
  - Neighborhood can be iffy
  - Job descriptions don't reflect full scope of staff duties

### Phase 3 – The Future

- **Threats to The Library/Community**
  - Rising costs & wages (staying competitive)
  - Intellectual freedom / book bans
  - Loss of socialization skills
  - General uptick in safety concerns / people with shorter fuses
  - Difficulty in recruiting trustees
- **Opportunities for Library/Community**
  - More engagement with community via programs & services (x10)
  - More newsletters / More ways to spread awareness of library & library programs
  - More efforts in teaching information literacy

### Where do people get their local information?

- Facebook
- WBNG
- Radio



- Google
- Instagram
- Word of Mouth
- NextDoor App