

Service Survey and Planning Document for

Riverton Free Library

A Member of the Burlington County Library System

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Part A: Service Survey Analysis

Part B: Proposed Programs



Prepared by the Executive Board of the Riverton Free Library Association
Reviewed by the Directors of the Riverton Free Library
& The Burlington County Library System
Endorsed by the Riverton Free Library Association, September 2008

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Introduction

The Riverton Free Library has enjoyed its more than 100 years of service to the Palmyra and Riverton communities as well as others outside our immediate neighborhood. It is the desire and mandate of our library to continue to be an “integral, valuable community resource every day.” To continue with this tradition, the Board of the Riverton Free Library Association chose to look at what services are now offered as well as where we can improve and grow. We chose to measure RFL services using a short questionnaire, which was developed and disseminated in the spring of 2008.

This document is the compilation of the results of that Service Survey. It is important for this organization to establish its vision for the future based upon customer satisfaction as well as monitoring general trends in library service so to help direct the Association’s future funding. To this end, this Planning Document will cite goals formulated from service areas as described by survey respondents along with a list of suggested tasks or modalities that can help address those goals through the concerted efforts of our library director/branch manager, the Burlington County Library System, and the Association as one of the funding agents. A timeline for achieving these service standards must remain flexible as staffing and funding for some of these goals is not certain.

Our sincere thanks to the Burlington County Library System, for without their support over the past four years, we would not have been able to achieve so many of our current services. We would like to extend special thanks to our local library leader, Michael Robinson, for his dedication to our little library.

This is the start of service for the next 100 years.

Riverton Free Library Association Executive Board

Karen Healey, President
Patricia Solin, Vice President
Eleanor Paladino, Treasurer
Mary Markiewicz, Secretary



Part A – Library Service Survey: Needs Analysis

History of Service

Presentation to the Focus Group Meeting, June 7, 2008 at the
Riverton Public School Library/ Media Center

This presentation is based upon a document, written in October of 1970, by the History Committee of the Riverton Free Library as well as Riverton Public School's online history, *The Riverton Project* (<http://www.riverton.k12.nj.us/rivertonproject/project.html>). We offer our thanks to them for the use of these sources. Collated by Patricia Solin.

Formed from farmland, the borough of Riverton was founded in 1893, and Palmyra in 1894.

Eventually, Riverton, which had been a summer retreat for wealthy Philadelphians, became a year-round residential community. It boasted of lumberyards, warehouses, boarding houses, a yacht club, country club, and Lyceum for social and recreational activities. Riverton had a public school, which started with 60 pupils, churches, and a newspaper, *The New Era*, along with many shops. Riverton had one of the largest fern and rose nurseries in the United States, Dreer Nursery, which warranted Riverton having its own Post Office. Riverton and Palmyra had boat landings for ferries, trolley, bus and train service, a recreational bicycle track, and eventually cars that would carry people from Trenton to Philadelphia, and beyond. The women's Porch Club not only supported the creation of a new educational directive, a kindergarten, it championed what would become New Jersey's first PTA. It was these progressive people from both communities that would establish on January 12th, 1899, the Riverton Library and Free Reading Room.

With Dr. Alexander Marcy, Jr. as President and Mr. Walter G. Wilson as Secretary, it was resolved:

"That steps be taken to establish and maintain in Riverton, a Library and free Reading Room which shall be absolutely free from Sectarian, Political, or Person Control."

By-laws were created, space was found at the Christ Episcopal Church, a librarian appointed, Miss Elizabeth Campbell, and fees ascribed for the library's maintenance. Annual subscriptions were \$1.00 each year, or Life Members could pay \$25.00 annually for five years. "No conversation" was permitted in the Reading Room!

By 1908, Sarah Morris Perot Ogden, widow of Riverton's former first mayor, Edward H. Ogden, made a gift of the house at 306 Main Street as the new home of the Riverton Free Library.

Over the early years, the library had remarkable success despite chronic financial stresses. When outbreaks of disease like measles occurred, books were burned. But there were advances, too; the building was electrified, and even during the Depression, funds were collected from 75 families to make repairs to the building. Eventually a Children's Room was added. Library programs included story hours and lectures, with a patron list that included 551 reader cards from Riverton residents, 650 from Palmyra, and 209 from Cinnaminson Township.

In 1968, the building interior was remodeled and renovated, providing for a better arrangement including more open space for storage. The library's rear addition, a new Reading Room for adults, was completed in 1992.

In 2004, the Association was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to become a branch of the Burlington County Library System. Once again, the library had been facing dire financial constraints, but this relationship has been symbiotic – we have both benefited from this collaboration. County's contribution to the financial support of staff, materials, and programs, as well as their professional leadership and support has been essential in allowing our library to flourish. As an Association, we continue to be responsible for the library's building and grounds, and still support such library services as book purchases and programming.

Now, with the continued support of the County Library System, and the generous support of Palmyra, Riverton, and other patrons, it is our opportunity to assess community needs so that we can plan for our future. From our *2008 Service Survey* we hope to create a plan that will ensure that the Riverton Free Library continues to fulfill the vision of its early founders.

Current Conditions

The health of our library will be described in three facets: service statistics, facility condition, and monetary support.

Service Statistics

Mr. Robinson has been instrumental in collating various statistics to show how the library is used as well as documenting its collection.

- Overall, circulation of materials has steadily grown over the years, especially once the library was automated and we became a branch of the Burlington County Library System. For the first quarter of 2008, the library sustained a growth of 19% over the previous year's circulation. It is anticipated that nearly 32,000 items will circulate in 2008, with an additional 15,000 items that will be borrowed from the collection via interlibrary loan.
- Patron use of the library, including those who attend special library programs such as story hour, has also increased. Great Books and Book Discussion groups, as well as neighborhood use of the building for meetings are but a few of the library's popular programs. The library expects that over 22,000 people will visit the library in 2008.
- The library has 32,785 circulating items in its collection, including 2,600 movies and audio books in all formats.

Facility Condition

As a branch of the Burlington County Library, the Riverton Free Library Association has been able to use its resources to direct its attention to the maintenance and improvement of the building and grounds. With County providing funds for salaries, material resources, and programming, the Association has concentrated on completing work that had had to be deferred for years due to funding issues. Since 2004, the Association has completed the following:

2005

- Replaced rugs throughout the library
- Replaced plastic reading chairs with wooden library chairs
- Purchased stackable chairs for public meetings/performances
- Painted library's apartment

2006

- Replaced plumbing sink fixtures in apartment bathroom & added new cut-off valves

2006, Continued

- Repaired sewer line from apartment to basement
- Repaired air conditioning system
- Replaced kitchen cabinetry, sink, and kitchen flooring in apartment
- Replaced wall-to-wall carpet in apartment hallway
- Replaced all eight double hung apartment windows with Anderson windows
- Added blown insulation to the library and apartment walls
- Repaired chimney flue
- Cleaned basement, donating excess library furniture and shelves to other libraries
- Repaired bay window in new addition of the library
- Removed existing roof ridge caps and replaced with roll vent

2007

- Painted the exterior of the library
- Secured and supplemented donation of new, front landscaping
- Brought up to code electrical box, safety exit lighting, and replaced light fixtures throughout the library
- Purchased new exterior library sign with lighting

2008

- Replaced thirteen windows on the library level with Anderson windows
- Replaced three windows in the old basement
- Replaced front door lock system
- Added window wells for basement windows
- Surveyed property to review fencing options
- Parged the foundation walls in the old basement
- Planned benefactor plaque to be added to library's interior

Monetary Support

The Riverton Free Library has the following areas of financial support:

- Dividends from Endowments and other sources: Susan B. Lippincott Memorial Trust Fund, Marvin E. Ellis Fund, Lenore Showell Probsting Fund, the Memorial/Remembrance Fund, a Vanguard money market fund and Stock Investments
- Municipal Government Donations: Palmyra and Riverton Boroughs
- Rent from the apartment on the second floor of the library building
- Patron donations, especially those solicited through its Annual Appeal
- Burlington County Library System

Monetary Support, continued

- Donations from The Friends of Riverton Free Library and funds raised by the Annual Cocktail Party organized by volunteers

The Association approves an annual budget of expenses based upon the following disbursement areas:

- Books
- Programs
- Heating Oil and Service
- Insurance
- Utilities
- Sewer
- Capital Improvements
- Maintenance
- Equipment
- Annual Appeal
- Cocktail Party
- Postage
- Miscellaneous Expenses

The Burlington County Library System has provided funds for books, staffing, equipment, supplies, and programming.

- Salaries, total for one full-time and five part-time employees, \$120,813
- Benefits for the full-time employee, approximately \$18,000
- Furniture, for 2008, \$1,700
- Programs and program supplies, \$7,600
- Photocopier, \$898
- Books, materials and supplies are not broken out by branch location, but the total for all branches can be found in the Burlington County Library's annual budget, a 70-page document.

Service Survey

Purpose of the Service Survey

Our mission: To survey library service preferences of the Palmyra and Riverton communities, as well as those patrons who use the Riverton Free Library. The intent is to help plan and direct Association expenditures in future years, especially in those funding areas that are outside our usual budget lines, or where we need to increase traditional Association funding.

This information will be collated and analyzed by the RFL Executive Board, who will then create a recommended Planning Document. Both the administrative staff of the Burlington County Library as well as the RFL's director/branch manager can review the Planning Document, offering their interpretation of the goals and suggestions, as well as amend objectives for any implementation. Once approved by the Executive Board, the directors of the Burlington County Library and our own library, the Plan will be presented for the endorsement of the full board of the Riverton Free Library Association in September 2008.

Who Received the Survey

The RFL Service Survey was distributed along with our Annual Appeal to:

- Every residential customer in Palmyra (3,390)
- Every residential customer in Riverton (1,131)
- Direct mailing to about 55 non-Riverton, non Palmyra residents who had donated to the library over the past two years
- Students at the Riverton Public School, grades 6-8
- Extra surveys were available at the library circulation desk for walk-in patrons

Who Completed the Survey

Any library patron from the age of 12 and older was offered an opportunity to complete a Service Survey. Approximately 64% of the return from the Annual Appeal donation responded to the survey, or 3% of the total mailed distribution. Overall 146 surveys were returned and evaluated. The breakdown:

By Location

- 33 from Palmyra
- 101 from Riverton
- 12 from "Other" or Unknown Residences

By Age Group

- 56 from Age 12-21
- 16 from Age 22-45
- 34 from Age 46-62
- 36 from Age 63+
- 4, No Age Provided

What Was the Duration of the Survey

Patrons were asked to complete the Riverton Free Library Service Survey from the March 11, 2008 Annual Appeal mailing until June 1st.

Service Survey Results

1. Library hours are adequate for my use of the library.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
106	13	26

2. There is adequate space for me to work either independently or in a group.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
84	22	40

3. I am satisfied with the number and quality of library programs for children.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
73	8	65

4. I am satisfied with the number and quality of library programs for young adults.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
51	12	83

5. I am satisfied with the number and quality of library programs for adults.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
74	11	61

6. I am satisfied with the number and quality of reference materials.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
86	14	46

7. I am satisfied with the number and quality of children's books/materials.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
79	6	61

8. I am satisfied with the number and quality of young adult books/materials.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
64	12	70

9. I am satisfied with the number and quality of books and materials for adults.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
67	15	44

10. I use the computers at the library.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
47	31	68

11. I use magazines and newspapers at the library.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
45	41	60

12. The library staff is friendly and helpful.

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
116	10	20

Highest Areas of "Agree"

1. Staff is friendly and helpful
2. Library hours are adequate for my use.
3. Satisfaction with the number and quality of books and materials for adults.
4. Satisfaction with the number and quality of reference materials.

Highest Areas of "Disagree"

1. Use of magazines and newspapers at the library.
2. Use of computers at the library.
3. Adequate space for independent and group work
4. Satisfaction with the quality and number of books and materials for adults.

Highest Areas of "No Opinion"

13. Satisfaction with the quality and number of young adult programs.
14. Satisfaction with the number and quality of young adult materials.
15. Use of computers at the library.
16. Satisfaction with the number and quality of programs for children.

Survey Comments

Respondents completed the following sentences with comments. These are in no specific order or weight.

My favorite library service is:

Interlibrary loan	Staff friendliness	Story hour
Book borrowing	Helpfulness with research	Audio books
Reduced fee for overdue	Child programs	The staff
Reservations	Paperback exchange	Mr. Robinson
Special speaking events	Books on the porch	Movie Night
Youth services & collection	Magazines	Computers
Large print books	Book discussion	Books
Movie selection	DVD collection	

My least favorite service is . . .

No hours on Sunday	Book selection	Magazines
Looking up references	Computer use	Fees
Weekend hours		

The change that would most improve the library is . . .

More adult fiction	Expand website	New windows
More new releases	More space	Outside lighting
More current adult fiction	Salary for staff	More movies, DVD's
Increase hours on Fridays & weekends	Permit patrons to access sale books /basement	Enlarge building Identify staff

I think more library funds should to toward . . .

More space	A new library	New books
Technology: More computers	Special programs	Periodicals
More room for quiet reading	Salaries	Snack machines
Expansion of the library – More room for meetings, DVD's and books on tape, an annex specifically for computer and technology use		More promotion in town

Additional Comments

- "The staff have (sic) always helped me to locate books and reference materials I needed."
- "I hope to someday have more time to enjoy the adult programs offered by the library."
- "Overall, I'm impressed with the library, its service and programs."
- "I understand that you are tapped out of space at the current location – unless your renter leaves."
- "Continue to do what you do best – help when needed—Thank you!"
- "I'm a new resident so I've never been to the Riverton Library. I plan to visit."
- "It would be great if the library had a little more room."
- "I have recently begun attending story hour and I am unfamiliar with other programs."
- "I feel this is the first library I've have ever used."
- "Stay the same."
- "This library meets all my needs."
- "Everyone is kind and helpful. Couldn't be better! Think the service for children is a wonderful thing. Wish my great preschool children lived near here."
- "We like our library and our librarians."
- "I love this library! Its smallness gives it a quaint feel and EVERYONE is so helpful. Don't change a thing!"
- "Your Service Personnel has always been very helpful and treats members with great dignity."
- "Regarding enlarging the space – the historical 'feel' of this space should be maintained while adding internal space and care of its infrastructure."
- "A key ingredient in any library is the librarian. We are fortunate. Michael Robinson is a wonderful asset."
- "Riverton Library is the right size for Riverton."
- "I feel very fortunate to use this wonderful facility."
- "I don't have much opportunity to visit the library, but I'm glad you asked and care to make it the best service to Riverton."
- "Wish you great success in your plans."

What Will Be Done With the Survey

The Association announced in this year's Annual Appeal & Newsletter that the Service Survey was being performed this year along with a community Focus Group meeting. As a follow-up, postcards were sent to 385 patrons from the Association's database of previous donors or for those who had asked to be included in the Focus Group. The Focus Group meeting was held on June 7, 2008 at the Library/Media Center of Riverton Public School. At that meeting, Karen Healey and Patricia Solin gave an historical overview of the Riverton Free Library as well as a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the results of the survey. Those who attended the presentation were then given the opportunity to voice their opinions, which were then added to this document.

Once this Planning Document is approved by the Executive Members of the Association Board, it is to be approved by the General Association Board. Once approved, it will be distributed to the Burlington County Library, the Palmyra and Riverton Boroughs, with a copy on the library's website in pdf format, and paper copies available in the Riverton Public Library.

Library Trends

“In a progressive country change is constant; change is inevitable.”
Benjamin Disraeli

The Association is justifiably proud of its library director and the cited level of satisfied library patrons. We are grateful for the partnership that we have forged with the Burlington County Library System, and especially with its director, Gail Sweet. We have remained a viable institution that is of service to our patrons due to their vision and support.

To maintain that level of personalized service and to continue to be relevant in a changing society remains a challenge that our library embraces, and our Association supports. Libraries are challenged to anticipate a trend and then fiscally plan for those changes – no small task for any organization, but especially libraries that face evolving client needs and swift changes in information/technology. No organization can afford to “stay just as you are” because that would lead to stagnation, or worse, to looking backward. But how to choose what kind of future we should strive to support? Our Association’s goal is to support those qualities that are our foundation, while trying to prepare for those changes. Our plan is to listen to our library’s patrons, then to endeavor to be proactive in serving our communities through our library. This Plan will rely on the combined vision of our library professionals as well as the continued financial support of all who value the service.



Part B – Proposed Programs

Option A – Remain in Current Location: Description of Service

Has the library outgrown its current location? If the answer is no, or it is not a viable option to move then what can be achieved in our current location that would enhance service?

The Association proposes the adoption of the following goals based upon stated patron comments. As a collaborative document, we will enlist the views and support of both the Director of the Burlington County Library System, Gail Sweet, and that of our own Director and Branch Manager, Michael Robinson. These goals and areas of comment can be used to further service at our current location based upon finances and goals of the Burlington County Library System.

Goal 1 – To continue to provide friendly, personalized service to patrons.

- Selected patron comments suggest that staff identify themselves.

Goal 2 – To maintain current service hours, and increase service hours on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays..

- Survey results cite that patrons would like more service hours. Staffing would need to be provided to cover those hours that the library is open, if financially justifiable.

Goal 3 – To review the book collection for its currency and relevance in order to optimize shelf space and provide for growth in areas of the collection that need to be enhanced.

- A majority of survey respondents requested more and newer library materials, from a variety of age groups. In order to provide space for the addition of a wide variety of books and DVD's, as well as new options in computer technology, space may need to be reallocated in order to meet these stated patron preferences based upon a plan developed by the RFL director and the County Library.

Goal 4 – To increase the selection of resources and programs specifically for the young adult audience.

- The survey noted a low mention of the materials and programs for the young adult audience. Perhaps this area of service could be enhanced if more materials and services were directed toward this area.

Goal 5 – To review the selection of magazines and other periodicals in the library's collection for use and local relevancy.

- It appears that there is an even distribution of those who like/use the periodical collection, those that don't like/don't use the resources, and a significant group that has no opinion of the materials. A review of the current title selection might enhance magazine and newspaper satisfaction and utilization.

Goal 6 – To increase patron input for the selection of library books, DVD's and other resources.

- One of the highest areas of response was in patron request for more materials. Some patrons actually made requests for specific subject areas or titles of materials. A patron request form could be devised for walk-in clients, and a link created on the RFL's website for those who use the web which would allow patrons to suggest specific titles or areas of interest.

Goal 7 – To increase visibility of the services offered by the Burlington County Library System.

- Although this goal was not specifically stated on any survey, it seemed to fit naturally and strategically as an option for furthering service to our patrons. For example, a link could be made on the RFL website which would hyperlink to County Library's card catalog – that would save a step for any RFL patron to search Riverton's collection, as well as the whole system.

Goal 8 – To increase familiarity and use of the library's computer system, especially for those who have been traditional non-users.

- So many of our older clients cited that they did not use the computers at the library. While it could be that they use their own computer at home, it was significant that those in the youngest age group, who are traditionally more computer-savvy, use the library's computers – although they might have a computer at home, too. It seemed appropriate to suggest that the RFL could assist those users who would like to learn this technology that the library teach or promote those facilities that provide technology training.

Goal 9 – To increase promotion of library programs within the community.

- Patrons in several age groups commented on the need to do further outreach in the community regarding promoting library programming. The RFL could consider such options as further contact with school librarians, flyers, and especially as noted in the survey, using the library's website to promote special programs (e.g. a monthly calendar, sign-up options, etc.).

Goal 10 – To continue to encourage the participation of The Friends of Riverton Free Library and other volunteers.

- The survey yielded more than a dozen people who wish to join the Friends. It would be ideal to incorporate their new enthusiasm into many of the projects that various volunteers now sponsor, such as the book sale and the Cocktail Social or the semi-annually House Tour, as well as other volunteer activities.



Part B – Proposed Programs

Option B – Expand to a Larger Facility: Description of Service

As noted in Option A, above, there is much that can be accomplished should we remain in our current location to improve communication and service outreach to our communities. However, when one reviews the list of items that would most improve the library or where more funds should be spent, many of those requests would require the purchase of more resources and more space in the library to complete research and social activities. Do we have the space where we are now located; some may say, no, there must be a new facility.

Our tenant uses the second floor of the library, so while it is possible to take over that space, it would not be feasible. The second floor would require major renovation in order to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act, making it accessible for all. Even if that were to be accomplished, the inability to house a live-load of books upstairs might make it cost-prohibitive to use the space for anything other than meeting room or staff room space. Using the basement would also create some of the same challenges. Therefore, if the library were to expand, it would require finding another building that could accommodate the weight of the book collection as well as the space to address new or expanded services.

The Association would support the County Library and Director should they endorse a move to a larger facility. Based upon the Association's perception of such a move, certain criteria would need to be addressed.

Based upon stated needs, characteristics of such a building would be:

1. To offer additional display and storage space for a wide variety of resources, for all ages and in all formats.
2. To provide greater public parking.
3. To be readily accessible to our primary communities, Palmyra and Riverton.
4. To create more space for quiet reading.
5. To create more dedicated space for small and large group meetings and presentations.
6. To equip the group meeting rooms with computer presentation hardware and software.
7. To designate a social area that would have snacks and beverages.
8. To provide greater numbers of computers and other technologies for patron use.
9. To provide a private work/storage/staff area for the library staff.

Perceived barriers to this proposal would include:

1. Sentimental attachment to our current library building.
2. The cost to purchase and renovate a building to meet the characteristics as stated, above.
3. The cost of maintaining a larger building.
4. The ability to find a suitable buyer or lessee for our current building that would be in keeping with the residential flavor, zoning limitations of the street.
5. The ongoing cost of additional salaries for the additional staff that would be required to manage the facility.
6. The additional expense of purchasing more library resources, for all ages in all formats.

In short, it is the willingness to move, our ability for find an appropriate facility, and the money to fund the initial renovation and long-term staffing of this option that has multifaceted complications for the Association and the County Library – the two primary sources of funding.

Conclusion

What will the Riverton Free Library look like in the next ten, twenty, or hundred years? Will we remain in our current building? Will the library have the financial resources to move to a larger facility that can accommodate some or all of the stated desires for extended services to our communities? Will the desire or need to move be overwhelmed by the ability to find a facility and the money to fund such a project? We have not been reticent to ask, "How are we doing?" so that we can try to improve, beginning today. What path we take will require the concerted vision and effort of all who have a stake in our library.

What we in the Association know is that, if the library remains an important place where people seek information and is a hub of social interaction, it will continue to be funded and to serve. We are here to support our fine Director/Branch Manager and our partner, the Burlington County Library System to creatively continue to meet the ever-changing information needs of our constituents.

We hope that this Planning Document will spark conversation, debate, and further analysis within our communities and with those professionals who can make these service goals a reality.

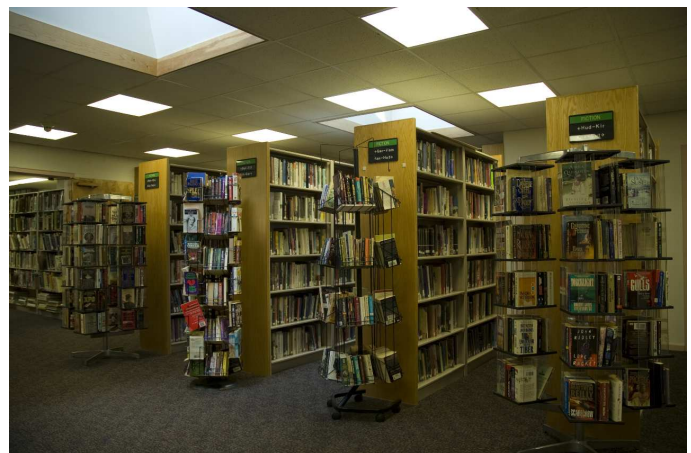
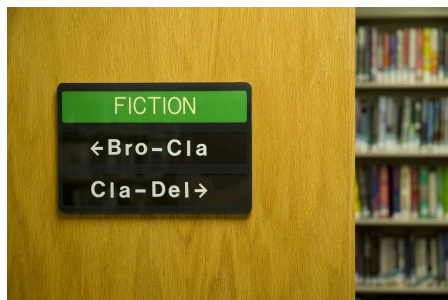
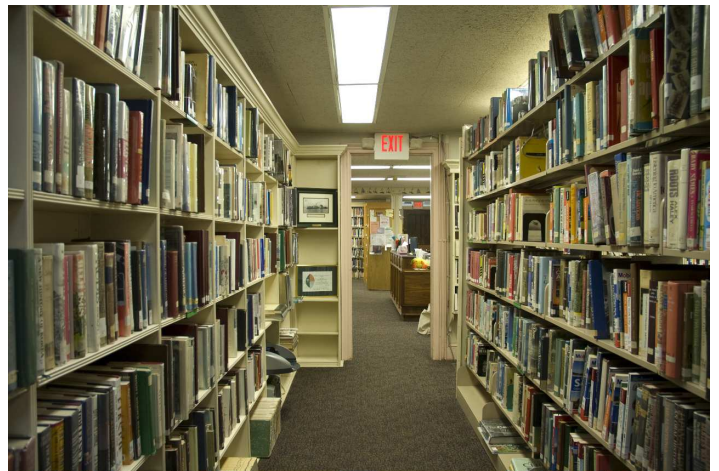


Appendix A

PowerPoint Presentation at Focus Group Meeting

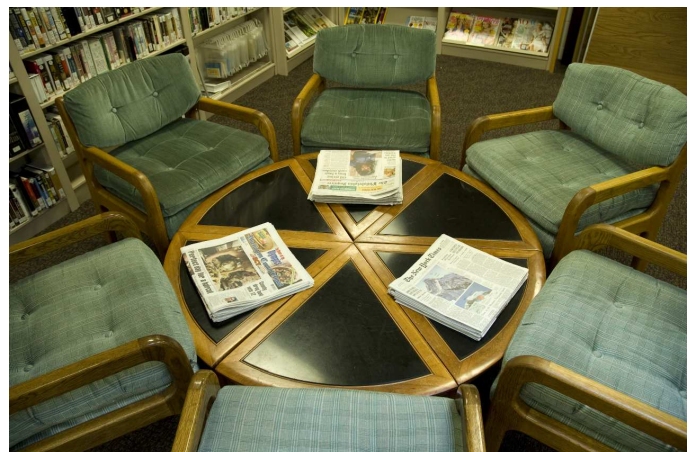
Appendix B Exterior and Interior Photographs





First photo of the previous landscaping and exterior paint color on page 23 was taken by Bennett Landsman, the Riverton Free Library's webmaster.

The new exterior photo as well as the other interior photos were taken by Riverton resident and photographer, Paul Solin.



Appendix C Resource Materials

17. Coale, Edith, et al. History of the Riverton Free Library. Part I 1899-1970. October, 1970.
18. Free Management Library. *Strategic Planning (in nonprofit or for-profit organizations)*. 6/20/2008 <www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm>
19. Hayes, Bob E. Measuring Customer Satisfaction: Survey Design, Use, and Statistical Analysis Methods. 2nd ed. Milwaukee, WI: ASQ Quality, c1998.
20. Lomonacco & Pitts, Architects, P.C. *Revised Feasibility Study for Woodstock Public Library*. pdf. Woodstock Public Library. 6/20/2008. <www.woodstock.org>
21. Nikitina, Arina. Learn How to Make Your Goals SMART: SMART Goal Setting. 6/20/2008 <www.goal-setting-guide.com/smart-goals.html>
22. Riverton Public School. *Riverton Project*. 6/20/2008 <www.riverton.k12.nj.us/rivertonproject/project.html>
23. William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan. *Sarah and Edward Ogden Diaries*. 6/25/2008 <www.clements.unich.edu/Webguides/NP/OgdenSarah.html>