

# GLOUCESTER COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

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## OUR LIBRARY, OUR FUTURE

*Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC)*

*2013*

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## INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Gloucester County Library System **Our Library, Our Future** project was to conduct a strategic planning process that would foster a community-generated vision for the future based on a diversified customer base and building upon the common values, capabilities and desires of those customers, staff and community.

This evaluation report summarizes an electronic community survey conducted by the Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC) in November-December 2012, a staff satisfaction survey conducted in January 2013, and three community/staff focus groups conducted November 13 and December 4, 2012 and January 16, 2013 .

Library customers also were polled through paper surveys placed throughout the library system at each of its branches and through a link provided through the library website to an electronic version. More than 460 community members completed the survey including teens, adults, and senior citizens who not only live in Gloucester County but work in the county.

Focus groups reflected diversity of opinion and positions regarding the current offerings and future of the Gloucester County Library System (GCLS) and articulated some interesting, thought provoking, and in some cases almost unanimous agreement on the current and future direction of GCLS.

This report is a summary of the actual responses as well as interpretations from EIRC consultants and is comprised of six sections:

- I. Executive Summary*
- II. GCLS Overview*
- III. Strategic Planning Process*
- IV. Common Themes from Survey Responses*
- V. Recommendations*
- VI. APPENDIX:*
  - Summary of Community Survey*
  - Summary of Staff Survey*
  - Focus Group Minutes*

This summary report is being presented to the GCLS community and public and will be available to the public at the GCLS website: [www.gcls.org](http://www.gcls.org) or by e-mail from [awodnick@gcls.org](mailto:awodnick@gcls.org). It will be distributed in hard copy at the Gloucester County Library Commissioners' meeting. It is the EIRC intention for this report to foster on-going community dialogue about the future of the Library and to play a role in supporting implementation of recommendations whenever possible.

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EIRC would like to thank Anne Wodnick, GCLS Director, and her staff for their assistance and collaboration with logistics, marketing and facilitation, and the Gloucester County Library Commission for their support of the strategic planning project and the library public; without their passion and commitment this report would not be possible.

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the changing role of libraries, shrinking tax dollars to fund libraries, increased population resulting from recent housing developments, differences in the way services are delivered via technology, and changing needs of customers, the Gloucester County Library System commissioned this study to answer these questions:

- *What is [currently] working well in the Gloucester County Library System?*
- *If we were here together three years from now, what would have needed to happen for you to feel happy about the improvements made in the Gloucester County Library System?*
- *What roadblocks might you have experienced?*
- *What strengths does the Library System have that have enabled success?*
- *What are the priority goal areas identified as a result of community engagement?*
- *What are the action steps that will support accomplishment in these goal areas?*

Overlaying the survey results with the focus group outcomes revealed opportunities to follow-up on community suggestions and recommendations generated by the collective components of the strategic planning process.

### EIRC Interest and Capacity

The Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC) is a public agency specializing in education-related programs and services for parents, schools, communities, nonprofit organizations and privately held businesses throughout New Jersey. EIRC was a long-term member of the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, and is a current member of the consolidated statewide organization which replaced regional cooperatives, LibraryLinkNJ. Our programs also reach into more than 36 states and 8 foreign countries. We have effectively assisted school districts in their strategic planning process and regionalization studies for more than 45 years. Many of our staff live and work in Gloucester County and have a commitment to strengthening and supporting our libraries for the greater good of our community.

### Survey Results

Most respondents felt that the most valuable aspects of the library as it currently exists were:

- Friendly, helpful staff
- Quiet place to study, read, work
- Learning opportunities and entertainment

Most survey respondents agreed that they wanted to see the following happen:

- Technology upgrades/enhancements/continuation
- Glassboro facilities improvement
- More copies of print materials including more current books, movies, e-books and magazines
- More programming (for adults and children)

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The survey respondents were divided in the means to reach these ends -- those who think these results can be achieved through radical or costly changes, and those who suggested cost effective ways to improve upon existing systems.

Throughout this study, the investigators constantly heard how friendly and helpful staff members are, some mentioned by name. It is observed that GCLS has an informed community who would like to continue to participate in the future of the library system, who have valuable input and skills, and who are proud to be your customers.

This report should be seen as a "living document," adjusted as needs change, recommendations are implemented, and new goals arise. We encourage you to be transparent, as you have been throughout the process, by posting updates on the website as you record your progress toward your goals, and that you continue to assess community satisfaction and invite feedback. Your customers are your strongest supporters.



# GLOUCESTER COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

## II. Gloucester County Library System (GCLS) OVERVIEW

Gloucester County Library System (GCLS) is located in Gloucester County, with 24 municipalities in 329 square miles. The total population is 288,288 with a median household income of \$69,990 and a median house value of \$220,400. Gloucester County Library System consists of six branches and one independent association library, providing services to residents of 14 Gloucester County municipalities. More than 102,000 residents may have access to library services offered through libraries in East Greenwich, Glassboro, Greenwich (Gibbstown), Logan, Harrison Township, Newfield, and Swedesboro. More than 60 GCLS staff members, along with association library employees, work throughout the system to provide circulating and reference collections, homebound service, comprehensive children's and reference services, free computer training, and public Internet access. The GCLS web site offers the public access to library service 24 hours a day. These are just some of the many services available to all members.

The Gloucester County Library System is a group of individual and interdependent libraries that cooperate through a central administrative body to provide a wide range of library services for eligible patrons. Sharing resources enables members of the system to provide more cost-effective and technologically sophisticated services than any could provide operating alone.

The GCLS staff is responsible to a seven-member library commission, which is appointed by the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Funds for system services are provided by the member communities through a dedicated library tax. Of the 24 municipalities in Gloucester County, these 14 currently belong:

- Clayton
- E. Greenwich Twp.
- Elk Twp.
- Glassboro
- Greenwich Twp.
- Harrison Twp.
- Logan Twp.
- Mantua Twp.
- National Park
- Newfield
- South Harrison Twp.
- Swedesboro
- Woodbury Hgts.
- Woolwich Twp.

All residents of these communities have free access to the full services of the Gloucester County Library System through libraries located in the following towns:

- East Greenwich Twp.
- Glassboro
- Greenwich Twp.
- Harrison Twp.
- Logan Twp.
- Newfield
- Swedesboro

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Library cards are issued without charge to residents of the 14 participating communities; nonresident owners of property in a member community; not-for-profit organizations within Gloucester County; educators teaching in Gloucester County; county department heads; and those holding elected/appointed positions in county, state, or federal government.

The GCLS “wordle” sums up the library system philosophy and is worn as a badge by many of the library staff:



Gloucester County’s ethnic breakdown is 84.6% Caucasian, 10.5% Black, 5% Hispanic and 0.2 % Native American, far off the mark for the State of NJ statistics of 74.1%, 14.6%, 18.1% and 0.6% respectively. Our community has more residents with high school diplomas, 90% compared to the state average of 87.6%, but fewer with advanced degrees, only 27.4% compared with the states 35.0%. Only 8.8% speak a language other than English in the home, compared with 29.2% for the state.

Per capita money income 2007-2011 was \$32,067 compared to \$35,678 for the state and median household income 2007-2011 was \$74,830, higher than the state’s median of \$71,180. We have fewer people below poverty level, with .3% compared with the state’s 9.4% for 2007-2011.<sup>1</sup>

The researcher was able to find the services listed below on the website. However, the Welcome Handout is more comprehensive and should be posted for download in a very visible location (About Us) on the website (and is appended to this report):

Librarian by Appointment - Library patrons can make an appointment with a professional librarian for an individual session that lasts up to an hour. Sessions can be used for research advice, instruction on internet searching, or help with resumes and job searching. Additional help is provided via online chat, email reference, telephone reference and text/SMS.

Teen Services and Children’s Services - including homework help and Learning Express.



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eBooks, eAudiobooks and music – downloadable and available for a variety of devices including Kindle, Nook, and Sony eReaders, iPads and other tablets, smartphones, and PCs.

Classes and programs – programs and instruction for children (including story time, family fun, music and more); adults (computers, book clubs, ancestry, etc), and everything for tweens from anime to Wii are held on a weekly basis.

Public meeting rooms - with accommodations can be reserved by the public and agencies for public meetings and group programs. (See <http://www.gcls.org/use/meeting-room-policy-and-regulations/meeting-room-reservations#.USY52qU3vCo>)

Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) - a research-based educational program designed to help parents and other caregivers develop early literacy skills in children from birth to age five. Five simple practices—talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing—are used to develop language and pre-reading skills in very young children. Special programs are designed to help parents and caregivers incorporate these five skills into everyday activities.

Jobs and Resource Guide - including career oriented subscription databases and preset searches on career-related resources on careers, employment interviewing, occupations, resumes and vocational guidance.

Reference Services – more than 60 online and in-house databases, Reader’s advisory to students and adults, business information, tax forms, statewide database of the holdings of New Jersey libraries and interlibrary loan.

Salud en Español –comprehensive evidence-based reports and fact sheets in Spanish on all aspects of consumer health and wellness.

1

Statistics taken from the United States Census, updated January 10, 2013 (accessed February 18, 2013 at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/34015.html>) from the County of Gloucester, <http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us/about/demff.asp> and from the American Community Survey at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/34015k.html>

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## III. Strategic Planning Process

### Definition and Plan Elements

The primary elements and terminology of a strategic plan include:

1. **Mission Statement** - The statement of purpose

*The Gloucester County Library System provides access to information, programs, books, and other materials to meet the personal enrichment and lifelong learning needs of the people we serve.*

*We recognize the diversity of our population, are responsive to their needs, and respect their right to privacy. A trained and dedicated staff offers excellent service, state-of-the-art technology and up-to-date collections in a welcoming environment, both in our libraries and throughout the community.*

2. **Vision Statement** - A description of the desired outcomes; the image of success; the vision statement may serve internal and/or external purposes.



The Gloucester County Library System is a leader in the provision of information services. Our expert staff provides:

- Advanced information and technology resources
- The most current formats of materials
- Enriching and entertaining programs at convenient locations and hours

The Gloucester County Library System aspires to countywide awareness of our services and our role in member communities. GCLS libraries are recognized throughout Gloucester County as community hubs that are an essential part of the lives of our customers.

The Gloucester County Library Commission and GCLS leaders and staff should review the Mission Statement and Vision Statement relative to the outcomes of the strategic planning process to determine if adjustment is needed.

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**3. Values Statement** - *The guiding principles of the board and staff for current and future leaders.*

GCLS values statement to be determined by the Gloucester County Library Commission and staff based on strategic plan feedback.

**4. Goals** - *The broad core competencies; pillars of the organization. Three to seven goals support the organization's mission. In a well-written plan, the goals may remain unchanged while the strategies will offer fresh initiatives.*

See consensus goals compiled below. Goals should not only reflect public input, but should be prioritized, expanded upon or condensed based upon expected outcomes. Goal areas identified through the strategic planning process will need to be word-smithed to better capture their meaning.

**Strategies** - *The programs and projects to advance the goals and mission. Strategies will influence the allocation of resources.*

See chart below – **Action Steps**

**5. Tactics, Performance Measures** - *The identification of deadlines, timeframes and other specifics for committees and staff.*

To be established based on Strategic Plan Recommendations, goal statements (below), library team members, and Gloucester County Library Commission oversight. A separate document, the **Strategic Planning Toolbox**, contains some useful templates to help plan and develop your goals, action steps, and implementation and evaluation process.

**6. Plan Champion** – *It is common to assign a person or persons from the public to be involved in implementation and further planning.*

From responses gathered throughout the strategic plan process, it is clear that not only is the Gloucester County Library Commission on board, but several community members have stepped forward to self-identify as advocates for the future of the library, including staff, volunteers and local business members. **This is testimony to the productive work of the GCLS.**

## Focus Group Process and Outcomes

**Strategic Direction:** *The articulation of a desired physical, social, or economic outcome that would normally require action by, or involvement of, more leadership and board (or other entity).*

### Session I: November 13, 2012

#### ***Points of Pride: What Is Working Well In the Gloucester County Library System***

On November 13, 2012, twenty four Gloucester County residents met for the purpose of strategic planning. The purpose of this planning was to seek contributions to efforts of the Gloucester County Library System to engage community members in future thinking improvement needs for the Library System. The November meeting was the first in a series of three community engagement sessions.

During this session, *What is Working Well in the Gloucester County Library System*, participants worked in small groups. Their first task was to think individually about this topic and to record their thoughts. Following this, participants shared their individual thinking, and following discussion, they reached consensus on 3 to 5 points of agreement on what is working well. These consensus points were then presented by the small groups to the full group of meeting participants. Members of the large group then discussed, compared and contrasted the results of thinking across the small groups.

Below are consensus summaries; individual responses can be found in the Appendix.

**Table 1: What is Working Well in the GCLS?**

<b>GROUP 1</b> <b><u>Consensus Contributions</u></b>	<b>GROUP 2</b> <b><u>Consensus Contributions</u></b>	<b>GROUP 3</b> <b><u>Consensus Contributions</u></b>	<b>GROUP 4</b> <b><u>Consensus Contributions</u></b>
Friendly staff County-wide reciprocal borrowing (+ statewide) Services: databases, children's programs, computer classes, LVA etc. Collections Community interactions Third space	Great approachable staff Programs for all ages – Pre-school literacy PAWS for reading Cultural programs Computers/technology/ eBooks Computer availability – (not at Glassboro) Good summer reading programs	The hub of the community Students Family Business Great staff – friendly and educated Technology Business Resources Online tools Research Workshop Lifelong learning opportunities	Inclusive services for all ages Warm and nice environment Maintains relevant and current trends in terms of new technologies for information delivery Very community focused programs, meetings, agendas and philosophy Forward – thinking library management

## Session II: December 4, 2012

### *Looking to the Future*

On Tuesday, December 4, twenty community members and library staff met to participate in Session 2 of strategic planning. After reviewing highlights from the first session, "What's Working Well in the Gloucester County Library System," participants focused on the question:

*If we were here together three years from now, looking back over those three years that have passed, what would have happened in the Gloucester County library System that would make you feel proud of the accomplishments of the Gloucester County Library System?*

Individually, participants recorded their responses to this question. Participants then shared their thinking with other small group members. Participants then, by consensus, identified points they agreed should be brought forward to the full participant group. The summary work the small groups follows.

**Table 2: Consensus Contributions**

<b>GROUP 1</b>	<b>GROUP 2</b>	<b>GROUP 3</b>	<b>GROUP 4</b>
Information Hub (Family/Community) Information Ombudsman – County Clearinghouse  Consistent & Adequate Financial Base to support: programs, services, technology, physical spaces, increased staffing  Establish a Library Foundation to assist in implementing technology projects  Communication/Advocacy/Collaboration	New Glassboro Library "State of the art" meeting rooms  Continued community program and (intergenerational programs) – Workshops, concerts, eLearning  Expansion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)  Volunteers for specific services	Bring back concerts  Expand technology training  Expand programs for older adults (and other adults)  Expand borrowing options  More cooperation with technology/service corporations  Remain current with new technology options	New building in Glassboro upgrades existing buildings  Technologies up to date including adding tablets for use  Partnership with – businesses, schools and other social agencies  Marketing – got research experts and let "them" know who you are  Cultural (multi) programming for all ages

## Session III: January 16, 2013

### *Action Plan -Confirming Our Future*

*“Include the community in the design.”*

Twenty two community members convened for a third session to consider the priority goal areas identified through the work of Session 2. These goal areas include: **Facilities, Technology, Communication, Programs, and Financial Issues.**

Session participants worked in five smaller groups and carousel brainstormed the five goal areas of work. Their challenge was to identify action steps that would support the accomplishment of improvements in the goal areas they have identified. Following this brainstorming activity, the groups identified 3 to 5 action steps they believe would be important to take, but which would not require substantial cost for operating funds or additional human resources.

What follows is a summary of the work accomplished during this third planning session. Each of the five goal areas is identified with reporting of the groups’ low cost top action steps and then listing of all other action step ideas identified during the carousel brainstorming activity.

Each goal area small group reported out to the larger session what were their observations.

***Table 4: Action Plan – Outcomes of Session I-III***

Goal Area	Priority Action Steps			Additional suggestions
	1	2	3	
1. <b>Facilities</b>	New building for Glassboro Theatre type venue (tiered seating) Café to generate revenue	Separate spaces quiet/teen/ children area/meeting rooms	Partnership with businesses, schools and other agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrading shelving fixtures and carpeting (seek in-kind carpet donations)</li> <li>• Additional/satellite branches in areas not currently served</li> <li>• Electronic Outdoor signs at every branch</li> <li>• “Maker Lab” at Mullica Hill Branch – 3D printing, electronics, digital music production</li> <li>• More “Fire sign” systems at branches</li> <li>• Glassboro- Skylights in existing Glassboro library</li> <li>• Cut holes for window</li> <li>• Create inside arboretum with grow lights</li> <li>• Commission murals on outside of building</li> <li>• Creative lightening outside/sculptures</li> <li>• Create a tower for new look</li> </ul>

Goal Area	Priority Action Steps			Additional suggestions
<b>2. Technology</b>	Create committee for assessment and evaluation of current future technologies	Expand tech training and create curriculum for staff and public--cyber safety instructions for seniors. Ipad training for seniors--Parent-child tech cam for safe use of social media.	System –wide self-check-out system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase laptop labs and other devices for training.</li> <li>• Foundation for funding</li> <li>• Smartboards</li> <li>• Tech garage/petting zoo</li> <li>• Self-publishing technology-- Partner up with businesses and schools for the tech interns</li> </ul>
<b>3. Communication</b>	Electronic outdoor signs at every branch	Library column in Chamber of Commerce and other publications and through partnerships with other agencies (e.g. One Stop)	Library website - community information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use user information to provide services</li> <li>• Information on local access channels</li> <li>• Podcasts/video on website – annual state of library address</li> <li>• Library “column” in Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce publication</li> <li>• Expand use of social media – especially with youth</li> <li>• Distribute public relations materials to senior counters/visit centers</li> <li>• Library card for every child</li> <li>• Partnerships – co-announcements</li> <li>• Hire public relations firm or buy time from another agency</li> <li>• Get on committee’s (WIB, NPDC, HGC etc.)</li> <li>• Define the “new library” – change public perception</li> <li>• Café –make it welcoming – make people want to stay</li> <li>• Specific websites with unique URLs e.g. Bizinfo.net or health.net -- promoted by multi-type libraries</li> </ul>
<b>4. Programs</b>	Expand programs – older adults – Expansion of STEM (GCC,GCIT, Rowan) Children – young adults, Cultural (multi) programming for all ages	Kiosk ex. Old telephone booth –talent contest, job fairs – skill specific, real life programs for children e.g. voting booth	Cultural programming for all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book mobile – digital access</li> <li>• Bring back concerts (charge small fee)</li> <li>• Local authors – book signing</li> <li>• Story times using tablets</li> <li>• Partnerships—education community/business community</li> <li>• Book Fair</li> <li>• Community event</li> <li>• Craft fair, technology fair, maker fair</li> <li>• Small business fair</li> <li>• County services fair</li> <li>• “Spoken word” –poetry program</li> </ul>

Goal Area	Priority Action Steps			Additional suggestions
<b>5. Financial Issues</b>	Create a library foundation – time-talent-money	Market services to business community in county –Identify, create, determine needs. Business sponsorship Ads on website for small fee	Tech donations (new) Apple, Amazon, B&N, Verizon, Dell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing the value of the library to your tax base</li> <li>• Grants – systematize pursuit of “Grants” by committees.</li> <li>• Friends of GCLS 501.C3 or partner with existing 501.C3</li> <li>• Open meeting rooms to “for-profit” groups for a fee</li> <li>• Nominal fees for concerts</li> <li>• More book sales for tech support</li> <li>• Used tech equip sales</li> <li>• Pass the hat</li> <li>• Donation project of the year like “adopt a highway”</li> </ul>



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## IV. COMMON THEMES FROM SURVEY RESPONSES



These are by no means all-inclusive but reflect consensus across the focus and survey groups:

- a. The library is a community center, where customers go not only to read, but to learn, get new experiences and socialize.
- b. Atmosphere is important to customers—some branches may need more comfortable seating areas and/or tables.
- c. Customers are looking for the Starbucks/Barnes and Noble experience - coffee and/or snack stands were requested by many respondents.
- d. Availability of a quiet place to study was mentioned in many surveys; others mentioned noise as a distraction.
- e. Programming is important.
- f. It is apparent that not all customers are aware of all current services.
- g. The Glassboro branch should have resources allocated aligned with its usage.
- h. Technology and the library use of technology are important.
- i. Customers find out about events and services from different sources.



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## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

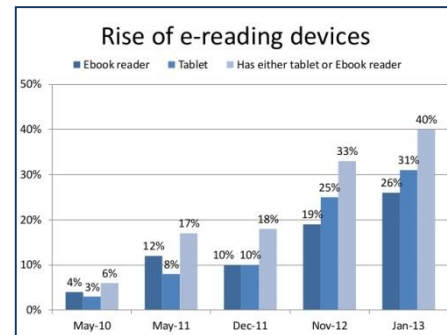
- a. Intersperse quiet/noisy areas. Noise contributes to the sense of the library as a community hub and is indicative of the exciting programs that go on within the library. Parents need to be able to keep an eye on children, but may want to do their own “shopping” for books or quiet reading. Glassed in areas, tables set aside from computers and more clearly defined teen areas may be needed. See research indicated by \* in (k) below.
- b. Investigate ways to provide customers with coffee without setting up a formal snack stand. Set up Keurig machines (with coin slots) or vending machines, have volunteers take care of coffee stations, have honor boxes for snacks or create intergenerational programs where seniors teach no bake cooking to kids. Investigate contracting with local businesses or even DVR/ARC programs to have their staff run a snack stand for a portion of the proceeds. See if the Friends groups are interested in helping out or have suggestions.
- c. Create a sense of airiness and modernity through paints, tapestries, and art exhibits. See if there is an outdoor area you can carve out for a reading nook or picnic area. In older buildings, provide architectural interest by breaking through walls for some strategically placed windows or skylights, use grow lights and lots of plants in other areas. Invite the community in with contests or suggestion boxes for design features. See: [Ten Steps to a Better Library Interior: Tips That Don't Have to Cost a Lot – Library by Design](#).<sup>2</sup>
- d. Several respondents mentioned specific programs. Some requested more programs for kids, more adult classes or art programs. Investigate more free or local programs. For instance, you could have a “battle of the bands”, more family game nights, see if you can participate (or create your own) artist-in-residence program (funded by arts councils or even local historical associations). Some seniors in the focus groups mentioned they would be interested in sharing their skills in intergenerational programs, e.g., teaching knitting, carpentry or science.
- e. Provide more consistent signage, make sure that everyone who wants to receive email is signed up and have staff remember to ask customers if they are on the mailing list. Many respondents reported that they enjoyed finding out about new books, music or movies. Resources like Novelist or Readers Corner should be highlighted.
- f. Along with (e) above, ensure that people are aware of services such as Library Elf and Text Messaging Alerts. Perhaps, take a page from fast food “upselling” (“do you want fries with that?”), reference librarians can ask customers if they are on the mailing list/aware of text reminders, etc. at checkout.
- g. Some respondents were concerned about being able to use the catalog, services for people with disabilities. Make sure there is a way that people are made aware of services for the homebound and the Outspoken Library.
- h. The Glassboro branch is in a prime downtown location and it is possible that moving it to a location outside of downtown could backfire by changing proximity for customers who use it

*“Start with the people – bricks and mortar do not make a library.”*

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most. Explore ways to partner with Rowan University to create a facility that is accessible, well lit and safe, and could be a resource to both the community and the college.

- i. Along with technology comes a learning curve. While some staff will take ownership of new technologies, others will need to learn and be comfortable for themselves, as well as to guide customers. Professional development for technology is a must. Encourage staff to enroll in classes such as the free Lynda.com courses offered by LibraryLinkNJ.
- j. Continue to expand your eBook offerings. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project 23% of Americans ages 16 and older read an e-book in the past year, up from 16% the year before. The share who read a print book declined to 67%, from 72% (posted December 27, 2012).
- k. Additional findings from Pew are aligned with survey responses from GCLS customers and suggest print collections, friendly, knowledgeable staff, and computer access are still valued services the Library provides:



*The availability of free computers and internet access now rivals book lending and reference expertise as a vital service of libraries. In a national survey of Americans ages 16 and older:*

- 80% of Americans say borrowing books is a “very important” service libraries provide.
- 80% say reference librarians are a “very important” service of libraries.
- 77% say free access to computers and the internet is a “very important” service of libraries

Majorities of Americans (and library staff) are strongly in favor of:

- *Coordinating more closely with local schools: 85% of Americans ages 16 and older say libraries should “definitely” do this.*
- *Offering free literacy programs to help young children: 82% of Americans ages 16 and older say libraries should “definitely do” this.*
- *Having more comfortable spaces for reading, working, and relaxing: 59% of Americans ages 16 and older say libraries should “definitely do” this.\**
- *Offering a broader selection of e-books: 53% of Americans ages 16 and older say libraries should “definitely do” this.*

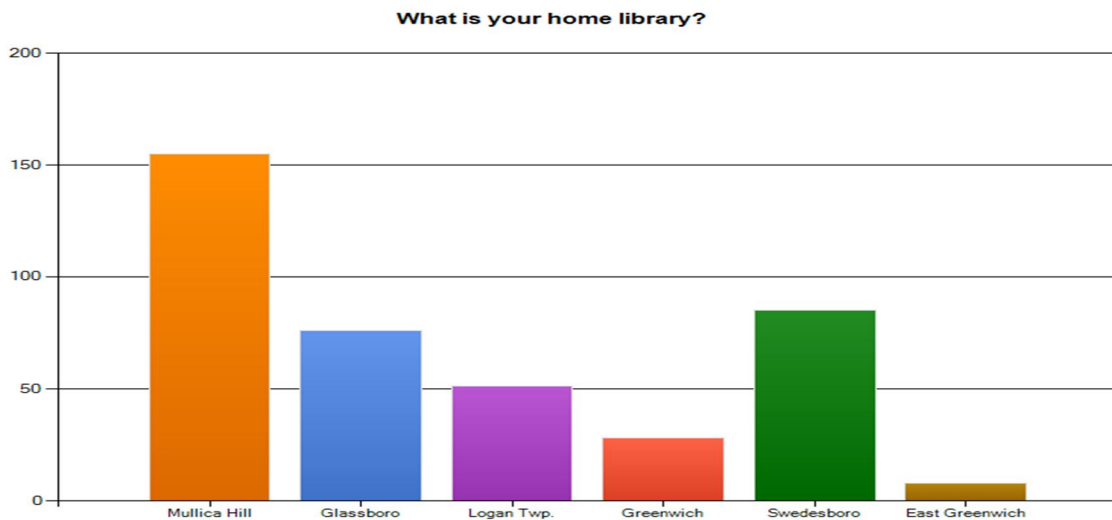
2. Lesneski, Traci, Ten Steps to a Better Library Interior: Tips That Don't Have to Cost a Lot – Library by Design. Library Journal, September 20, 2011 [http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/community/buildingandfacilities/891646-266/10\\_steps\\_to\\_a\\_better.html.cs](http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/community/buildingandfacilities/891646-266/10_steps_to_a_better.html.cs)

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

#### Community Survey Responses

Customers were asked to take a brief survey, either online via a Survey Monkey link from the GCLS website, or at their home library via a paper copy of the survey, in order to assist with the needs assessment portion of the strategic plans. Below is a summary of all responses in respondents own words)



The majority (38% of respondents) were from the Mullica Hill branch, followed by 18.9 % from Glassboro, 12.7% from Logan Twp., 6.9% from Greenwich, 21.1% from Swedesboro and 2.0% from East Greenwich. Remaining respondents indicated non-GCLS or out of area libraries as the home library.

2. My favorite thing about the library is	427 answered 9 skipped	Percentage of recorded responses
Book availability	101	23.7%
Staff (friendly, helpful, etc.)	99	23.2%
Environment (cleanliness, hours, quiet, calm)	66	15.5%
Computers (copying, internet, faxing, etc)	63	14.8%
Various resources (may include all or some of above)	43	10.1%
Children's books/programming	37	8.7%
Proximity	36	8.4%
DVD/Movies	36	8.4%
Programs (music, writing, etc- may be overlap with children's)	29	6.8%

<b>2. My favorite thing about the library is</b>	<b>427 answered 9 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Teen room (anime, lock-in)	8	1.9%
Online requests/holds/self checkout	8	1.9%
Snacks (with programming?)	4	0.9%
Audio Books	3	0.7%
Book sales (and table)	3	0.7%
Newspapers/magazines	3	0.7%
Job resources	3	0.7%
Cost savings	3	0.7%
eBooks	2	0.5%

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 2 – My favorite thing about the library is:**

225. It is free, it is everywhere, it is inclusive.

424. it's not just a library, it's a community center with programs for kids, seniors, job seekers, everyone!

<b>3. The library helps me to</b>	<b>413 answered 23 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Work/do research/study/think	146	35.4%
Learn or help a child learn	49	11.9%
Save time	3	0.7%
Save money	28	6.8%
Use Technology	44	10.7%
Obtain movies/DVDs	21	5.1%
Find out about new things	14	3.4%
With work/job search	22	5.3%
Read magazines/newspapers	14	3.4%
Entertain myself/my children	58	14.0%
Relax	28	6.8%
"in so many ways"	2	0.5%

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 3 – The library helps me to:**

108. Find new authors to obsess over.

122. Keep my sanity by offering a quiet haven where all the current newspapers, magazines and books are right at my fingertips.

261. [The library helps me to] connect with the world through its internet.

<b>4. I would like to see the library include more</b>	<b>353 answered 83 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Current books/DVDs/Movies/Games (and topics – manga, anime, audio, travel, foreign, blue-ray, gay/lesbian) *	62	17.6%
Computers and laptops	20	5.7%
Children's Programming (other than storytime – evening programs, games, yoga, world lit classics, cartoons, music, afterschool and evening, toys)	19	5.4%
Quiet study areas (cell phone free zones)	17	4.8%
Adult Programming (music, Shakespeare)	16	4.5%
Family fun/social events/clubs	12	3.4%
Kindle/eBooks	11	3.1%
Computer Programming (on Facebook, advanced topics and for toddlers)	10	2.8%
Music (concerts)	10	2.8%
Teen and pre-teen programming	8	2.3%
Hours	7	2.0%
Snacks/coffee bar	6	1.7%
Place to eat/tables	4	1.1%
Book clubs	4	1.1%
Young adult books inc. topics for boys	4	1.1%
Displays – bookstore style	2	0.6%

\* Librarian should note suggestions and book requests – alert customers that there is interlibrary loan service and book, services, etc. suggestion forms available at the library.

<b>5. If I could design the perfect library, I would</b>	<b>320 answered 116 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Change nothing	62	19.4%
Separate toddler area (sound proof, glass viewing area, add a stage)	36	11.3%
Provide comfortable chairs (lamps, reading area, media center, cubicles, tables)	34	10.6%
Add a coffee shop	29	9.1%
Ambiance (fresh paint – more colors, light, windows, fireplace, decorations, balcony, additional floor.)	25	7.8%
More technology (computers, bigger area, more printers, labeler, separate area, tablets, bigger screens, touch screens for kids, more iPads, less macs, more software, download area for eBooks)	19	5.9%

<b>Cont'd. 5. If I could design the perfect library, I would</b>	<b>320 answered 116 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Teen oriented (creatively painted, playstation, place to talk, webcams, vending machines, soda machine, anime, videogames, slushy machine)	19	5.9%
More music and movies	11	3.4%
Add more best sellers/variety	8	2.5%
Special services (mailed books, all eBook, no fines, longer loan time, nooks/kindles on loan to people with disabilities)	8	2.5%
More hours	7	2.2%
Programs (book-club/discussion groups)	6	1.9%
State of the art meeting room	4	1.3%
Games	2	0.6%

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 5 – If I could design the perfect library, I would:**

29. Have a method for the disabled and those who cannot read to have books sent to them. Also consider if there is a method that such people could be hooked up with digital note books that people are no longer using and connect them to library resources.

84. Include the community in its design.

92. Offer more guest speakers or have a series of lectures or invite authors to come and speak. E.g., CCCollege just offered a free Civil War lecture series – there was hardly an empty seat.

169. Begin with a blank slate or rethink the whole idea of public libraries as if there had never been any.

172. Make it reflect the Columbus Metropolitan Library in Columbus, OH. I was a student out there and visited their main branch frequently. I loved that library because it had completely separate sections and floors for their non-fiction, fiction, children's and multimedia areas. It had large lounges and desks to read and do research throughout the library, computer access in each department, copiers, self-check-out areas, and a café. It also had a used book store and I could borrow materials anywhere in the county. It was about the size of Rowan University's library but for public use. Also, I would highlight the children's area and make it a Mecca for a child to get excited about? The children's area would have cool seating throughout, bright colors, interactive toys and games, music areas, computer areas, storytelling areas, low shelving that was accessible to small children, and feel spread out.

174. Get Glassboro the new library they were meant to have.

241. Start with the people – bricks and mortar do not make a library.

254. Give it many windows and a beautiful view. I will admit to traveling to PA libraries to find this. The darkness of the Glassboro Library keeps me out of it most days. I often travel to Mullica Hill to find a

window. Libraries need to go high tech. They need computers. They need tablets too. My sister works in a Library in the Chicago area that has its own media center. You can make your own movies there. You can digitize old pictures and slides. If you need a book, you can call and they will buy it for the system if it isn't already there. They are able to get many copies of the latest movies and best sellers. I would like to have access to such a place. Libraries need to have more classes about the latest movements in technology. I tried to attend a computer class a few times, but the class was always filled. Now people need info about the tablets that are out. And I think the library needs to supply them – at least within the building. Kids need to know how to use them, especially kids whose families cannot buy them at this time Apps are not just games. There is a world of information held within them. Everyone should be able to access this information.

<b>6. I would use the library more if</b>	323 answered 113 skipped	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
I could (less work, less school, more time)	65	20.1%
I already use it as much as I can!	60	18.6%
There were better hours (open earlier, more weekend hours)	42	13.0%
Atmosphere (quiet, coffee, playground, outside space)	38	11.8%
There were more programs (adult and teen)	28	8.7%
The library was closer	16	5.0%
There were more up to date books (music, movies)	15	4.6%
There were more computers, laptops, time on computers, scanners, Macs)	13	4.0%
Other requests (longer renewal times, no fines on returns, mobile services, kindle books, eBooks for iPad, better access to event calendar)	13	4.0%

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 6 – I would use the library more if:**

49. [I would use the library more if] the online system [was] a little more user friendly. It is extremely tedious to have to reenter my card number with EVERY title I want to request. Also very frustrating to not be able to renew books online once they are overdue. There is a way around this...I know other county libraries in the state are not so frustrating when it comes to the online component.

173. [I would use the library more if] it was in a more desirable point of town and bigger. Unfortunately where the Glassboro Branch is located, I do not feel safe and it's out of the way of the rest of my outings, which are further up on Delsea Drive near the shopping centers. Also, more interesting adult classes and events might bring me out more.

260. [I would use the library more if] there were more well lit and comfortable places to sit. (One library in PA has its own fireplace) I would like more food options. The vending machines never give me a



reason to stay near lunch time. I wish there were more “discussion” programs – about books, interesting topics that are in the news at the moment. I wish there were more author visits – for adults and children. I also wish the access in and out of the parking lot was better at the Glassboro branch. If one doesn’t slow down one scrapes the bottom of the car. This angers me every time it happens.

281. I’m at this library mostly every day. It’s a family friendly environment with warm and inviting [staff?] which makes me bring my family here every day.

<b>7. Impact of closure: If the library (the one you use) were to close tomorrow, I would</b>	<b>399 answered 37 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Be upset (cry, be sad, be devastated, be miserable, be depressed or panic)	149	37.3%
Watch TV/Listen to music	60	15.0%
Find another library	60	15.0%
Find it a hardship (no place for homework, or on disability, or cost)	47	11.8%
Advocate/complain/protest	32	8.0%
Wouldn’t know what to do (be bored, be lost, read more at home, not read)	30	7.5%
Buy books	14	3.5%
Use the internet more or read eBooks	7	1.8%

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 7 – If the library were to close tomorrow, I would:**

28. Be absolutely devastated. I have been an avid reader all my life and could never afford to buy all the books I’ve read through the library. Good libraries are essential in a democracy.

38. Be very sad. The neighborhood needs the library. Our schools alone do not have the human or tangible resources to help our children achieve academic success. The librarians at my library have been extremely valuable to us – especially since my son attended a small private school with no library from 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

342. [I would] have no access to job postings, community events, my email accounts to correspond with friends, family, and colleagues and clients across the country, coupon downloads which help me save money on essential living items, great books published years or even decades ago, my favorite periodicals and our community would lose the opportunity to interact with the experienced and helpful staff here at our Glassboro Library. They truly make our day at a time when there [are] so many unpleasant things happening around the globe.

346. I would be disappointed. This is the only place in town that’s open six days a week with free activities, computers and books which [allows] family to enjoy a safe environment.

<b>8. How do you get news about the library? Select your top 3 (below in addition to provided responses)</b>	<b>366 answered 70 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
In person (flyers, bulletin board)	39	10.7%
Family/Friends	9	2.5%
I don't receive any information	4	1.1%
Local paper	3	0.8%
Online	1	0.3%

<b>9. Do you have any other comments for us?</b>	<b>240 answered 196 skipped</b>
Several mentioned staff by name	
Noise was mentioned throughout the survey	

**Select Narrative Responses – Question 9 – Do you have any other comments for us?**

19. As I look around tonight I am completing the survey. There are patrons of all ages. Just about all the computers are being used – not everyone can afford a computer at home. Great place for students to be tutored. I love the PAWS program. I frequently attend the free events which are always awesome. Not everyone can afford a yoga or Zumba class themselves. The Tween programs make me wish I was a tween.

33. I am staying with my parents because of the hurricane. I have no electric at home. Nice to come “home” and be able to use the library, not the library I remember from 40 years ago. Thank You.

70. This is a vital public service. You have a warehouse of knowledge and entertainment. If local saloons were as busy as this library the township would have to hire 20 more cops. In here I have access to a thousand great minds. This is the best return on tax dollars. God bless them.

116. The continued presence of the Department of Corrections workers during story time program is a major concern for myself and other parents. They are only supervised by the guard and the last time, there were 10 prisoners and one guard.

125. I have never had a home library so fully utilized. Because Glassboro has such a diverse economic profile, there are clearly people for whom it serves as a tech center as well as a library. The older people come to read the periodicals. I find it shameful that the big new library is located in Mullica Hill, a far more affluent community, rather than in Glassboro.

213. This library [Glassboro] is a safe haven for a lot of people. If the library were to close it would do an injustice to the people of Glassboro.

## Staff Survey Responses

GCLS staff members at all branches were asked to respond anonymously to the online survey.

1. What part of your job gives you the most satisfaction?	40 answered 1 skipped	Percentage of recorded responses
Customers (happy, helping)	25	62.5%
Interaction with customers	5	12.5%
Working with children/teens	4	10.0%
Clerical work	3	7.5%
Autonomy	2	5.0%
Variety	1	2.5%
Programs	1	2.5%

2. What part of your job is the most frustrating?	40 answered 1 skipped	Percentage of recorded responses
Untrained staff, lack of collaboration, communication	15	37.5%
Impatient/rude customers	7	17.5%
Not enough time/interruptions	6	15.0%
Computers/tech glitches/training customers	5	12.5%
Funding	5	12.5%
Disorganization/lack of resources	3	7.5%
Teens	3	7.5%
No frustrations	1	2.5%

3. What changes would you make to eliminate that frustration?	39 answered 2 skipped
Alternate duties Hire library pages More staff training on handling disruptive teens adults (5) Longer deadlines/realistic timelines (2) More volunteers, More staff Less meetings/shorter meeting time More communication beyond the morning meeting and evening, part time, weekend and volunteer staff	

4. In your experience, what do customers like best about the library?	40 responded 1 skipped	Percentage of recorded responses
The staff	20	50.0%
Computers	8	20.0%
Great customer service	7	17.5%
Other programs	6	15.0%

<b>4. In your experience, what do customers like best about the library?</b>	<b>40 responded 1 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
DVDs	4	10.0%
Book holds	4	10.0%
Children's programming	4	10.0%
Atmosphere	3	7.5%
Interlibrary loan	2	5.0%
Meeting rooms	1	2.5%

<b>5. What is the most common complaint you hear from customers?</b>	<b>41 answered 0 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Mistakes in check-in/returns/renewals	13	31.7%
Slow computers, more help assistance needed	6	14.6%
Noise	5	12.2%
Lack of current books/DVDs/movies	5	12.2%
Need more hours	4	9.8%
Hold/wait times too long	3	7.3%
Would like to use debit card to pay fines	3	7.3%
Lack of space/meeting space	2	4.9%

<b>6. With regard to library services, what do customers ask about most often?</b>	<b>38 responses 3 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
DVDs	9	23.7%
Computer questions	9	23.7%
New books	8	21.1%
Assistance (with forms, copies, catalog, finding items)	8	21.1%
Notary	3	7.9%
Meeting Rooms	2	5.3%
eBooks	1	2.6%
Holds	1	2.6%
Hours	1	2.6%
Library card cost	1	2.6%
Children's/adult programs	3	7.9%
Job openings	1	2.6%

<b>7. What do you suggest to help the library operate more efficiently?</b>	<b>36 answered 5 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Technology and tech training for staff	9	25.0%
Up to date technology	4	11.1%
More staff	3	8.3%
Site based monthly meetings	2	5.6%
More signage	2	5.6%

<b>7. What do you suggest to help the library operate more efficiently?</b>	<b>36 answered 5 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Staff task list	1	2.8%
Hire pages	1	2.8%
More hours	1	2.8%

<b>8. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the library or your employment with the library?</b>	<b>34 answered 7 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Love/enjoy working here	21	61.8%
More staff development	2	5.9%
Hire younger staff	1	2.9%
More flex time	1	2.9%
Build a bigger library	1	2.9%

<b>9. Three years from today, if you were to look back, what would have needed to happen for you to feel happy about the improvements made at GCLS? What would you be proud of?</b>	<b>32 answered 9 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
A new Glassboro library	3	9.4%
More services (classes, programming)	3	9.4%
More and up-to-date technology	3	9.4%
Touching lives	2	6.3%
More staff	2	6.3%
Increased usage	1	3.1%
Customer involvement	1	3.1%
Staff training	1	3.1%
Teens matter	1	3.1%

<b>10. Is there anything else you would like to say about the library, or what it's like to work at the library?</b>	<b>29 answered 12 skipped</b>	<b>Percentage of recorded responses</b>
Love it!	19	65.5%

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## APPENDIX B

### GCLS Welcome Handout