

THE HOTCHKISS LIBRARY OF SHARON

LONG RANGE PLAN

Plan originally dated 25 December, 2005

Updated as of July, 2008 and

Approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting on 26 July, 2008

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Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This Long Range Plan was originally put together in late 2005. However the passage of time has made much of the plan obsolete since a lot has already been accomplished. For example, the Library has joined Bibliomation, it has gone through an extensive weeding program, which still continues, reducing its collection by over one-third, it has installed Wi-Fi capability with high speed internet access, it has purchased more computers, it has made the basement a space that is usable for staff and book sale preparation, a major source of fund-raising, etc.

Many of the recommendations made in 2005, however, are still valid, as follows:

- The key recommendation is to initiate plans for an expansion to the building to provide needed space for current and future activities.
- Closely related is to have a Capital Funds Drive to provide funds for construction and to bring the Trust Fund up to \$ 2.0 million.
- Expand the number and scope of programs offered to enhance community participation in the resources available at the Library and better to fulfill its Mission Statement.
- Maintain the current hours of operation and the level of staffing both of which have been well received by the Library patrons.
- Bring the annual operating income level up to \$ 200,000 (especially after the expansion) to meet current and expected operating costs including the Bibliomation System as well as anticipated increases in the collection and increased activities as more space becomes available.

This Plan is the result of many hours of work and contributions from a diverse group of people in Sharon, including the staff and board members, as well as experienced library consultants.

BACKGROUND

The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon and the Community It Serves

The Hotchkiss Memorial Library was erected in 1892-93 at the direction of Maria Bissell Hotchkiss in memory of her husband, Benjamin Berkeley Hotchkiss of Sharon. In accordance with her wishes the Hotchkiss Library Association was formed in July, 1893 to keep and maintain the “land, building, books and personal property therein.”

On April 10, 1979 the Library became a “not-for profit, non-stock corporation” known as The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon, Inc. The Library is currently governed by a Board of Directors comprising, according to its By-laws, from 9 to 15 members.

It is a fitting testimony to the original design of the Library that it has served the Town of Sharon and neighboring communities for 115 years without a single significant modification to the building. The structure which is certainly among the oldest, and may well be the oldest, open stack libraries constructed in Connecticut, is situated in the Historic District of Sharon. Its unique Romanesque Revival design built of local limestone and the rich interior featuring extensive solid oak paneling are rich treasures which the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon is dedicated to maintain.

The Town of Sharon currently has a population of approximately 3,000. In addition to this population, the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon serves residents of neighboring communities in Connecticut and New York as well as a significant number of weekenders primarily from New York City. It is estimated that the total population served is 3,250. The population of the area has been very stable (an increase of 60 during the past decade) and is forecast to remain stable. The population is somewhat older than average for the region with a median age of 45 with 21% over the age of 65. School population has also been, and is expected to remain, stable at 360-370.

The Library is staffed by a full time Library Director, a Children’s Librarian who works 20 hours per week and four regular part time employees. The Library is open six days a week for a total of 41 hours. The library is open from 10 AM until 5 PM except for Tuesdays when it is open from noon until 8 PM and Saturday when it closes at 4 PM.

The Library, in accordance with its original 2005 Plan, has installed the Bibliomation system and so has available to it very detailed usage statistics and can provide its patrons with all the benefits of being able to order books on line from home.

The Operating Budget for the Library is currently \$ 178,000.

The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon receives annual financial support from three principal sources. Currently direct support from the Town of Sharon is \$ 40,000, which was increased to \$50,000 for the fiscal year 2008/09. Income from the Annual Fund Raising Drive and Special Events, principally the Annual Book Signing and Book Sale totals \$ 55,000. The Library has a Trust Fund and distributions from this fund produce approximately \$45,000. All of this still results in a deficit and the Library is planning and carrying out additional fund-raising event, which often are “one of” events.

The collection included a total of over 22,000 items, which has since been weeded down to approximately 14,000 items. Since space is severely restricted it is planned to make some further reductions in the materials that do not circulate. Circulation for the last fiscal year, July 2006 - June 2007 was a total of 17,219 units. There has been a major shift in the types of lending materials requested by patrons. The circulation of audio and video materials has doubled over the past 5 years and now represents about 1/3 of the total circulation.

Principal Library activities included active children's and school age programs which attracted 735 participants and adult programs which attracted 285. Additionally the Annual Book Signing and Book Sale event held the first weekend in August each year has grown significantly and serves outreach, entertainment and fund raising purposes. Almost 280 people, mostly local, participated in this event last year, with many more attending the Book Sale.

A survey was sent to patrons requesting their input concerning the operation of the Library and asking their advice on how the Library could best serve their needs. Response to this survey was very good with the following comments dominating:

Comments have been very complimentary regarding the staff and operation of the Library.

A very high percentage of respondents felt that the collection needed to be increased with strong emphasis on adding more audio and video materials.

A majority of respondents asked for more activities, particularly adult programs.

There were a few negative comments and these were directed at space limitations, excess noise near the reading room and a lack of suitable meeting facilities.

Mission Statement and Activities

The Library will remain alert to the needs of the community and the diversity of its people and to changes in the use of libraries and their resources, so that the town of Sharon may possess the finest library that it can support.

This will include the following:

It should be the social, cultural and technological center of Sharon.

A free lending library offering a collection of current and classical literature, periodicals, video and audio materials, and electronic resources, all conveniently and quickly accessible.

Strong emphasis on children's programs including preschool and summer reading activities.

Access to the statewide interlibrary lending program for materials not in the Library's collection.

Large print books and audio books.

Basic reference materials and a significant collection of local genealogical and historical books and documents.

An expanding series of programs for adults including lectures, the annual book signing and book sale and small group sessions including evenings with authors and discussion groups.

High speed computer access to the Internet for its patrons.

It is the goal of the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon to respond to the needs of the community, from toddlers to retirees, and to seek advice from its patrons regarding their interests and expectations.

The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon Compared to Other Libraries in the Region and to State Averages

Summarized below are selected statistics from Connecticut's Public Libraries: A Statistical Profile - July 2006 - June 2007. These are the most current available data.

Town	Sharon	Salisbury	Kent	Norfolk	Goshen	Canaan	State Averages
Circulation:							
Total/capita	5.60	18.80	8.20	22.00	12.70	11.40	8.70
Video %	21	34	19	30	32	16	23
Audio	14	8	6	8	3	5	7
Programs:							
Number/year	101	165	342	216	152	139	389
Attendance/ Capita	0.43	1.22	1.20	4.66	0.32	3.32	0.49
Collections:							
Total print	12,463	31,663	26,260	38,438	29,033	27,176	73,674
Audio	937	3,224	468	1,554	410	481	3,972
Video	377	2,635	1,262	1,694	1,550	1,028	4,757
Operating cost:							
Total	174,972	409,389	255,296	374,589	125,160	116,690	891,694
per capita	57.22	101.16	85.96	223.24	39.68	105.79	42.37

Although these statistics are a year old and no doubt changes have occurred since then several observations stand out. Compared to other libraries in the Region, the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon has a more limited collection, particularly in video materials and a much more limited level of programs and activities. These lead to a lower level of circulation and a more limited participation by the community in the Library and its resources. At least in part this appears to be due to the limited space available and the lack of meeting facilities at the Library. Using the State of Connecticut guidelines, a library with the service population of the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon should have at least 7,000 square feet available to provide adequate space for the collection of lending and reference materials, children's library, Internet services, facilities for programs and for necessary staff and administrative activities. Space availability in the existing building on the ground floor, second floor and mezzanine total under 3,600 square feet with an additional 1,160 available in the finished area of the basement. However, only about

2,000 square feet of space located on the main level is really useable and this too is very cramped, since it includes the checkout area and the “librarian’s office.” It is also of interest to note that, of the 183 libraries in the State of Connecticut, the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon is one of the very few that do not provide wheelchair access to the library.

THE LONG RANGE PLAN

ACTIVITIES

Goal: Implement a plan for an expanded program of activities with particular emphasis on programs for adults and a comprehensive program for children.

The following specific programs and activities are to be included:

Creative and innovative programs for children

Each year should include a spring and a fall lecture with a literary tie-in.

Art work should be displayed on a continuing basis throughout the year changing shows each two months. A price list will be available at the Circulation Desk. Opening receptions are not necessary but the shows should be publicized in the Newsletter and in local newspapers.

The month of April is to be dedicated to poetry with local poets gathering to read from their works.

April or May - Book discussion with a paid scholar.

May - Memorial Day light reading book sale featuring novels, mysteries, children's books, gardening and cook books.

June - July - Children's Summer Reading program.

August- Book Signing Benefit followed by the Annual Book Sale on the first weekend of the month.

September - May - Weekly children's program.

Other non-literary programs should be provided, such as lectures on investing, finances, art, tapestries, carpets, etc.

FACILITIES--EXISTING

The existing facilities should be restored to their former status, with the removal of all extraneous post-1893 additions and re-installation of the old light wells and lighting fixtures to recreate the library as it was originally designed. In addition modern lighting should be installed so that materials can easily be read and the facility can meet today's standards.

The existing library, after the completion of the addition detailed below should remain as a functioning part of the overall library and provide reading rooms, display areas and an area where gatherings can be held.

The main floor of the existing space should be made totally accessible for handicapped people. It will not be possible to make the second floor gallery area wheelchair accessible without significantly modifying the interior and destroying its original Brice Price design.

FACILITIES - BUILDING ADDITION

Goal: Construct an expansion of the existing building to provide needed space for library operations, a children's area and expected changes in the needs of patrons. It is also the goal to provide space for proposed expansion of programs and activities, and meet ADA requirements including wheelchair access to the building.

Building Expansion:

This is the major and most important part of the Long Range Plan. Principal elements of the expansion will include increased space for the Children's Library, increased stack facilities to enable the Library to expand the collection and meet the stated needs of its patrons, adequate facilities for computer and Internet equipment and to bring the building into compliance with ADA including a rest room and wheelchair access. Due to the fact that only the main floor in the existing library is accessible for all patrons, an addition of at least 5,000 square feet will be required.

Essential to the plan is to maintain the integrity of the architectural design, both the exterior, as required by the fact that the building is located in the Sharon Historic District, and the interior of the existing building. The expansion will attach to the existing building on the rear so as not to impede the vista from the main road or the north and south side. In fact it should be the goal to provide the minimal intrusion possible to connect the expansion to the existing building.

Specific goals and justification for the expansion:

Children's Library:

Current facilities: The children's library is currently located in one of the original reading rooms of the Library. It has 277 square feet of space and its capacity is limited to 12 to 18 and its location is in close proximity to the reading room and the rest of the main level. Due to its limited capacity and location, children's programs must be scheduled during hours when the Library is not open to the public.

With expansion the size and location of the Children's Library would be significantly improved to State standards and its location should be well removed from reading rooms so that children's programs can be conducted during normal library hours.

Internet:

Current facilities: Two Internet stations are located between book stacks which, while serviceable, limit access to the nearby stacks. There is essentially no space for expansion of Internet and/or computer stations.

With expansion: A separate space is to be provided for Internet stations. There should be room for a minimum of four stations as well as other office equipment such as the copy machine which is currently located at the main entry and next to the reading room with the result that people coming into the library interfere with people making copies.

The highest speed possible for internet connections should be provided and the wi-fi capabilities that already exist should cover the entire building.

Public Reading Rooms:

Current facilities: There is one reading room with 277 square feet of space and seating for about 10 to 12 people.

With Expansion:

By relocating the Children's Library to the new addition to the Library, the reading room space on the main floor will be doubled with the return of the second of the original reading rooms to its intended purpose. In addition the fireplace that is currently covered with a bookshelf will be reopened.

The corresponding rooms on the second floor will become available as reading or meeting rooms as all the material stored therein will be moved to the new children's area or into other parts of the library. These rooms are exactly the same size as the two reading rooms on the ground floor.

Rest Rooms:

Current facility: Currently there is one small toilet and sink for staff only.

With expansion: A public rest room(s) meeting ADA requirements will be installed. The existing rest room(s) will continue to be available to staff.

Kitchenette Facility:

The addition should include a small kitchenette facility both for the staff to use as well as to warm up food for events such as the annual book signing or after readings at the library.

Shelf Space and Storage:

Current facilities: Shelf space is severely limited, particularly for audio books and video materials. The latter two are located on six different small stacks extending to the floor. There is only one small closet for storage on the main floor which also serves as the book return receptacle. It is not fireproof

With expansion: The expanded building will allow for better organization of lending materials with particular emphasis on audio books and videos which now account for one third of the circulation and which are very much in demand. The

Library Director estimates that this part of the collection should double in the next two years. The addition will provide in excess of 600 linear feet of stack space, with only five shelves per stack so that books are not placed at floor level. The new stacks should be placed 60” on center to allow for ease of wheelchair access. The expanded building will provide storage closets in strategic locations. A fire proof book return facility accessible to the public will be provided.

Library Director’s Office:

Currently the Library Director’s office consists of a roll top desk and file cabinet located at the rear of the Library. It does not provide privacy or adequate space for necessary files and reference materials. It is supplemented by a desk and file cabinet located on the second floor of the building.

Proposed facilities: An office conveniently located to provide privacy while being close to the center of activities in the Library will be provided. It will be adequate in size to meet the needs of the Director including desk, computer equipment and necessary files and storage space.

Rooms for events and activities:

Currently the Library can host small groups for lectures on the main floor of the existing library, but must hold such events outside of the normal library hours. No facilities are available for audio/visual presentations.

With expansion: In addition to the Reading Rooms for small groups, the removal of all newly placed material, such as shelves and desks on the main floor will allow for groups of 40 to 60 or possibly even more, depending on the requirements of the fire code. Also, there will not be a need to close the library for events as it will be designed so that the main floor can be closed off from the addition, if so required.

ADA Compliance:

Current facilities: The current facilities are not wheelchair accessible and, because of the crowded areas around the book stacks, access for handicapped persons to the collection is compromised. The Library does provide service for patrons who cannot come into the Library by arranging for the delivery of lending materials to their homes and does maintain a significant collection of large print books and audio books for the sight impaired.

With expansion: The new addition will include a ramped entrance meeting ADA requirements for wheelchair access. The new rest room(s) will be designed to meet ADA requirements. Existing book stacks will be more accessible due to being only five shelves in height and 48” aisle width between stacks.

Summary:

The addition proposed will be designed to resolve the several limitations and operating problems posed by the existing facilities. The addition should compliment the historically important features of the original building and allow for the restoration of the Reading Room on the main level, now used as the children's library, and the removal of nonconforming book shelves now attached to the original stacks. In dealing with the wide range of limitations imposed by the present facility, the addition makes a compelling case for this investment in the future of the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon.

Site Challenges Faced:

The major variance that will be required is for the coverage ratio as the site is very small, some 17,000 square feet, and the footprint of the addition plus the existing building will exceed the 20% coverage ratio allowed in Sharon.

The addition should meet the Secretary of the Interior Guidelines for restoration of historical buildings, but this is a problem that the appropriate architect should be able to resolve.

Funding of the expansion:

Discussions with the Connecticut State Library Consultant indicate that this project should qualify for a state grant equal to one third of the total cost, with a cap of \$1,000,000. The balance is to be raised through a Capital Funds Drive which will have as its goal the necessary funding for the expansion and the needed increase to the Trust Fund. The initial target for the Capital Funds Drive should be a minimum of \$4,000,000 including the funds from the State Library Grant Program. The board should also look for other grant programs, either from the State or from private organizations and charities.

The Capital Funds Drive should be scheduled to begin in September, 2008 and be based upon the assumption that we will be awarded the State Grant (December, 2008.)

Schedule: The schedule for the expansion is to complete the Capital Funds Drive by the spring of 2009 and, having already started full construction drawings, start construction shortly thereafter.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Goal: Increase the annual income for operation of the Library to \$ 200,000 from the present level.

This level of income is needed to eliminate continuing deficits-- projected at approximately \$20,000 in the current fiscal year-- and to provide funds for increases in the acquisition of books, books on tape, DVDs and other lending materials and for recommended increases in programs at the Library.

Specific plans for achieving this goal:

Currently the Library obtains income from three principal sources: direct community support provided by the Town of Sharon; the annual fund drive, and contributions and

income from special events such as the Annual Book Signing and Book Sale; and distributions from the Trust Fund. The plan proposes that each of these three sources provide, respectively, one third of the income. To achieve this, the following steps are proposed:

Town Support: Obtain an increase from the present level of town support of \$50,000 to at least \$60,000. It should be noted that the increase to \$50,000 was made only this fiscal year. This level of support can be well justified by comparing support levels provided by other communities in the Northwest Corner of Connecticut to their libraries.

Contributions and Special Events: The current budget anticipates an income of \$55,000. Increasing the level of income from these sources is expected as a result of a more aggressive fund raising program and an expanded schedule of special events.

Trust Fund Distributions: It is the policy to limit distributions from the Trust Fund to a level that will maintain the asset value of the fund adjusted for inflation. Currently the distribution is limited to 4% of the rolling average of the fund assets for the past three years which amounts to approximately \$45,000. To increase the distribution to \$70,000 will require increasing the Trust Fund to \$2,000,000 or about \$1,000,000 above its present level. The plan proposes a Capital Funds Drive with a target now estimated at \$4 million to fund both the proposed restoration and expansion of the building and the increase in the Trust Fund.