

The following text is a transcription of contemporaneous notes taken by the focus group facilitator during each session.

Seniors 11.11.19

Several of this group name ILL and cloudLibrary as their favorite things about the library. Others pointed out the new space and the friendliness of the librarians as particular bright spots.

Question 2:

Access is important. We have a lot of middle schoolers and teens always here, and it's important to both kids and parents that these kids have a safe place to go after school. The library is the closest thing that Haddonfield has to a community center.

Participants are very enthusiastic about the library-run book clubs.

Question 2B:

Adults love adult arts and crafts! People would like to come to a lot more of those.

Question 3 and 6:

No one likes the McMansions being built up in Haddonfield. Older people feel they're being driven out of town. There is less age diversity in Haddonfield than there used to be. Residents feel that the taxes are astronomical, but at least the library gets the money.

People have expressed that they stay in town BECAUSE of the library, which is just an addition to a high quality of life.

Question 4: in terms of experiences the library could offer, patrons want more lectures, courses, short seminars, etc. They'd like a forum about town issues. And they want the timing to be before 7:30 PM, because 7:30 is a bit late for them.

More guest authors would be a plus, but people think there are a lot of experts living around Haddonfield, and they could be roped into giving a talk.

More pan-Haddonfield events would be a huge plus.

Question 5:

There is a severe lack of awareness about databases, tech services, etc. Volunteer services are poorly organized, and no one really knows what the Friends do. But the staff at the library are apparently amazing.

Patrons hate the TV and DVD kiosks, would appreciate different shelving, and find movie titles occasionally difficult. More audiobooks would be appreciated, and perhaps some kind of rent-an-iPad or Kindle service.

Question 6: People do come for a change of pace, to sit in the garden, to take out movies, and use the museum passes. They love audiobooks, but would like a more curated experience when it comes to regular books, so: more staff picks.

Classes: An “intro to ebooks and tablets” class would be appreciated.

6A: requests, ILLs, Lectures, ebooks, audiobooks, are the most popular items.

Question 11: A VHS to DVD converter would apparently be a great purchase.

Back to the “curated experience,” patrons would like more themed collections, and more time to plan to attend our programs. They’d like a “coming attractions” sort of newsletter. Also, new non-fiction downstairs, because no one goes upstairs.

Patrons suggested a we add to the health and mindfulness section.

Also, many seniors want to know more about databases, better communication through our newsletter, and a focus on new trends in the world (like quantum computing, for instance). Seniors feel like we need a lot more non-kid programming.

In addition to the forums, they would like brown-bag luncheons to discuss current issues in the community, along with semi-annual check-ins and quarterly meetings.

In conclusion: bring back the suggestion box!

Parents of Young Children 11.12.19

The library is super important for people *when* they know about it! It’s a big deal for growth and outside-of-school learning.

McMansions and gatekeeping seem to be a bigger problem than originally noticed. Taxes and cost of living in Haddonfield seem the same, but that’s always been astronomical, apparently.

There’s also an outsider/insider dichotomy in town. So many people HAVE known each other for 35+ years, which makes it seem very close-knit and sometimes clique-y to people who have just moved in. It might be nice for the library to organize some kind of event for new parents with the Newcomers Club.

Feedback about the library itself: participants do not like the DVD towers in the children’s department. Things get lost all the time behind the DVDs themselves.

“Young children” is such a broad term. It would be nice to have more craft-type programs for children between tweens and toddlers (5-8). Music classes for toddlers, however, are a huge plus.

For parents: it might be good to have “parenting classes” or “idea classes for parents,” to teach parents low-budget crafts and such.

Ideally, for a newcomer, staff should be proactive, but not pushy. People want to be greeted, but not smothered.

Maybe we can get a repository for town info? Current school info? I suggested Burbio, but that does nothing to help when it comes to summer reading lists and the like. It would be nice if the library was a one-stop shop for town info.

SIGNAGE. We need better signage: how to get to the Children’s Dept, where the New Books are, where the restrooms are, etc.

A Yoga/Meditation class for kids would be neat. Maybe some health and wellness programs.

More volunteer opportunities would be great, but specific opportunities, like signage, photos, etc.

Seniors 11.13.19

2A: We have a great library here. 7:05.

This is, like others have said, a community center or the closest thing to it.

Libraries are good for democracy! 7:30-ish.

Browsing for books is somewhat serendipitous: it’s a better experience browsing books in person than on an online catalog. The library is also an excellent resource center.

2B: *Community, Community, Community!!!!!!* Libraries mean that education doesn’t stop once a child or adult leaves school (10:56.) Libraries also aren’t just about books!

The fact that Haddonfield taxes do go to the library is also very important to seniors: it’s better to know that something they enjoy is being funded, rather than paying for a service like Amazon.

It’s funded *by* the public, *for* the public.

3: The building boom in Haddonfield has divided the town into factions. People want the Bancroft area to be age restricted. Economics are becoming more of a concern year by year. And the culture of Haddonfield is changing, too. There’s so much trash everywhere! We need more trash bins! The traffic! The taxes! The kids on bikes!

Also, there’s no township-run senior transportation. People don’t like that.

6: People want more classes on tech, electronics, social media, etc.

Seniors want transportation to and from the library. It's gotta be accessible... which most seniors think it is.

They'd like more frequent newsletters, more surveys--this is around the 25 minute mark.

Again, people want forums. Quarterly? And in the daytime?

Lots of people know about large print books, but few people use them or care to use them. Patrons like our CDs and DVDs, but think they should be cleaned better or higher quality, less likely to scratch, etc. 31:35.

Perhaps create a program about taxes, using someone local or from AARP. 37.55.

39:32: They like us!

Seniors in this session reported that they don't go upstairs, because the lighting is better on the first floor, and there's no staff on the second floor to assist.

Travel guides: could we label the section? Travel guides are big for this group, as are museum passes. They even would like us to organize a group of buses or something for seniors who want to travel together.

We should also take out a page in the Sun, or Haddonfield Today, as some kind of physical newsletter, because they don't read things in their email. We should also advertise at PTA meetings.

Top things we need:

- More lectures
- More tech help
- Better communication
- Forums
- Tours of the library.

HFOL needs to be more active? Maybe we can open a charitable giving account?

Also, more author events, but night driving is stressful, so maybe we could hold them in the daytime?

Town-wide events are nice. The library should involve people in an all-town read or author events. We should also partner with local business. And why haven't we bought the Bancroft property?

Why do teens like HPL? For starters: it's calm, not as stressful as their school library. No one is yelling at them to take out their headphones, get rid of their drinks, etc. They also appreciate books and movies, tutoring opportunities, and coming with friends.

A few mentioned the solar eclipse program!

Other activities tend to take precedence over TAB, though. And their schedules prevent them from using the library sometimes.

Teens would like movie nights at the library or a space for general hanging out. More soldering activities for older kids at the maker space too. Lego club for older kids would also be appreciated.

What teens would really like is a quiet space. The middle schoolers from Christ the King seem to have taken over the space, and they're not really enthused or happy with how loud it gets.

The library is primarily used for:

- Studying,
- Hanging out
- Tutoring
- Safe space

Again, the school library isn't nearly as welcoming. But neither is the teen room when it's super loud! (23:20)

However, teens want to see:

- Movies
- Better transitional shelving between YP and YA
- Charging stations for laptops
- Maybe a pen pal program would be nice.
- Better variety on Hoopla

The timers confuse teens on the public computers, but most of them already own their laptops so they don't bother to use them.

Rearranging the YA collection by genre the teen room would also be a plus and would help teens read more.

The library really, *really* needs to communicate programs more. They'd like a bulletin board or the like as soon as you walk in.

Also, more author meet and greets, maybe a scavenger hunt through the library or an escape room.

Young Professionals / Adults 11.14.19

2: Museum passes are a top attraction. They make it easy to try and use them.

Love the “nesting” options both upstairs and downstairs.

The DVDs are great, and the books are great for serendipitous browsing.

These guys appreciate the space upstairs. They also like the lectures, and the idea of the book clubs. Newspapers are popular, the seed library is a hit, and they appreciate both ILLs and the fact that we order books for them.

3: Most are okay with having a nice, small library. It’s within walkable distance for many people, and (8:58) is a community hub. Libraries are also important for democracy (10:18). Free and unlimited access to libraries is important!

3B: Reliable and authoritative information is something that libraries should provide, as well as the human element. It’s important that we have human interaction! Again, the library is spoken about as being a community center. However, people in the community still buy books instead of “renting” them.

4. Community tends to consist of very young children with their parents/families, and senior citizens.

5. Bancroft is going to consist of entirely new people, which current residents are ambivalent about. The emphasis is on tech workshops and such (around the 22:00 marker). Maybe the library could help distribute dictionaries, now that the schools won’t allow it? The emphasis on tech in schools isn’t necessarily a good thing either.

6. 26:30 we talk about the “rent a bookstore” image. We should go beyond books! Add more community activities! More lectures and fun adult programming! We should focus less on “early childhood” stuff and more on adult stuff, potentially tying the library programming to museums. Bring more town history into the 21st century, because residents are interested in it.

Also, the library should NOT take a stance on certain town issues, like McMansions going up in the neighborhoods.

7. 37:30, yay, they like us!

38:45 staff seem happy, participants in this group remember staff being rude/unkind once upon a time.

Our book selection is subjective: some people think it’s great, some think it sucks. We should get more people involved in book selection, and more local authors involved.

8. Space goals: big windows, lots of light, etc., reading room tables like NYPL's furniture. The smallness of our library is a plus. It's also a "third space," somewhere you can go and hang out that isn't home or work/school, and you don't have to pay money for it like you would at a coffee shop or the like.

Perhaps we should try a partnership with Jersey Java, for advertising or whatnot. (50:45)

Longer hours would be a plus! Especially on Friday nights/weekends.

9. Improvements would be more large tables to work at and a better use of space--we should make more of the space we have.

We need more parking!! Also, we need better spaces. Maybe we should develop an entire parking app for the Borough. Also, we need "better" lectures and speakers for programs.

10. The computer timers in the reference room are confusing. Also, we should promote our room rental more.

12/13: The public computers are sometimes confusing. There is a lack of information about e-readers. Maybe get more kindle training out there. And also, the website is *not* user friendly.

15. Meet people where they are--1:12:00.

We shouldn't send out extra mail, but bulletins are great, and social media is... sort of followed. Maybe we should post one-page flyers in key locations around town. Lean on tax funding and advertise in "what's on," etc.

16. We should have more forums, more times around the year.

One incredible comment that "It's not the library's job to get more people to come to the library. They'll come if they want to." Truly incredible.

We should figure out what residents want in programming and make our decisions that way.

Still, libraries are somewhat of a "great equalizer," and should be protected. They're a place of serendipity, in a sense.

Young Professionals / Adults 11.18.19

2: Books, CDs, digital books, kid programs were used a lot when these women were younger (and had young children. 5:00 mark: something cute about granddaughter raising money for the library. One family provided the dog for the read to a dog program when their kids were younger. Several have helped out with the HFOL Book Sale over the years.

3: It's important to have a bigger, better focus than sports, which is what the high school focuses on. The library provides a space for kids to read, which in turn gets them to develop better vocabulary and helps them in school. It is nice to have someplace to actually *read* books. However, some people in this group *really* miss the annex.

6: A library should be a high energy place, noise is not an issue. The library should not have any shushing (a comment on libraries in general, not on ours specifically). (16 minute mark) This is a community space and shushing makes it feel unwelcome. Also, yes: people still want *physical books!* Studies show physical books are also good for the kids.

4. Haddonfield Adult School has similar programming to us. We need to advertise better. There seems to be a sense that there is far more programming for kids than adults. Also, we should consider having a community calendar online--and "maybe the library can take that on!"

5. The HMHS Library doesn't do much. Students like us far better. Middle school and elementary libraries also do it better than the high school.

8. Museum passes-- people REALLY like that we have to come in to get them, instead of reserving them online like Cherry Hill (34 minute mark or so). People like the books, the magazines, the architecture, the seed library... but would like to see more author presentations. Perhaps we could break the cost up with other libraries.

9. Bathrooms are WAY better than pre-renovation bathrooms. Perhaps we should have later hours on Friday nights and weekends, though. It's far better for people who work and want to stop in the library after work hours.

10. Ease of finding things is an issue (see 46 minute mark). Ebook finding was an issue--patron didn't realize that you could just search on the website instead of just searching app by app. The brochure may want to mention this.

11/12. The library should give more "BIG" presentations, ones that we need to rent out the HMHS auditorium and the like for. We should also use Library Point/the yard out front more often. Maybe create some First Friday type events, and invite Symphony in C more often. Also, yay makerspace days!

Around the 1 hour mark, we have some GREAT advice on how to teach seniors tech stuff. People want more programs like that, especially for seniors/older adults. In terms of tech, the kiosks for the catalogs aren't the most user-friendly, but people are getting used to it.

13. Information literacy is a huge problem for kids, but adults are also having a bit of a time. Definitely advertise databases and the genealogy stuff. Perhaps a library tour for adults? We could also go into the public schools to talk about it as well.

Maybe have a Library Scavenger Hunt with prizes (much like what was mentioned in the teen focus group).

15. PAPER WASTE BAD: there are extra ads literally everywhere, and people hate them. Instead, maybe do some advertising in the coffeeshops.

16: Who's up for some singles events? Also, meet-ups for interesting books?

Parents of Young Children 11.18.19

1: Most people come for books, but also visit storytime, get DVDs, etc. They're power users during summer break, but very rarely use ILL. They're big on museum passes, though!

2: 3:50 mark--the library is a great place to socialize their kids. It's a fun summer space. Parents would like to get more involved, but they have very little time. The library has a lot of opportunities, it's a safe space for their kids, and there are places for "mini private time."

6:48 mark--it's hard to find events to go to. We need better advertising. By the time they find out about programming, it might be too late. So, we need in-your-face advertising and a library calendar. It's hard to keep track of ages and the like on the website, and it would be great to have things a month to two months in advance.

3: As mentioned a great deal previously, McMansions suck. The ongoing building boom is jumping up the number of kids in the school system, and there's no real place for them after school. Perhaps we could open the classroom for extra space? With the program room closed, there's suddenly so much less space for kids.

4. People are satisfied with the kids programming, although there are concerns that the programs fill up really fast and it's hard to get in. There's a good variety of books, and the movies are pretty good. Nonfiction section does feel like the unwanted stepchild, though. Perhaps we could get more?

One improvement we could add is a handicap button door at the front of the building, as there is an access concern.

We could also use more coordination with schools on projects and on research/nonfiction books.

6. Summer reading bingo is fun and a good program. Perhaps we could bring in parenting tips for REALLY early readers, and books for in-library reading only? More parent classes could be great. Also, reverse storytime, where kids read to Miss Jordan instead of being read to.

Someone brought up the “just right” books for their kids with the 5 finger rule, but that’s not really feasible to have a section for that given that “just right” is different for every early reader.

7: Library goals: take the classic exterior, but make it open concept with more space for kids. Have a “quiet” study area for kids. More tables and space. A nursing area. Also, librarians “stuck” behind desks are intimidating.

8. Yes.

9. More nonfiction for kids! Put a cap on kids fines and block patrons who have too many fines/ too many books out and not returned. One participant felt the 40 item limit is too high. Our collection is great, though! And we have a good diversity of staff in terms of what staff knows.

Parents of Teens 11.20.19

1: Teens have: taken advantage of volunteer opportunities, the book box, crafts, makerspace, book club, STEAM programs, hanging out, and digital library books.

2: the library is the intellectual hub of the community (4:45 minute mark). Book club is great to meet people (5:20 mark). Museum passes are a great way to save money, as are DVDs, etc. The library is a great equalizer. Plus, we have more books than the school libraries do. 6:49 mark, the library gives back!

3. Bancroft property will be bringing in a lot of new kids (8:15 minute mark). Politics today are really dicey, and the library can teach about that without being biased (8:35 mark). Plus, kids these days still appreciate the military (11:15 mark).

11:37 minute mark: can we help teach responsible usage of social media? Parents should be aware of how teens can cover their tracks and hide their activities on social media.

4: In terms of “grade the library,” we received: 8/10, 8/10 (prior to Cathy D’s presence, the grade was 0/10), and 7/10 (the Nashville City/County system was better).

There is a HUGE interest in sewing lessons! Also interest in tech/trade programming, and “common sense”/life skills classes that are no longer taught in the schools.

Perhaps we could start a knitting + crocheting club? BYO yarn? This is a potential opportunity to do outreach with our senior or older patrons, or collaborate with one of the yarn stores in town. Maybe start up bridge or mahjong for kids? A puzzle table, with mats? Yoga for kids and teens? Game and paint nights?

6: Parents would love prep classes and practice exams for college. It would be nice if we had a scholarship database, or hosted a scholarship/financial aid night at the library.

7. An ideal library would be bigger, with more space for meetings, and better use of Library Point outside. Perhaps we could place an annex on the Point? It could have more meeting rooms, which might benefit a more sprawling kids and teens program (35:40). It would also keep teens all in one place.

9: 37:40 minute mark: please more classes about social media awareness and safety, and more information/data literacy programs.

10: User experience on the website is not as friendly as we would like. Also, staffing is a bit thin, they would like late nights on Friday and longer hours on Saturday or Sunday. Cut back in the week if we have to.