

***Focus Groups – Current and Future Use of Public Libraries  
November 2005 – January 2006***

As part of a planning process, staff of the Southern Tier Library System conducted focus groups in seven member libraries from November, 2005 through January 2006. Several libraries joined with a neighboring library to sponsor the group. The sessions were held in libraries in cooperation with directors Carol Berry, Bath; Kim Lindsay, Canisteo; Cindy Dutton, Cuba; Sheila Peterson, Friendship; Maureen Ferrell, Horseheads; Heidi Berghoff, Montour Falls; Gayle Greuber, Odessa; Cindy Schamel, Savona; Harriet Eisman, Watkins Glen; Brian Hildreth, Wellsville.

These focus groups were held in preparation for developing a new System five-year plan of service. The goal was to establish how members of each community view and use the library currently. In addition participants were invited to comment on the kind of change they foresee in the library over the next five years and how they would like libraries to remain the same.

Directors of member libraries invited participants, hosted the focus group, organized refreshments, and often took notes. Reports of individual focus groups were compiled cooperatively by the group moderator and the library directors. While the community discussions have been merged into this combined report for presentation to STLS member libraries and trustees, reports on individual focus groups are expected to be of use to the local library.

The fifty-one participants are residents of ten towns in the region and included five high school and college students, five municipal officials or board members, retired school administrators, two retired librarians new to the area, business owners, teachers, retirees, a director of a Chamber of Commerce, director of a county child care council, persons active in community organizations, and parents. Several home school their children. Over 10% are 65 years of age or older. The majority are natives of the region or have lived here twenty years or more. While the most of the participants are library users, approximately 20% are not.

***Think back about some information you needed during the past year. How did you look for the information?***

Most participants use the Internet, at home or at the library, to research information especially if they wanted the information quickly, because the Internet has everything and is easily accessible. Some are aware that information on the Internet may be inaccurate. A number talked about the reliability of books and about using the library for in-depth research, books and local history. Several mentioned interlibrary-loan.

- Don't find the library as convenient as the computer. I use the Internet more. The library didn't have what I needed so I went to Rochester for the book
- Use the Internet. It's easy from home; have the answer to a question right now, use Google. Depends on the info I am looking for. If it's classical and scholarly, I would rather come to the library. For popular information, I use the Internet
- I type in Google and away I go. Use a search engine
- Glad to have Internet access at the library. If I don't know how to find information, I can ask the library staff for help
- Use the telephone – call Cooperative Extension
- I look up craft information online. If a craft book looks interesting I borrow it from the library to see if I want to buy it
- Books are treasures that can be taken home. Never “jam,” always work. (I have) more trust in a book, print seems more reliable
- Used to use reference a lot; now using the computer a lot more; it's quicker
- Came down (to the library) and looked it up
- Local history housed in the library is valuable
- Art related products. I used to go to the library first to find images for my work, now the Internet has replaced that
- The library is a source for leisurely research, biographies
- Depends on the kind of information. When the Internet freezes, I dig for books. Ask for the books to be sent to me at this library
- Look up medical books online
- Come to the library to use faster computer
- Researching online on Internet has problems – recent controversy about Wikipedia. A lot of information is not true

### ***How do you use the public library?***

Participants talked about using the library for freely-available books, videos, audiobooks and a wide range of programs and services, meeting room space, and bringing their children to the library for programs and materials. A number stressed the value of computer facilities to write and print out school assignments, computer training, and user-friendly assistance.

- Current books, movies, old classics (high school student), use those a lot
- Reading programs for children. Children's (department) does a great job. Important to start when they are young. Socialization for moms and kids
- Very user-friendly
- Computer training for older folks
- Come to the library to talk to people, Learn from people you run into in the library. Also story hours, summer reading program
- Local history
- “Free” is a key word

- Entrance with display of new books. Can't get in and out of the library without checking something out
- Taught adult literacy students at the library. The library is a good place to meet students. Taught them to look up materials
- Attend the story hour. Day care group comes to the library every week for a program. (Library programs are announced in the Child Care Council newsletter)
- My children are ages 5 and 7. I bring them to the library every week
- 4 participants in one group borrow audio books. "Once we missed our exit while listening to an audio book in the car."
- Use STARCat to find books on different subjects
- Having a quiet space is good
- Homeschoolers – STARCat especially useful. Love to bring kids to library. Love kits
- Useful for homework and printing out papers for class – school PCs often in use during day
- Enjoy adult book discussion group.
- Use for meeting space (ie Town Board for Board meetings and contract negotiations)
- Can look at books before purchasing them for gifts
- My kids are both public library readers in the summer. They use books at the school library in winter
- Use for my classroom – order kits
- Out-of-town newspapers, magazines, books, activities, like it that you have the New York Times
- Ordered quite a few books from the library that I needed for Empire State College
- It blows my mind that it's free
- Kids see it as an exciting trip – traveling to library to see new books
- Like to volunteer here, meeting people, helping people with computers
- Borrow CDs/DVDs, tapes – especially like interlibrary loan
- A lot of people pick up their kids at the library after school
- Two participants don't have televisions. Check out a lot of videos, good stuff. Like it that R vides are available
- At home listen to lots of books-on-tape
- Real books are very important
- Like getting books on CD and tape. Get them on interlibrary loan, although not all are available
- Like the rotating collections of materials
- I'm able to borrow college courses on cassette tapes or DVDs from this and other libraries. The courses are great

***If you don't use the library, what would it take to get you to use it?***

While a number of the people in various groups did not use the library – some because they were too busy, others because they buy their books – all had suggestions for ways to increase use. Participants suggested more hours open, more space for parking, more publicity about library hours and programs and specific ways to involve the community in the library.

- Buy books online, 4 days later, then you have it. Books don't cost so much anymore
- (I) use the library through the Chamber, as a community center. Music on the lawn. We use the library (space) far more, community events, events during the balloon Rally
- Library hours are not convenient for working people.
- Library hours are irregular. You're never sure if its open, so you don't go. Ideal would be open regular hours. It's hard to go home after work and then come back to the library. Have evening hours until 9 pm. Saturday hours
- Advertise the hours of the library. I can never remember when the library is open, have to call up my mother and ask her
- Longer circulation period. It takes me so long to get through a book. Two weeks is not long enough
- Update the library collections
- I just buy it at Barnes & Noble; want a book, I research it on Amazon – can buy it used; Amazon is easy to use. They send it and I don't have to bring it back
- My grandson comes with my daughter. I don't use it – have a big library at home. My wife buys books and videos
- Don't know that I would use the library
- Haven't had the time
- Have more current literature, not only best-sellers
- Newspapers from larger communities, e.g. New York Times
- Don't have a local Barnes & Noble to visit and see what books are there
- (Library) is comfortable and safe
- Not everyone can buy books or have access to the Internet. (The library) also provides human interaction
- Monthly events to bring people in. Example – information session about a set of books, have local authors here to talk about what they are working on
- Advertise and get people excited about the library
- Provide Internet for the elderly. Explain what a tool it is. Many have no idea how to go about it
- Sponsor a challenge – “Take a kid to the Library”
- I'm not as adept as I'd like to be (on the Internet). Like hard information from research books (interested in automotive restoration)
- Library is a good tool for someone who can't afford a computer. Let people know that computers are available. Have more computers available, need more space around the computers for research – study carrels
- A surprising number of people come to the library to use computers

- Would volunteer at the library
- Tell people, “Come and get your truckload of books and CDs
- If you have children, I can’t imagine that you don’t use the library with the cost of books today
- How much marketing is done? Does it go far enough?
- Information about other programs only promoted at the library

***If the library disappeared tomorrow and you were starting over, what would your “new” library be like and what would it do?***

Participants emphasized the importance of technology, publicity about library services, and ways of inviting residents to participate in library activities. Participants stressed the importance of books – all kinds, including e-books, as part of a collection of a wide variety of up-to-date materials, covering a variety of issues and topics and organized for easy accessibility by all ages. The library would provide access to library materials through more space for children, drive-thru window, home delivery, and closer parking. The participants discussed the importance of a welcoming atmosphere at the library and consistent library hours – convenient for busy families. They also suggested various kinds of programs, the importance of reaching home school families, services and activities for children up through the teen years, and homework helpers. The library would be a cultural center that offered more services than it currently provides now, such as non-traditional services and technologically advanced services. Suggestions included:

- Like it to be the way it is now
- Visiting authors, visual organization of materials in order to access information easier & quicker, Movies that people don’t already own
- Bigger collection. The more books the better. Rotating collections – books cycle between libraries – not everyone uses interlibrary loan
- Books – I have to take time to think and consider. Now everything happens in 10 second bits. I can’t keep up with that
- Need a good and simple index to the library. That would be of great use – it’s a little bit difficult to find your way around
- Electronic way to find a book
- A little more user friendly. Can be intimidating. Don’t know what and who to ask, don’t know where to go to use things
- Entertainment that’s here (at the library) and that you take home (videos/DVDs)
- A retired teacher had surveyed his students – 40% of students said “no, never read anything.” There is a large untapped audience (we) should look into
- Variety of children’s services which are somewhat technically advanced. Children are hardwired for Game Boy; they look for immediate gratification. They want it right now; want to know “How does it work;” “Does it work?”
- More computers, usually the current library computers are all full. Lots of connectivity. Don’t know what will be in 20 years. Half of the library be a computer lab, other half everything you need for a library. Have a computer technician on

duty every day to teach people how to use the computer. The technician should also be able to find books and run the library.

- DVDs, audio books help me compress time; I can play them in my car. A way you can adjust the speed (of today's lifestyle)
- How do you provide more intellectual activities? High school has "readers' café" where students read a book each month and discuss it; also academic trivia contests, more forums
- Physical attributes – open plan with a sound-proof room for small musical performances, perhaps music lessons given Conference type room for groups like Chamber to hold meetings. Gazebo on front lawn. Incorporate space for research. Space that invites people to come and stay. Places to study, big space to spread out, library table, more computers. Meeting spaces so the library can be a public facility, with PowerPoint facilities, bring people in. Easy chairs, physically comfortable space, space to be alone and read.
- Ways to search genealogy
- Focus on education, literacy starting from birth, accessible for families with two working parents
- Educational opportunities
- Home schooling is a new trend. Lots of home schooling families are not using programs as much as they should. Could be using a lot more – such as special events, story hour for home school families. It attracts older kids
- When you walk in you feel welcome – very important. Like the Barnes & Noble setup
- Bigger children's section, farther away from adult section. *OR* the children's section would be right up front. Children would just walk in and find all the materials
- It could have a "drive thru" – could order through STARCat and drive thru to pick up, good for soccer moms and others
- Coffee bar
- Modern facility that meets ADA standards for accessibility: wider doorways, bathroom
- More computers, Internet access
- A library website that includes information about upcoming events. mailing lists to let people know about events
- Meet the needs of elderly and disabled
- Parking adjacent to the library
- Have interactive activities. Examples – "Become a member of the Suggest-a-Book club," bulletin board, "Book Challenge" – at the local library
- Display this week's featured books & new arrivals, #1 bestsellers, lists for youth, Don't know what good books are out there unless I hear about them on (NPR) National Public Radio. Have a way to find out quality literature – a feature that says "Hey, check this out!" Have library corner with recommended books. Like Amazon – look at my list on Amazon, something like this with a history of my local choices

- Older participant said – got hooked on reading novels a few years ago when a friend suggested it. Now I buy books, even hard covers. I got hooked because someone showed me something
- My 13-year-old sister loves to read books, there are not a lot of programs for her

***How important is the library to this community?*** Six of the groups were given a simple printed survey with the question, ‘How important is this library to the community?’ Participants were asked to confidentially circle “not important,” “slightly important,” “somewhat important,” or “very important.”

Of the 42 participants surveyed

- 39 or 93% indicated that the library is “very important.” One person said “evidenced by vote last year – they had a choice.” Another participant noted “Those who do not use libraries are missing out.”
- 1 or 2% said the library is somewhat important.
- 2 or 5% said that the library is slightly important. One noted “slightly important in their minds, but realistically very important.”

***Technology is changing the way we live. What are some changes that you see?***

- Chips with medical information will be implanted in humans – now being done in the military
- Hardly ever write a check anymore. Do everything online
- Even checks are handled electronically
- Lots of colleges, universities offering courses, masters degrees online, not everyone can be there anymore, opportunity to learn at home is cool
- Open access. Community wireless. Get wireless from your neighbor
- Negatively. Can’t stand to read things online. In my work was asked to read 100s of pages online. It’s so difficult to make notes
- Not that difficult to make notes, can do it with Word
- In the book business e-books looked huge. I’ve got an iPod but I want a printed book
- Books communicate our culture
- Example, still like to get a card for the holidays

***Examples of technologies that are changing the way we live:***

One groups list included:

- Music – MP3s, iPods, etc
- Copy CDs & DVDs
- GPS, cellphones, Bluetooth
- Blackberries
- Digital photography
- Wireless communication

- High speed internet – through cellphones
- E-mailing photos
- Security issues
- Filing taxes online
- Push to use Internet only
- Printing of airline tickets , convenience
- Plagiarism + fraud
- Disconnectedness
- Chat with anyone, anywhere, anytime
- Biometrics

***How should libraries prepare for these trends?***

Participants stressed the need to keep up with changing technology, and discussed the value of books and print to different groups of residents, some are concerned that more computers will mean fewer book. Participants are concerned that there is a growing gap between residents who know and use the new technologies and those who don't. They urge libraries to keep up with technology inside the library and help residents keep up through classes and the opportunity to use or borrow expensive software. Some also suggested web cams for library computers to communicate with loved ones overseas and families far away, as well as laptops for loan and wireless connections. One group discussed classes in the library. Those participants would like the libraries to support formal education, especially college courses and continuing education.

- Nothing takes the place of books
- Want both. Don't want books to go away, many people embrace books
- It (the library) will change. Kids want quick
- Upcoming generations should have the formats they are comfortable with
- Interacting opportunities, hands-on opportunities in children's area
- Keep upgrading technology. Smooth transition into new technologies for people who don't know latest technologies (Transition for people from not knowing to knowing) It's a lot easier to download now. Need more computers, classes for people. Library users want a faster internet connection (faster STARCat – like Amazon). In high school there is limited access to computers, "I have many (high school) friends without computers." Public library computer access is important
- Ability to bring in lap-top computers, wireless access. This service would allow people to combine aspects of fast-paced life with ability to be in the library. Wifi
- Technology. Can't compete with technology. People used to think that television would merge with the computer. Now it's the computer and cell phone that are merging. Libraries offer cell phones and laptop computers to provide services.
- Change won't end, worry about the library getting ahead of what I can handle, risk of bewildered old people, trends leaving older patrons behind, I was more comfortable with the card catalog
- Introduce distance learning. Is expensive – possibly fee-based as a community service at the library. I'm on a committee to try to bring more higher education into Schuyler County, support higher education – college courses/books at the library

- As people are finished with information in various formats, they might donate them to the library, just as books are donated now. People could test drive new formats at the library
- Library is vaguely connected to school. Kids study Egypt in 6th grade. Teach kids to organize and present slides. Better connection between school and library, technology and media

***If we were able to look five years into the future, how would you like the library to provide information, literature, and recreational materials?***

Incorporate new technology and keep books as a basic part of library services. A business owner emphasized the importance of keeping the library traditional in the sense of a quiet place with reverence for reading and learning. Other services included older teen/young adult tutors, books on disk, reference quick links on STARCat, more activities for all age groups, assistance for people learning to use technology and the importance of strengthening publicity and communication about library services and programs. Participants wanted to be able to use the latest technology, whatever it is, and to meet the needs of individual patrons.

- Keep the variety we have now – it is a public place for ALL. Continue with mixed media. I want it all up to date. Patrons could come in and download information. If you could plug in and download the book would never wear out.
- Hope the library would be much the same. I think of library as – books, quiet, reading for enjoyment. Don't lose the emphasis on books. Won't ever not want to come in and get a book
- Would not change good, personal, incredibly friendly service
- Generations have different points of view. Younger generation likes computers, faster, quieter, and easier than books, like the idea of change. Downloadable books, music, anything like that? "Of course!" For research purposes, faster on computer
- Not all people are interested in e-books. I could imagine electronic books, but it doesn't appeal to me. Meet individual preferences from youngest to oldest – include books and computers
- Be aware that the population is aging and plan programs for senior citizens
- Consider consistent policies from library to library, No consistency from library to library for how long to take the same thing out
- Occasionally show independent films, classic films. Show them as an event at the library
- Get encyclopedia /reference information directly from STARCat. Include all of the information right there so we don't have to go from one website to another
- List top ten current books in the newspaper
- (Libraries) don't need to provide electronic games. Don't see a need for videos at the library – others mentioned NOVA, information on careers, and said that videos bring people to the library

- Lots of kids only see school libraries, don't know about public libraries. Send fliers home with school children. Have library clubs for different age groups. Need the public library to be present. The school library is not accessible. Person to work with kids to read or who need help
- Be open more hours, be open on snow days
- Not enough people know what libraries have, reach out—radio, web site as exciting as Amazon.com (Include hours/books all on the web site.) Make it easier to use. Let community know that the library is growing and changing

***What are the most important things for libraries to keep doing?***

Keep changing and listening. Keep new books, programs, outreach to the community, and the opportunity to volunteer. Participants urged libraries to keep programs for kids, create a committee to go to public school to promote libraries, and keep reminding people about libraries through newspapers, school flyers, word of mouth. Participants wanted more library hours and a strong book collection.

- The library needs to continue doing what it is doing, and build on that. Everything it is doing now. Be a lively place where things are happening. Story hours, books sandwiched in, places for people to connect
- Say “Hi” to patrons, important that someone knows your name
- Good collection. Books. Up-to-date magazines. Turnover in books, so there are new books to read
- Can order from another library and in a few days or a week, I have it! Always find something I can read
- Interlibrary loan
- Children's programs – it's really important. Doing a great job with youth creating a love of books. Keep trucking on with good summer programs for kids. The first time I brought my son to the library, he was in awe when he saw all the books. Now he is an avid reader
- Customer service – self checkout coming
- I am unequipped to find something in a hurry. Don't eliminate the help desk, somebody willing to help. Customer services. We will never lose the need to talk to an individual and to have something physical to hold onto
- Rather than expand the collection of mass market films, provide those not typically available
- Continue to be a community center. Have artists, crafts, programs
- Keep good hours that Cuba has now, or even MORE hours! It's good that that library opened during the dinner hour (5-7 pm)
- Volunteering at the library comes up quite often in conversations around town. Something about that says a lot about how people feel connected to library/community
- Keep asking patrons (surveys) what they want. Forty years ago people couldn't afford to buy books. They had to go to the library, Now it's different, hopefully they find web sites to trust

- Start a group of people to go out to schools to generate enthusiasm. Keep reminding taxpayers how valuable the library is. Publicize through the newspaper, fliers sent home from school. “Did you know?” column once a month. Use personal testimonies – help people to see that the library is making a difference

***Suppose you have one minute to talk about what libraries should look like in the future, What would you say?***

Participants want a community friendly library, with helpful staff and space to gather, that is loaded with up-to-date books and library materials of all kinds. Another group emphasized incorporating new technology provided in a helpful and friendly way, interaction with teens, innovation, books, family involvement, more programs for various age groups and a strong emphasis on service to the elderly. People discussed changing technology with both enthusiasm and concern. Afraid we will have to look at a computer instead of looking on the shelf. Some discussed improved handicapped accessibility.

- Continue to change – have to see what works for people. Slowly changing, the way it (the library) has (been changing)
- Libraries increase the quality of life for all ages. Maintain & expand what we have now. Be as up-to-date as possible, bring in computers. Technology provides a good opportunity. People are looking for information.
- Computers – larger lab. Allow longer time at computer. Take reservations. Easy access to a person to ask for help
- E-mail people answers to questions
- Books will never be obsolete. I couldn't do it – read online. No one likes to read books online
- Books – variety, up-to-date, new and old books, pleasure, educational, research. Supply access to books to be enjoyed intimately. Love the feel and smell of books. Maintain intersection of books and technology
- Have card catalogs online, so people can look from home
- Library is in competition with bookstores, book clubs, Amazon.com Now you can buy books used and have it sent to you
- Should look like this. (Montour) cozy. Physical building still very important for seclusion and socialization. Place to be with others – or be alone. Place to sit down and read, hide, surrounded by books and magazines. Facility available to all ages. Opportunities to meet, study, read.
- Have people (at the library) to interact with teens, especially teens. Go for a family environment – got to start with the children
- Senior citizens will be a booming business. My clients suggested that the library upgrade like modern bookstores with a coffee shop. Would attract older and middle-aged people
- People don't want to travel a long way to do things
- Services to elderly. People who are one step before entering a nursing home may be forgetful. They want to be in a library, but it is difficult for them to get there. The

Penn Yan library goes right to the assisted-living facility; is more courteous about picking books up. Books and reading can activate their minds. Elderly people can be lonely. Perhaps high school students could visit apartments of elderly people and read to them

- Friendly and helpful feel. Community center, classes for children, computer classes, and performances, non-intimidating atmosphere. Place to exchange ideas and for adults and children to gather. Classes, films, community gallery, programs.
- Books on spinners & new types of fixtures
- All DVDs (instead of videos)
- Floor map of entire library when you first walk in, just like at a mall. Have the means to be able to find something in less than three minutes. Bulletin board that lists all types of programs going on at the library
- More do-it-yourself self-service in the library, make it simpler and easier
- Noise balance (quiet & interactive) figuring out new ways to use technology.
- Not so quiet in every single room. Technology & staying with trends, libraries shouldn't be too quiet. More seats, armchairs, quiet space, Quiet study areas. Have a peaceful location away from electronic noises. Keep technology in back
- Programs of interest for everybody and everything, even those who don't read (e.g. Technology info for work) even if they've never read a book. Game Boy and programs based on books to read on Game Boy
- Integrate technology in a variety of ways. Provide lectures through video-conferences: may not be able to get people to physically come to Wellsville, use technology to be able to reach out into the world. In the future, maybe the library will go into homes – i.e. “librarian” talk on PC/TV screen, have online book discussions or video chats. Example – satellite radio has a channel devoted to books read aloud
- Programs – cultural and educational, and fun. Book clubs. “Books sandwiched-in” once a month. Cyber Cafe zone may lure early teens and keep them interested. Keep it separated
- Reaching out to people who are blind, hearing-impaired, senior programs. Improved handicap accessibility (larger lift- Cuba lift does not work for large wheelchair)
- Literacy programs, many cannot read
- Appeal to all ages

***Would the community be willing to increase taxes to support library service?***

Participants recognized that some who don't use the library may not want to support it, and stressed that libraries have to present a plan, ask for support, let residents know what's available, and the cost of technology. Participants also suggested a PR Committee to educate the community. Residents need to know about library services and financial needs and how funding increases would be used. One group suggested that residents don't understand the relationship between the public library and the school district and how taxes are collected. A number thought that the community would support additional library taxes, but also wondered

if enough had been done to ask for contributions. Participants were very concerned about higher taxes, while at the same time many were willing to pay to support library funding. Some wished for a benefactor to support the library or suggested that recruiting more volunteers might help with library funding.

- Libraries don't promote/publicize themselves enough. Would need a real concrete plan presented with publicity. Develop a 5 year plan to let people know what they are getting for their money. Cite technology services. People understand what technology costs.
- Library needs a PR committee, an education committee that would passionately share what the library can do, how it can change your life
- Survey taxpayers to find out what would make them come in. Have cancelled several subscriptions to save money, read the library's copy
- Taxes are really touchy. There is a mentality here – it's fine if the library closed
- What makes your house worth something? Services like the library
- Some would think those who use the library should pay. Could patrons pay a user fee for services, or when they register? Would opt for tax instead of user fee, otherwise if I don't have the money in my wallet, I can't use the library today
- Another avenue would be a rich patron making a large contribution. Keep the library set for a few years
- Everyone will pay if it's fair; someone will always complain; everyone will have a different idea of fair. I live in the village, how many times do I have to pay (as a village, town, and school district resident) for the library?
- Would like to see funding divorced from the schools. Discussed concept of school and library budgets merging. Have a unique situation here with voting for taxes. Get on the phone and call people. In Odessa people equated the library on the school campus with the (public) library off school campus. Not doing a good enough job of making clear the libraries serve two separate purposes. Watkins could end up same as Odessa
- Advocate for funds higher up – state grants
- A case should be made for more taxes, but it's a hard sell. Oh, I'll increase it, but how much more can taxpayers be stretched? When school taxes go up, people say 'Ow' and don't look at the separate line items
- Serves as a community center – getting something back for their tax \$s
- Move voting booths into the library so they can see what the library has
- Fundraise for a specific purpose. Local libraries do have their own book sales. Could they be combined as is done in Ithaca?
- Promote more volunteerism in library – if many volunteers worked two hours/week, would need less staff
- Never had anyone complain about paying taxes to support the library. I would pay more. People grumble about taxes every second. Think they would be willing to spend more. Got to ask. If they say "no," at least you asked. Think people would vote "yes" if they knew what the library had to offer

***Of all the things we discussed, what to you is most important?***

Various participant groups discussed

- ▶ the library makes you feel like you live in a community; the building is important
- ▶ ways to secure financial support, provide outreach services, and increase programs for all ages. The group emphasized the importance of keeping up to date with technology, including wireless access. They suggested that it is very important to use public announcements and other means to inform the public of library services. One participant emphasized preserving the library in its purest form
- ▶ a well-rounded library community center with current books and technology that meet the needs of patrons of all ages, educational opportunities, and services to people with disabilities. There was more discussion of using volunteers to stretch library dollars, at the same time realizing that volunteers are not “free”
- ▶ this group was unanimous in emphasizing community awareness and involvement
- ▶ some participants emphasized a balance between quiet and activity, although one volunteer said that the library doesn’t have a “hush” atmosphere anymore
  - The library is something that makes you feel like you live in a community. It is a physical place, not just a virtual place
  - What is the purpose of the library? Find needs of community, plan how we get there, make it fit. All parts need to fit, need everything for quality of life, from youngest to oldest, literate to illiterate. Ask people what they want and how to maintain & improve services
  - Investigate using more volunteers if that would help buy more books, computers. On the other hand, can’t fire volunteers, can be difficult for staff
  - Perceptions of the library used during childhood last into adulthood, even though the library has changed
  - Pay attention to the population coming up – recognize the needs of each generation. More interaction between generations (I’ve learned from younger speakers in this discussion.) Get teens involved with senior citizens
  - Awareness of library and services. More use of the library would drive services. Involve and inspire the community. Roll with changes. Educate people – let them know what you can do – programs, story hours, book talks. Not a lot of people read newspapers. More parents read what is in child’s book bag. Look for volunteers to write a two-page newsletter
  - Challenge teens and college age students to participate
  - Find a way to reach working adults. They have found other avenues to find materials to use for pleasure
  - Computers – I personally am not interested, (however) I see that this younger generation is. Keep up-to-date with technology
  - Secure and maintain financial support. Investigate grass roots fundraising. I would personally support and would advocate in the community for a tax increase – don’t know about my neighbors
  - Services for people who are disabled, in a wheelchair, blind or elderly
  - Jazz up STARCcat. Very convenient hours, wonderful ability to get on STARCcat 24 hours a day

***Focus Group Questions:***

Introductory Question: Tell us your name, how long you have lived here, and one thing you like about this area.

1. Think back about some information you needed during the past year. How did you look for the information?
2. If you don't use the library, what would it take to get you to use the library?
3. How do you use the library?
4. If the library disappeared tomorrow and you were starting all over again what would your library be like and what would it do?
5. How important is the library to this community?  
Printed survey. Choices are: Not important/Slightly important  
Somewhat important/Very important
5. Technology is changing the way we live. What are some changes you see?  
Brainstorm list of technologies.  
  
How should libraries prepare for these trends?
6. If we were able to look five years into the future, how would you like libraries to provide information, literature, recreation materials?
7. What should the library keep doing?
8. Suppose you have one minute to talk about what libraries should be like in the future, what would you say?
9. Of all the things we discussed, what to you is the most important?