

# **WESTHAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## Strategic Plan

### 2023-2028



Image Credit: Christine Kress

**Westhampton Public Library**

**1 North Road**

**Westhampton, MA 01027**

[www.westhampton-ma.com/westhampton-public-library](http://www.westhampton-ma.com/westhampton-public-library)

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## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to give special thanks to members of our Community Strategic Planning Committee, Westhampton Library Trustees, the Friends of Westhampton Library, and to all library patrons. We are truly grateful and fortunate to have so many people invested in the future of the library and its important role in the life of the town of Westhampton.

## **About Westhampton**

Westhampton is a town located in Hampshire County in the Hilltowns of Western Massachusetts. Its location is close enough to neighboring cities and the Five Colleges area that restaurants, shopping, and entertainment are within reach. Westhampton is a small, rural community and is home to several locally run farms, sugar shacks and other small businesses. Westhampton's residents settled in the area around 1762. Originally, the town was part of Northampton known as the "Long Division." In 1778, residents petitioned to have Westhampton become its own town. Westhampton is a geographically dynamic area with hills, woods, wetlands and trails. It is home to conservation land including Greenberg Family Conservation Area managed by Kestrel Land Trust and Lynes Woods Wildlife Sanctuary managed by Mass Audubon. White Reservoir and Pine Island Lake, a summer destination, are both man-made.

According to a local census, the population of Westhampton as of 2020 was 1,645. In 2020 there were 1,312 registered voters and approximately 548 households. According to the 2020 U.S. Census the racial demographics of Westhampton were as follows: 1,516 residents identified as White, 3 residents identified as Black, 1 resident identified as American Indian & Alaska Native, 6 residents identified as Asian, 2 residents identified as Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander, 9 residents identified as Some Other race, and 85 residents identified as 2 or more races.

Also, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, the median age of residents was 46.3 years of age. There were 94.4 males for every 100 females living in Westhampton. Data by age group was as follows: 21.5% under 20, 11.3% in their 20s, 9% in their 30s, 11.7% in their 40s, 19.1% in their 50s, 15.1% in their 60s, and 12.3% were over 70 years of age.

### **Sources:**

Town of Westhampton. *Our Town*. <https://www.westhampton-ma.com/our-town>. Accessed 14 September 2022.

United States Census Bureau. *Westhampton town, Hampshire County, Massachusetts - Decennial Census P1: Race*. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Westhampton%20town,%20Hampshire%20County,%20Massachusetts&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>) Accessed 14 September 2022.

United States Census Bureau. *Westhampton town, Hampshire County, Massachusetts - S0101: Age and Sex*. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Westhampton%20town,%20Hampshire%20County,%20Massachusetts&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101>) Accessed 14 September 2022.

## **Library Historic Timeline**

**1866** At the town reunion the idea of a library was born. Donations of funds and books were made by residents.

**1867** The town voted to accept book donations and to house the library in the town hall. Charles N. Loud was appointed as librarian.

**1883** The library was voted to be moved to the church.

**1928** The Emma Edwards Thayer estate gifted \$10,000 for the library.

**1930** Mrs. Vera Chapman Clapp gifted a parcel of land and the library had its own building with construction of the “Edwards Thayer Library” beginning the same year.

**1973** A donation from Evelyn Montague made a children’s room possible for the first time. Additional donations from Sidney and Jessie Cole and David and Letiticia Cole granted more space for the collection, meeting room and furnishings for the children’s room.

**1983** Many residents called the library “Westhampton Memorial Library” and this name was officially adopted in 1983. The deed for the library was changed this year to the town of Westhampton.

**2007** A capital campaign towards the goal of a new, larger library kicked off on June 9, 2007. The current building at 1 North Road was funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, private donations by over 400 families, individuals, businesses and organizations and proceeds from the sale of Center School.

**2009** The groundbreaking for the new library was on June 5, 2009.

**2010** On October 17, 2010, the new Westhampton Public Library had its grand opening. Thanks to the generosity and support of hundreds of volunteers, the library is the beautiful and welcoming space that it is today.

**2020** On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The library adapted to the need for increased public safety by offering curbside pickup when it was deemed necessary to close to the public.

### **Westhampton Memorial Library/Westhampton Public Library, Librarians**

Marion Mascho 1928 - 1967

Stella Swanson 1967 - 1971

Gail Fernald 1971 - 1973

Eleanor Miller 1973 - 1978

Deborah Hanley 1978 - 1979 (acting librarian for Ms. Miller’s leave)

Louise Montague 1979 - 1990

Carolyn Keating 1990 - 2015

Nancy Hayes-Clune - Interim Director 2015

Lynn Blair 2016 - 2019

Judy Kelly - Interim Director 2019

Meaghan Schwelm - 2019 to present

**Sources:**

- LaFrance, Jacqui Hickey, Bridgman, James E., & Mulvehill, Sarah K., editors. *Local Color: Stories of Westhampton's First 225 Years*, 2003.
- *Westhampton, Massachusetts Bicentennial 1778 - 1978: A Short History of the Town*. Westhampton Bicentennial Committee, compiled by J.R. Greene, 1978.
- Wikander, Lawrence E., Terry, Helen, & Kiley, Mark, editors. *The Hampshire History: Celebrating 300 Years of Hampshire County Massachusetts*, 1964.

**Introduction to the Library**

The Westhampton Public Library had its grand opening on Sunday, October 17, 2010. Carolyn Keating, Library Director from 1990 - 2015, put forth the idea of changing the name of the library from Westhampton Memorial Library to Westhampton Public Library, feeling that “public” felt more inclusive. The new name was approved by vote of the Library Trustees and a new chapter in the life of the library began.

The Westhampton Public Library is open 29 hours, five days a week. It is a popular and busy library frequented by town residents and residents from neighboring communities. The collection includes materials for adults, teens and children as well as a “Trybrary” or library of things and a local history collection. Library patrons have access to materials through C/W Mars (Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing) network by interlibrary loan. Patrons also have access to materials throughout Massachusetts by request from the Commonwealth Catalog. Additionally, the Massachusetts Library System allows patrons to request items from outside both of those networks. Requests have arrived from locations such as Texas and Kentucky.

The library employs a director, youth services librarian, library assistant and custodian. Volunteers assist with library services and operations on a weekly basis by shelving materials, working at the circulation desk, creating displays and signage, pulling materials for assessment by library staff, helping library patrons, and performing garden maintenance.

Two meeting rooms, the Community Room and Judd Room, are used for library programs and are available to local non-profit organizations for booking. The Community Room is equipped with a sound system and projector which can be used for presentations and film screenings. Each month, a local artist shows their work in the Community Room. Exhibitions have ranged from landscape paintings to quilts to AI-generated artwork. Three public computers are available for patron use and Wifi is available throughout the building as well as in the parking lot.

As of September 2, 2022 838 registered patrons have Westhampton as their home library. In addition to physical materials, patrons have access to streaming films via Kanopy, as well as e-resources through C/W Mars and the Commonwealth Ebook

collection. Westhampton Public Library became an Overdrive Advantage library in 2021. Borrowers registered in Westhampton are granted first access to all ebooks and downloadable audiobooks purchased by Westhampton Public Library.

**Item Counts By Shelving Location**

Adult	7,444
Adult Audio	949
Adult Video	1,824
Juvenile	9,115
Juvenile Audio	480
Juvenile Video	763
Young Adult	1,163
Unassigned	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,756</b>

In fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022) the library circulated 25,387 physical items. This is a high circulation count for a small town library. Additionally, 4,611 electronic items were borrowed by our registered users.

Westhampton Public Library offers a variety of recurring programs and one-time events with appeal to all ages and interests. A Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant makes it possible for the library to host a weekly playgroup geared towards young children and families. Our Youth Services Librarian offers a weekly storytime during the school year and a summer reading challenge with incentives and programs during summer vacation. Playgroups and storytime promote socialization, school readiness, and early literacy. Additionally, we have hosted a YA Book Group, an Adult Book Group, craft programs for adults and teens, author visits, expert presentations, concerts and much more. Total attendance at library programs in FY22 was 1,474 people.

The library was granted LEED Gold certification in 2011. Policies are in place to ensure that EPA safer choice products are purchased to supply the library and to practice ecologically responsible management of its grounds. Solar panels aid in running the building and have generated solar credits via the SREC program which are sold and received as income for the town. The library’s solar panels have generated over \$43,000.00 of income for Westhampton. Additionally, over the past two years the library

has developed a pollinator garden featuring native plants and perennial herbs through grants from the American Library Association and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries.

### **Introduction to the Strategic Plan**

The major goal of our library strategic planning process became reimagining our mission statement. An effective mission statement is the guidepost by which all operational and service decisions are made. The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that while our previous mission statement upheld important library values, such as equitable access to materials, it was overly long and used words that are not in common use. We wanted an accessible, welcoming mission statement to guide our process. The values of learning and community came up again and again during our community meetings and became the heart of our library mission, vision and objectives.

### **Library Mission Statement**

*Westhampton Public Library will be a center for community gathering and lifelong learning. We will create opportunities for learning and enjoyment for all library users.*

#### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Catherine Adybell (Community Member)

Colleen Basile (Council on Aging)

Jackie Brodeur (Community Member; Art Exhibit Coordinator)

Anita Goddard (Library Friends Vice President)

Angela Griefen (Library Trustees Treasurer)

Nora Mulvehill (H.R.H.S. student, Library Volunteer)

Anne Marie O'Reilly (Library Trustees Chair)

Meaghan Schwelm (Library Director)

Debra Smith (Community Member)

Mike Stacey (Community Member)

Ruth Tracy (Community Member)

Emily Wayne (Youth Services Librarian)

### **Methodology**

Two meetings were held for the Strategic Planning Committee. The first meeting was held in May 2022 and was used to introduce participants to the strategic planning process and to conduct a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) analysis. This exercise helped the group identify library service areas to consider for the strategic plan. For the month of May/June, a survey was available for community members to fill out online or in-person at three central locations: the library, town hall, or

Outlook Farm. A total of 96 completed surveys were collected, the majority of which were submitted online. The online survey was advertised via the town website, the library and What's Up Westhampton Facebook pages, to the library newsletter email list, and to the COA email list.

A second meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was held in June. At this meeting, the committee reviewed results of the survey and brainstormed goals and objectives based on the results. The committee also came up with key words and ideas for the new mission statement. After the second meeting the library director drafted a new mission statement based on our group brainstorm and shared it with the Strategic Planning Committee and Library Trustees for feedback.

### **Analysis of Results (*Blank Survey pg. 12; Full Survey Results pg. 16*)**

Survey results showed that most respondents used the library weekly (36.5%) with nearly as many (29.2%) using the library monthly over the past twelve months. Only a total of three respondents had not visited the library in the past year. While this is evidence that most of our feedback came from library users, we made efforts to make the survey available to the wider community by placing copies at town hall, Outlook Farm, and advertising it on social media platforms. Nearly 50% of survey respondents said their use of the library had stayed about the same over the past 12 months.

When asked how they use the library, the majority of respondents cited the following reasons: borrow print materials, friendly welcoming staff, interlibrary loan services, attend library programs, browse collections, visit art exhibitions, use the library grounds and borrow non-print materials (DVDs, audiobooks, music, etc.) When asked why they don't use the library, inconvenient hours, lack of time, or purchasing materials rather than borrowing them were the most common reasons.

The survey also included a list of new services or services the library is considering offering to gauge community interest. The most popular services were the new Wowbrary newsletter, expanding the "Trybrary" or library of things to include more technology items, the new Kanopy online film streaming, programs on researching local history and more programs for children and teens.

The library uses a variety of channels to promote programs and services. According to the survey, the most effective are: the Bell Tower (church newsletter), library online newsletter, outdoor signage and flyers, the COA newsletter and Facebook or Instagram.

Community members noted many strengths of the library and its services during planning meetings and in survey results. Some of the strengths identified were:

friendly, welcoming staff and volunteers, a community mindset, interlibrary loan services, outdoor space, the beautiful building, programs including concerts and children's activities, new services such as Kanopy and the hotspot lending program, the collection including children's materials and the new adult materials, and a safe environment for teens. Here are a few comments on where the library excels from the survey:

*In all areas! Friendly, helpful, inclusive and aware, a true gift to our community.*

*I've only just moved to Westhampton and WPL was the first place I visited in town. We needed to borrow a hotspot while we waited for our internet to be installed and it was so convenient to be able to get one from the library! Everyone was very welcoming and, although I haven't had a chance to attend myself, I love the programming I've been seeing. I also appreciate the efforts to expand beyond traditional library programming (Trybrary) and I love that there's an exhibition space to feature local artists.*

*Friendly and skilled staff, the way it functions as a community space, outstanding collection*

*The staff is amazing and I love all the community building the library does.*

*Very welcoming place. Always a good, social experience. An opportunity to meet and see others.*

Opportunities for growth or areas for improvement were also identified. Some of the suggestions included: more programming and more regular (weekly) programming offered at times that work for community members, offering hybrid and more online programming, expanded hours, specific suggestions for programs including more craft programs and a homework help program, more accessible outdoor space, collection improvements such as: more art books, more children's books, a focus on the most popular books by authors and representing different opinions and values. Here are a few comments on where the library could improve from the survey:

*Libraries historically have advocated for expressions of difference not only of identity but opinion and values. Need to preserve this principle.*

*I wish there was more for elementary school age kids to do after school - book clubs, legos, etc*

*Outdoor area, ease for elderly.*

*Hours need to be changed to accommodate working people*

*I would like to see a use/time study done to help determine when the optimum times would be to be able to serve the most patrons. Friday hours might prove useful.*

*I think WPL needs some outdoor lighting or spotlights in the back of the building for concerts and Harvest Festival events. Older people have trouble seeing at dusk and when it gets dark...*

Community members were also asked to identify which core values of the library are most important to them. The values listed were:

- Free access to information resources that represent multiple viewpoints and interests
- Green and sustainable operations and facilities
- Supporting early literacy development and school readiness for children and families
- Practicing equity, diversity and inclusion as reflected in collection materials and public programs
- Promoting lifelong learning with free programs on topics of interest to the community

Respondents were asked to select three of the five values. It should be noted that the library plans to continue to uphold all five of these values, but wanted to determine how our core values align with those of the community at large. Some respondents explained that it was difficult or impossible to choose only three. Free access to information resources that represent multiple viewpoints and interests (80.9%), promoting lifelong learning with free programs on topics of interest to the community (79.8%), and supporting early literacy development and school readiness for children and families (62.8%) were the most common three selections.

Community members were given the opportunity to make additional comments at the close of the survey. Some of these comments included:

*As a newer resident of town and someone thinking about starting a family, WPL is an incredible resource that made Westhampton a more attractive place to settle. While I haven't used the library as much as I would have liked the past few years since moving*

*here, I'm hoping with Covid restrictions easing and once I have children that I can more frequently utilize all WPL offers!*

*Nope...Emily and Meaghan are a great team. They could probably use some extra staff, however...they have to cover a lot of ground!*

*So blessed to have such an asset in our town. Most valuable building in town.*

*We look forward to the summer reading program! My child is 8, we primarily come to WPL to browse the children's section. Emily is always so kind and helpful!*

*I can not choose just one above. Each is equally important for the library to serve all the residents and the community. We have a unique town, and our library serves it well. It is welcoming, comfortable, and boasts a wonderful array of books of all kinds. The staff now as well as in the past are caring and take great care of everyone. Thank you.*

*We LOVE WPL!!*

*Libraries are the bedrock of democracy.*

*The library has been a great support to the community, especially given the challenges of COVID!*

*I'm excited about the new "Reuse" initiative, and the expanding pollinator gardens. The library is modeling socially responsible behavior on both counts. It's a very visible town asset, not like any other. They are there to serve, to help, and to lead.*

A majority of those who filled out the survey were aged 50+. Recurring themes identified in the results were more accessible programming for all ages, hours that work for all members of the community, accessible and safe spaces for people of all ages, the library as a community gathering place, the importance of our core values, and high levels of satisfaction with library staff, volunteers, current programs and new initiatives. The survey also included a section for words that come to mind when people think of the library. Here is one comment that was especially nice to receive:

*Pride! So many of us are so proud of our little town's wonderful library.*

## **Goals and Objectives**

### ***Expand the library's recognition in town for its services and resources.***

Objective: Use in-person community-wide events, such as Fall Festival, to promote library programs and resources. Get new community members excited about the library!

Objective: Keep in regular contact with local schools, the COA, and other community groups by promoting relevant events, materials and services.

### ***Create opportunities for learning and enjoyment for all ages.***

Objective: Provide regular children's programming at set weekly times that are convenient for local families based on survey suggestions.

Objective: Design and implement programs of interest to teens and millennials based on patron feedback.

Objective: Use suggestions from the survey to guide programming plans for adult patrons over the next three to five years.

### ***Be a welcoming, accessible space for all community members.***

Objective: The library director in collaboration with town officials and library trustees will strategize how to make the outdoor spaces more accessible to older adults and people with disabilities.

Objective: The library director in collaboration with the youth services librarian will continue to develop a thoughtful, relevant, and inclusive collection based on the criteria outlined in our newly updated collection development policy.

## Appendix 1 Community Survey

# Westhampton Public Library



## Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028 Community Survey

Help shape the library's community vision for the next five years. We need your feedback to improve and expand library services, materials, and partnerships.

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**1. On average, how often have you visited Westhampton Public Library (WPL) and/or used WPL services in the past 12 months?**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Several times
- Once or twice
- I have not visited WPL or used WPL services in the past 12 months

**2. In the past 12 months has your use of WPL or WPL services increased or decreased compared to recent years?**

- Increased
- Decreased
- Stayed about the same
- N/A (not applicable)

**3. If you use WPL, please tell us why? Check all that apply.**

- Borrow print materials (books, large print, magazines, etc.)
- Borrow non-print materials (DVDs, audiobooks, music, etc.)
- Browse collections for something to read, view, or listen to
- Quiet place to sit and read or study
- Help with finding books or other materials
- Help with research, school assignments, or finding information
- Interlibrary loan services to request materials from other libraries
- Attend library programs

- Visit art exhibitions
- Participate in summer reading
- Use library computers
- Borrow library wifi hotspots
- Use the library yard/grounds
- Get out of the house and see friends and neighbors
- Borrow items from the "Trybrary" which includes jigsaw puzzles, learning kits, a ukulele, a telescope, etc.
- Borrow museum passes
- Use office services (print, copy, fax)
- Friendly, welcoming staff and volunteers
- Use meeting rooms
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**4. If you don't use WPL or WPL services, or use them regularly, please tell us why. Check all that apply.**

- Too busy/no time
- I buy what materials I need (or get them as gifts)
- My children have grown and I mainly went to the library for them
- Wait times are too long for popular materials
- Loan periods are not long enough
- It's too hard to find materials I want to borrow
- Hours not convenient for me
- Location/parking not convenient for me
- Staff and volunteers are not friendly/welcoming
- Had a bad experience
- Disability or physical limitation
- Rooms/spaces not available when I want them
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Which new or newer services would you most like WPL to offer or continue to offer in the next few years? Please check all that apply.**

- Wowbrary newsletter (weekly newsletter of new materials added to the library)
- Wifi hotspots lending program
- Curbside pickup
- Programs on researching local history
- Expanding the "Trybrary" to include more technology items for community members to borrow, such as a scanner and portable projector
- Kanopy online film streaming service

- More programs for children and teens

**5a. What suggestions do you have for programs and services that WPL could offer in the future?**

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**6. How do you hear about WPL services? Please check all that apply.**

- Facebook or Instagram
- Town website
- Bell Tower newsletter
- COA newsletter
- Library online newsletter (Would you like to receive the Library online newsletter?  
Yes No If Yes, please provide your email address: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Wowbrary online newsletter
- Local press - Country Journal, Gazette, etc.
- Outdoor signage and flyers

**7. In your opinion, where does WPL excel?**

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**8. In your opinion, where does WPL need to improve?**

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**9. What words come to mind when you think of WPL?**

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**10. What core values of WPL do you think are most important? Please choose your top three.**

- Free access to information resources that represent multiple viewpoints and interests
- Green and sustainable operations and facilities
- Supporting early literacy development and school readiness for children and families

- Practicing diversity, equity and inclusion as reflected in collection materials and public programs
- Promoting lifelong learning with free programs on topics of interest to the community

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

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Now tell us a little bit about you.

**What is your age group?**

- 9 or younger
- 10 - 19
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 - 69
- 70 - 79
- 80+

**What is your zip code and town?**

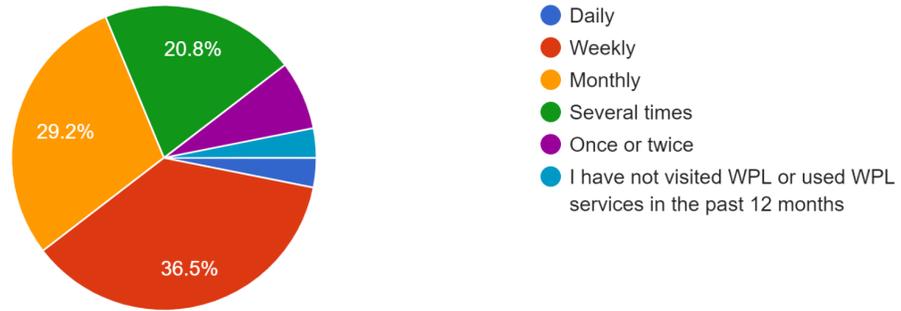
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Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.  
Your input will help us to better serve the community of Westhampton!

## Appendix 2 Community Survey Results

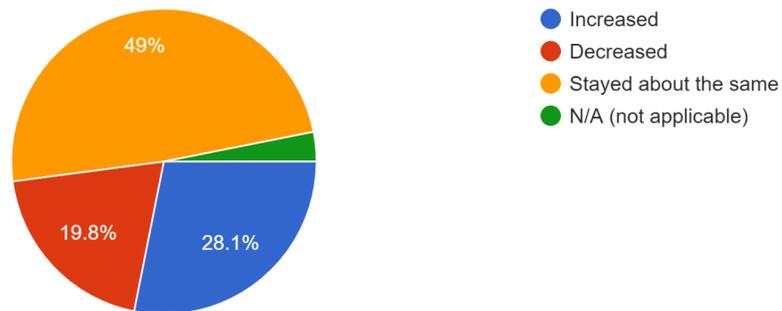
On average, how often have you visited Westhampton Public Library (WPL) and/or used WPL services in the past 12 months?

96 responses



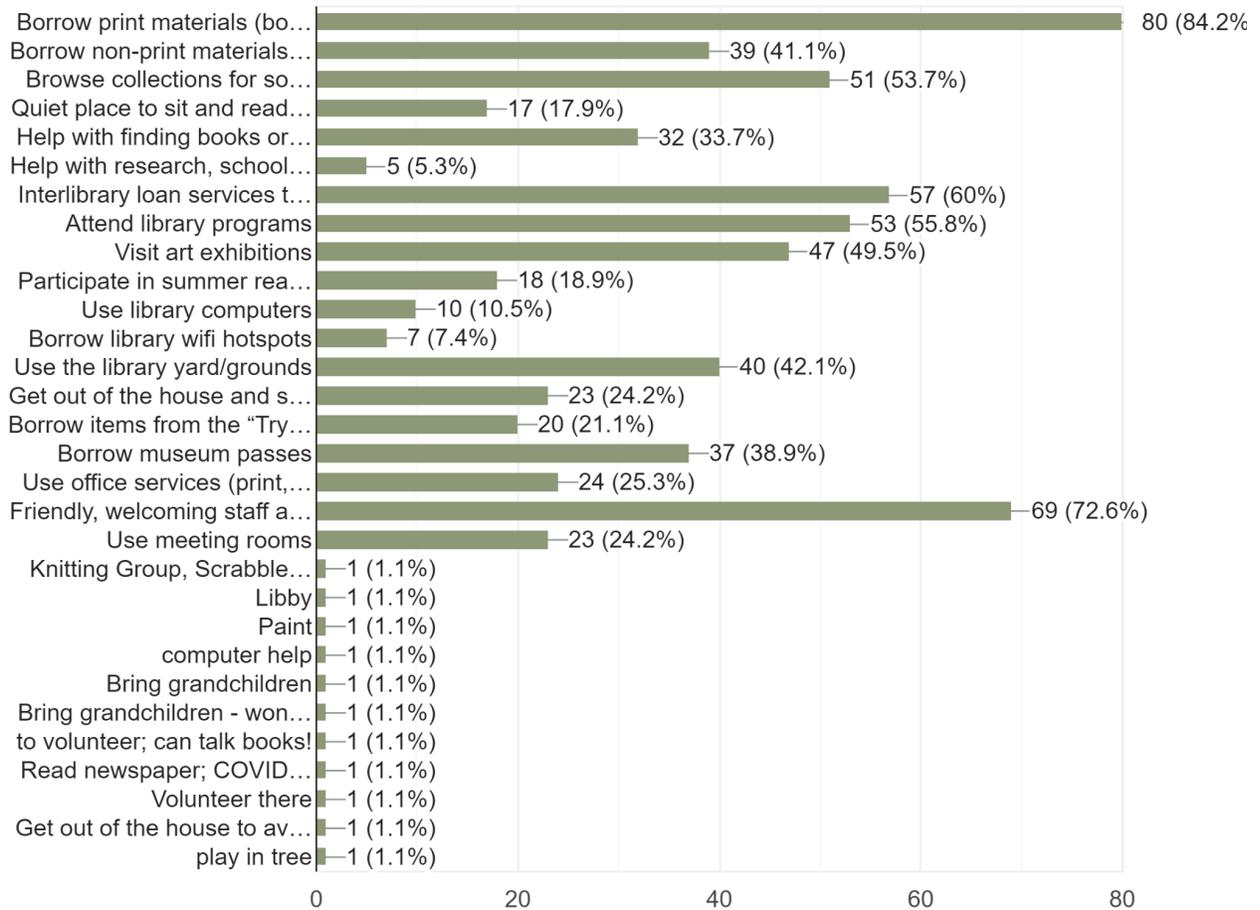
In the past 12 months has your use of WPL or WPL services increased or decreased compared to recent years?

96 responses



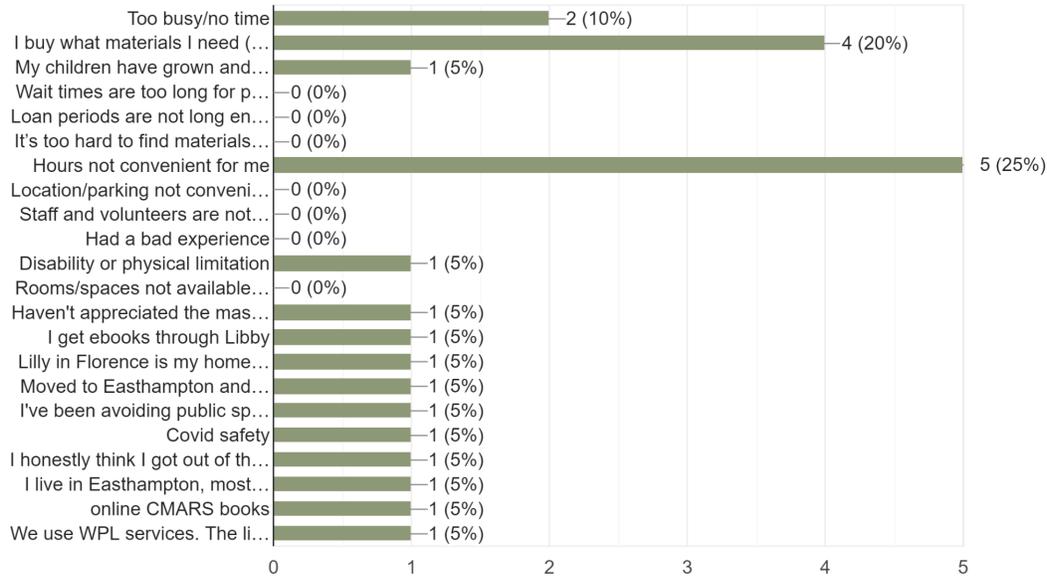
If you use WPL, please tell us why? Check all that apply.

95 responses



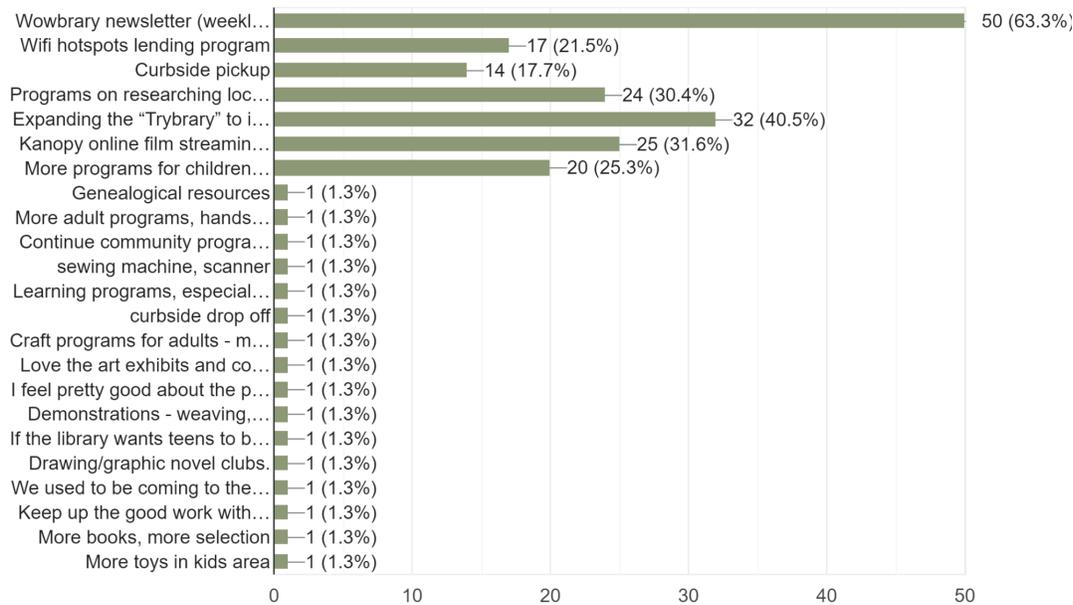
If you don't use WPL or WPL services, or use them regularly, please tell us why. Check all that apply.

20 responses



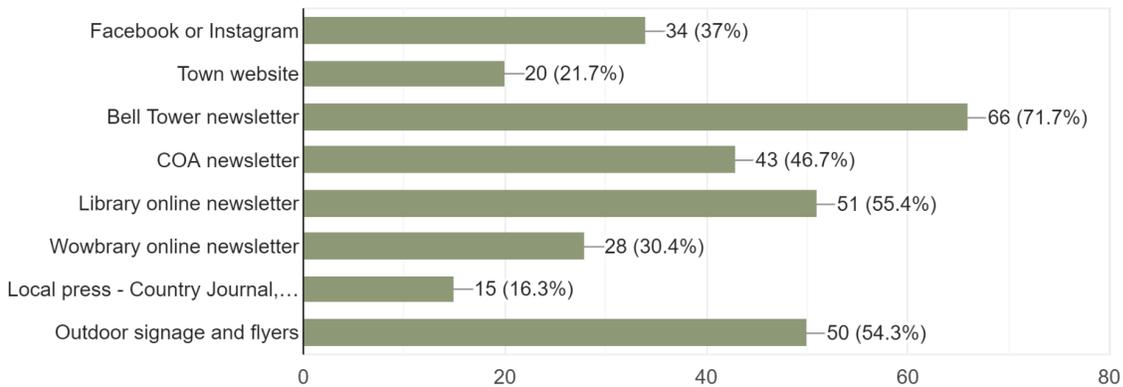
Which new or newer services would you most like WPL to offer or continue to offer in the next few years? Please check all that apply.

79 responses



How do you hear about WPL services? Please check all that apply.

92 responses



**In your opinion, where does WPL excel? 82 responses (first ten copied below)**

Welcoming staff, availability of items to borrow (including through CWMARS), appealing building and grounds

A beautiful, friendly resource for materials, sociabilty, programming, etc. etc. etc.!

beautiful building & grounds, programs, welcoming & helpful staff

Friendly staff, welcoming, beautiful space

online access to MARS, children's materials, beautiful grounds/eco-friendly, friendly community center

Community access of space, find any materials through inter library resources

Social media, children's collection, beautiful space

In all areas! Friendly, helpful, inclusive and aware, a true gift to our community.

Extremely knowledgeable and helpful staff

Accessibility

**In your opinion, where does WPL need to improve? 54 responses (first ten copied below)**

Can't think of a thing!

expand program offerings & staff hours

Libraries historically have advocated for expressions of difference not only of identity but opinion and values. Need to preserve this principle.

I wish there was more for elementary school age kids to do after school - book clubs, legos, etc

I think it might be useful to do a time management study to see which hours are more popular and adjust the hours accordingly.

Outdoor area, ease for elderly.

More hours

The hours make it difficult for me to visit and explore.

It would be nice if upper and lower shelves were easier to read/access, but I realize it's probably not feasible, given the tightness of the shelves already.

I'd like to see more groups/events offered

**What words come to mind when you think of WPL? 80 responses (first ten copied below)**

Friendly

Community

Welcoming

Wonderful

the center of the community for its patrons

friendly, accessible

Friendly, helpful

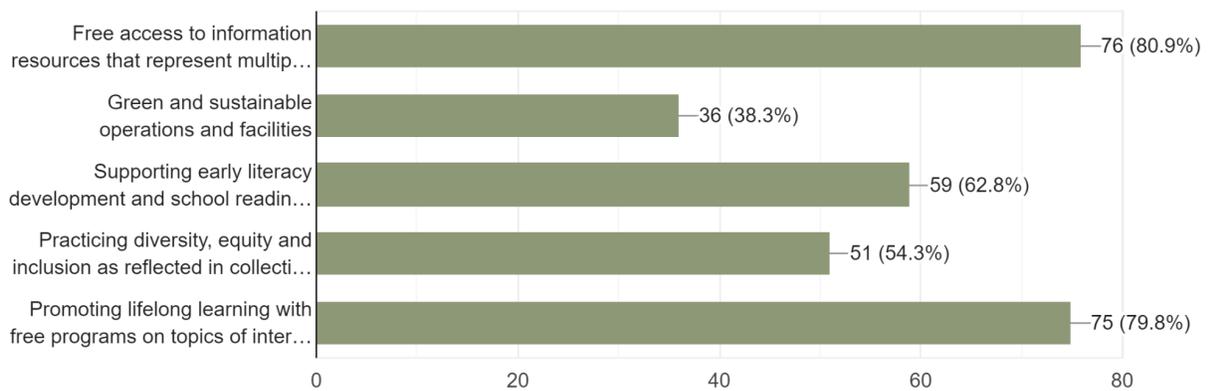


Pleasant and educational town center.

Great resource

What core values of WPL do you think are most important? Please choose your top three.

94 responses



**Is there anything else you would like to add? 30 responses (first ten copied below)**

Thank you!

The town is fortunate to have such an amazing library!

staff & volunteers are doing great work within their limitations of time

Thank you, Meaghan and Emily, and Trustees and Friends!

As a newer resident of town and someone thinking about starting a family, WPL is an incredible resource that made Westhampton a more attractive place to settle. While I haven't used the library as

