

Alfred Box of Books Library

Five Year Strategic Plan 2022-2027

Adopted by Board of Trustees: November 8, 2021

Mission Statement:

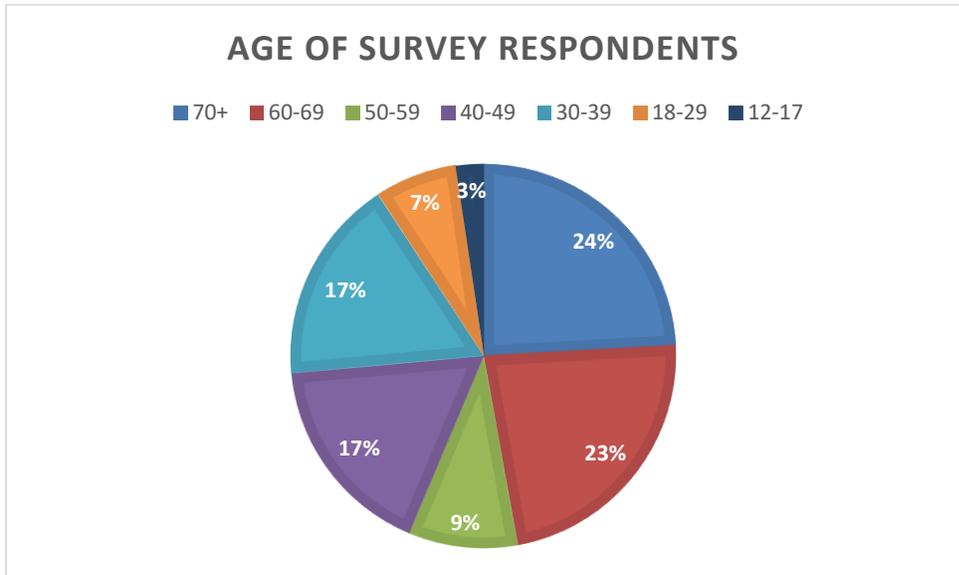
Alfred’s Public Library is dedicated to the principle that free access to the individual pursuit of knowledge is essential to the support and preservation of democracy. The library will continue to enhance the quality of life in this rural area by serving as a center of community interaction and by providing an open and non-judgmental environment, in which all people have access to cultural, educational, and recreational materials, programming, and services.

Turning Outward

Beginning in May 2021 we released a print survey to gauge the community’s interaction with the library. In September and October of 2021 we held a series of focus groups to help us identify what people wanted from their community and how the library might support those aspirations. Using data from both the print surveys and the focus groups, the Board of Trustees considered library services over the next five years.

We collected 88 responses to the survey. 90% of respondents were library cardholders.

Respondent Demographics:



51.8% of respondents were from Alfred (Town or Village) and 28.7% from Alfred Station. The remaining respondents were from surrounding towns such as Andover, Almond, Wellsville, Whitesville, and Belmont.

35.6% of survey respondents had children age 18 or younger living at home.

COLLECTIONS:

The core service for the Alfred Box of Books Library is maintaining a collection of print and non-print materials to fulfill the informational, recreational, social, and educational needs of the community.

In regard to the library’s physical collection, survey respondents share the need for more shelf space, more non-fiction materials, large print items, and young adult materials.



Many survey respondents noted that interlibrary loan was critical for library services for accessing the materials they needed. Despite this, the Alfred Box of Books continues to loan more items from its collection to other libraries than it borrows. According to annual report statistics, the library loaned 17% more items than it borrowed in 2020, and loaned 8% more than it borrowed in 2019.

Goal 1: Expand the library’s role as an educational resource by providing access to educational, recreational and cultural materials.

Objective 1: Collaborate with the Alfred-Almond School District for extracurricular activities and curricular support.

Objective 2: Support homeschool population through collection development and re-establishment of Homeschool Advisory Group.

Objective 3: Provide continued support and collaboration with Alfred Montessori School.

Goal 2: Seek to promote the library’s role as a community resource for all people by focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the collection development policy.

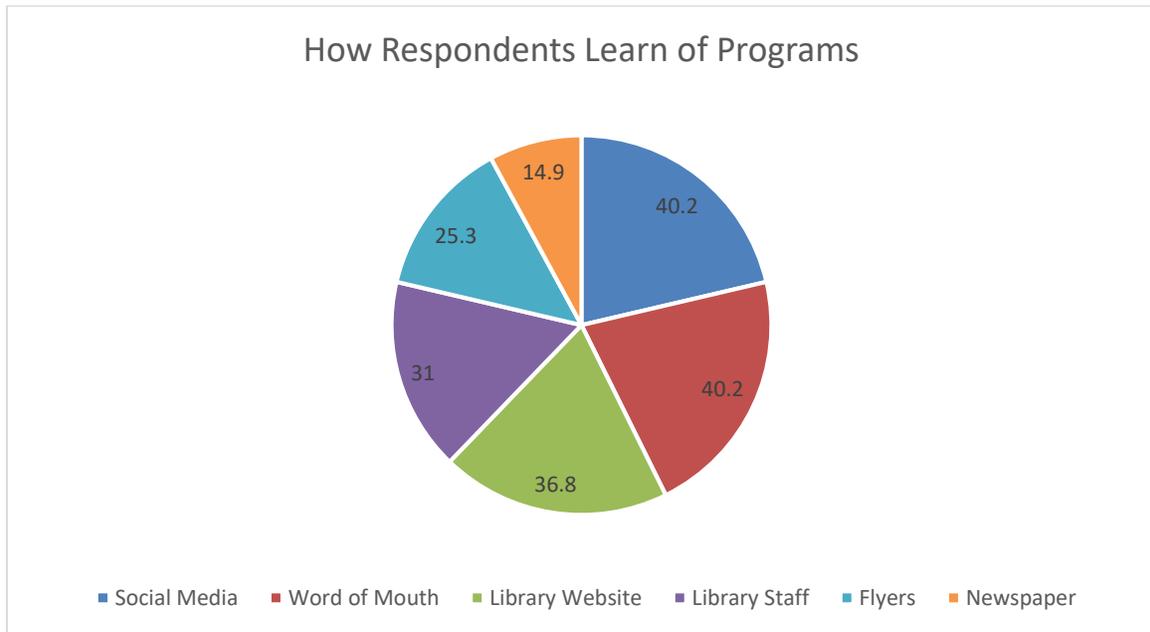
Objective 1: Conduct annual diversity audits of the collection to ensure the collection is reflective of the community the library serves.

Objective 2: Seek out resources to enhance collection development with diverse titles.

Objective 3: Include Large Print in acquisitions.

PROGRAMMING

Programming is an integral part of the services the library offers to the community. The Alfred Box of Books Library seeks to offer programs that enhance community life and satisfies the curiosity and interests of its residents.



28 survey respondents rated current library programming as Excellent, 15 rated it as Good, and 6 rated it as Fair. 32 said “Don’t know or not applicable” to this question.

Goal 3: Enhance the quality of life for community residents by offering educational, recreational, and cultural programs to patrons of all ages.

Objective 1: Maintain or strive to increase the overall programming budget each fiscal year to adapt to increased costs, conducting hybrid (virtual and in-person) programming, and offering more programs.

Objective 2: Secure grant funding to increase overall programming budget.

Objective 3: Continue to develop strategies for promoting library programs in order to reach a broader audience.

Objective 4: Work closely with Almond 20th Century Club Library to create cohesive programming for Alfred-Almond Community and promote that programming through the Alfred-Almond School District.

Objective 5: Continue to collaborate with Alfred State and Alfred University to provide program services, resources, and support.

Objective 6: Strive to revitalize summer reading programs for children and families and dedicate funding to this initiative after negative impacts from the pandemic.

Objective 7: Incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning opportunities into programming.

STAFF

Library employees are the greatest asset of the Alfred Box of Books Library. They provide, develop, sustain, and enhance the services the library offers. It is important that the Library Board of Trustees supports and invests in these individuals in order to continue our quality service.

Overwhelmingly, customer service was rated Excellent (69) by survey respondents. 10 respondents rated it Good. In focus groups, the welcoming nature of the library, particularly from staff, was mentioned several times as something valued most about the library.

Goal 4: Support a knowledgeable and dedicated staff in order to offer the highest quality service to the residents of Alfred and the surrounding area.

Objective 1: Provide staff with training opportunities and encourage professional development.

Objective 2: Train all student workers to ensure excellent customer service and knowledgeable staff.

Objective 3: Make diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings available to all staff, including student workers, volunteers and Board of Trustees.

Objective 4: Enlist volunteers who are capable of maintaining library service, making it possible for staff to seek professional development opportunities.

Objective 5: Encourage staff and Board members to stay knowledgeable about library requirements and issues by attending Southern Tier Library System (STLS) and other professional workshops.

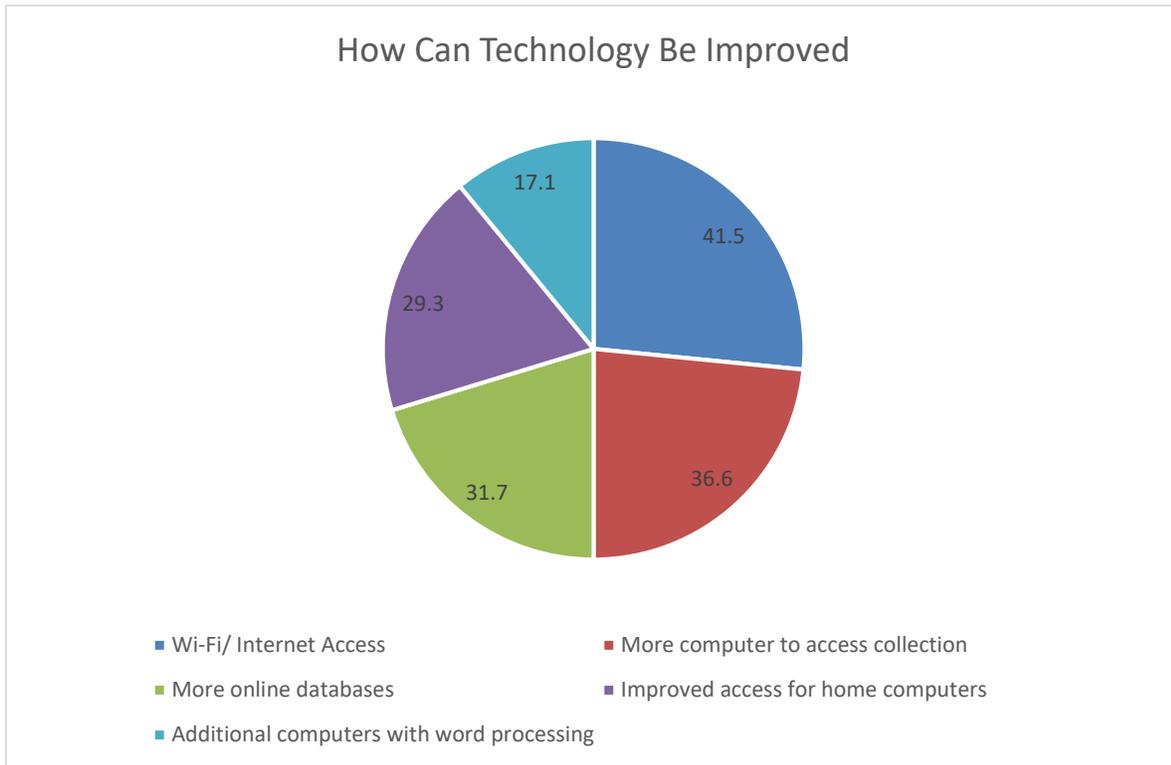
Objective 6: Continually review and update policies and procedures in accordance with New York State and STLS guidance and ensure that all staff are familiar with them.

Objective 7: Encourage staff and/or Board of Trustee participation in Village Board meetings to stay current on events happening within the Village that may impact the library or its patrons.

TECHNOLOGY

Maintaining staff knowledge of emergent technologies, and offering information and services to community residents on a variety of technologies is an integral part of the services of the Alfred Box of Books Library. Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic have also shown that there is a significant digital divide in communities, and finding ways to address that divide, especially at times when information is critical, is paramount.

96.5% of survey respondents have Wi-Fi and/or internet access at home.



In focus groups, the topic of digital inclusivity was brought up and the importance of making the community accessible through digital inclusion.

Goal 5: Provide access to 21st century technologies for patrons and staff, and enable development of the skills needed to use them.

Objective 1: Secure funding to maintain adequate levels of support for technology upgrades and purchase new relevant technologies.

Objective 2: Maintain well documented technology replacement plan to plan for future upgrades and purchases.

Objective 3: Allow for staff to participate in training opportunities to learn about emerging technologies.

Objective 4: Seek ways to promote digital inclusion in our rural area and to reach people in low-tech ways, as well.

Objective 5: Develop website resources for homeschool families.

Objective 6: Work with individuals to promote digital skills.

Objective 7: Investigate best uses of technology trends to educate and entertain community.

Objective 8: Ensure our online and digital presence is accessible to users with different abilities.

FUNDING

In order to fulfill the mission of the library and ensure sustainable community service, maintaining and growing funding opportunities is important.

One message we heard during focus groups was the desire for opportunities for community engagement through volunteerism. To that end, revitalizing and maintaining a robust Friends of the Box of Books Library is important.

Goal 6: Maintain funding that ensures sustainable library services and growth of the library.

Objective 1: Maintain transparency for taxpayers through annual reports and newsletters in order to create a relationship of trust and integrity with our tax base.

Objective 2: Develop an annual goal-based budget to meet the needs of the community and to provide the area taxpayers the highest return on investment.

Objective 3: Continue to research and develop alternative funding sources through grant writing for specific projects, collection development, and programming.

Objective 4: Revitalize the Friends of the Library group by recruiting and retaining a large and broad spectrum of volunteers.

Objective 5: Help support the Friends of the Library Group fundraising initiatives based on opportunity and financial need.

FACILITIES

The small size and age of the building is one of the library's greatest challenges. The last major renovation to the building was an addition completed in 1987. Due to the historical nature of the original portion of the Box of Books, there are limited funding opportunities and updates that can be made to the building. The size of building creates challenges in meeting community needs, delivering services, updating mechanical systems, and meeting the core mission of the library. The size of the library creates also accessibility issues.

Survey respondents rated handicapped accessibility, parking, community meeting space, and energy efficiency as highest priority in terms of importance for the library followed by quiet reading areas, young adult space and a larger children's space.

When asked about the current facility, survey respondents rated the following as Excellent: lighting (36), cleanliness (49) and time waiting for service (50).

Respondents rated the following as Good: exterior condition (45), interior condition (42), accessibility (30), ease of use (35), layout (40), ample seating (28), quiet reading areas (22), acoustics (27), restrooms (26), and overall comfort (34).

Private meeting space (22) and community meeting space (18) were rated as Poor by survey respondents.

During focus groups, similar themes emerged. The space limitations, limited handicapped accessibility, and noise of the heating system hinder the library from being a community center. Parking is also an important issue in the village of Alfred, and how new systems limit accessibility to local businesses, as well as the library.

Goal 7: Seek alternative space or potential for creating additional space for the library that would allow us to expand services and be accessible to all.

Objective 1: Work closely with the Southern Tier Library System on the New York State Construction Aid process should space or potential to create space become available.

Objective 2: Share the process with community members in transparent way, and invite community members' participation.

Objective 3: Communicate with community leaders to seek solutions and invite participation.

Objective 4: Create community meeting space that is accessible to people without parking burdens.

OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

Collaboration with local organizations, businesses, and individuals is an important part of 21st century library services. Not only does this increase library visibility, but it also provides greater resources to the community.

Throughout the focus group, one common theme that emerged was a lack of cohesiveness between the town and village of Alfred and the University and College. One way of addressing this issue is to seek collaborative initiatives and a centralized method of learning about events.

Goal 8: Actively and effectively cooperate with other libraries, local institutions and organizations to provide broader service to the community.

Objective 1: Partner with local organizations and businesses to present programs of interest.

Objective 2: Seek new opportunities for local partnerships to reach more community residents.

Objective 3: Seek opportunities to promote the library and its services outside the library and participate in local events as a way of maintaining community visibility.

Objective 4: Develop contacts at the local school district, Alfred State and Alfred University to facilitate collaboration with resource sharing.

Goal 9: Establish the library as a place of information sharing.

Objective 1: Work with the libraries of Alfred University and Alfred State on establishing local libraries as points of contact for information.

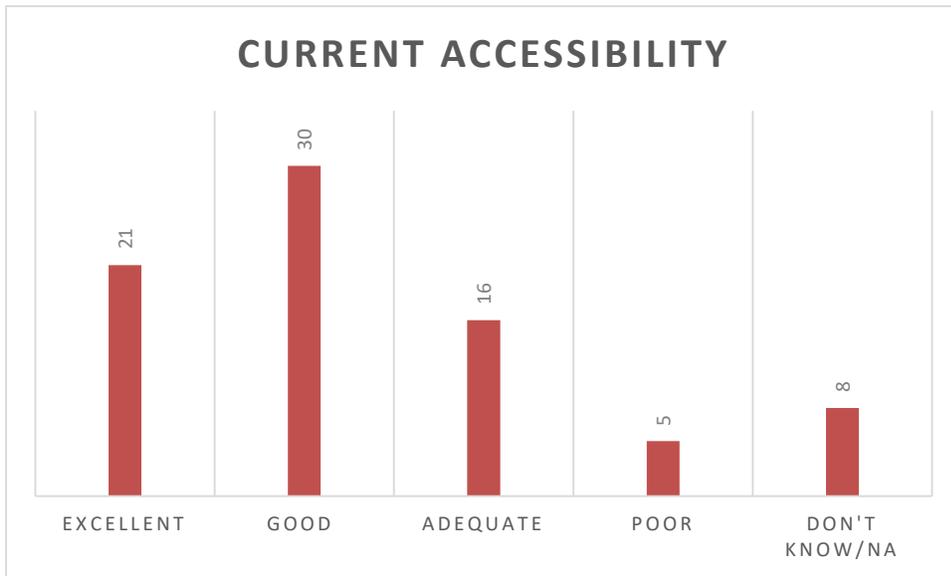
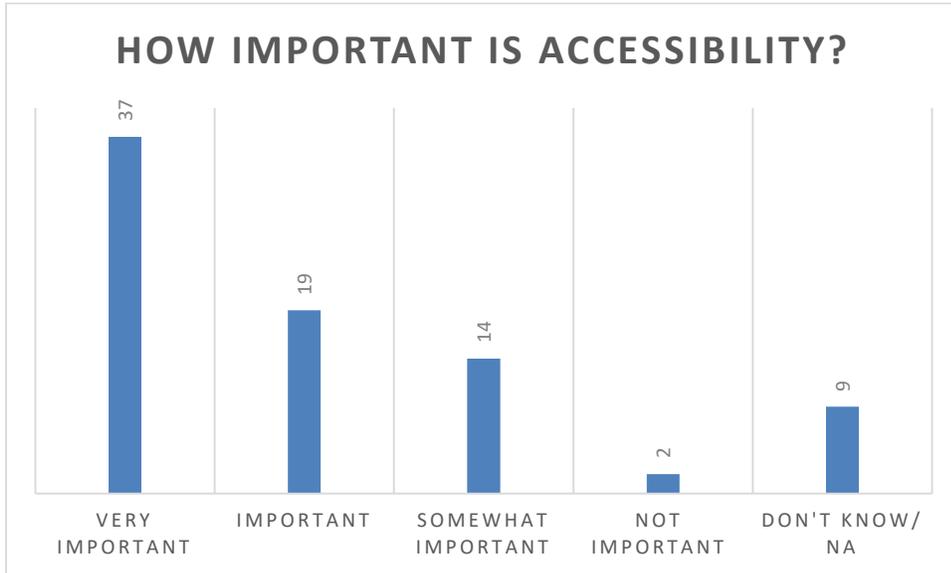
Objective 2: Continue to work with the town and village on a central calendar of events.

Objective 3: Establish information sharing with new community members.

Objective 4: Create a low-tech solution for sharing of information with community members.

INCLUSION, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY

A priority of the library is to ensure that all members of the community feel welcome in the library, and included in the community.



The issue of accessibility was brought up during focus groups, too. Creating physical and digital spaces that are accessible to all community members is a priority of the library.

Goal 10: Incorporate inclusion, equity, diversity, and accessibility into the work and mission of the library.

Objective 1: Ensure community members feel welcome in the library through staff training, customer service, and assistance.

Objective 2: Ensure that community members feel represented in the library through a collection that represents diverse subject matters, characters, and authors.

Objective 3: Encourage staff and Board of Trustees participate in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) trainings offered through the Southern Tier Library System.