

Reading Room Association of Gouverneur
Long Range Planning Document
2019-2024

Background/History/Current Status

The Reading Room Association of Gouverneur (RRAG), hereafter referred to as the Library, is chartered to serve the village of Gouverneur, but it also serves the surrounding area. Gouverneur is a trading center for a rural area with a weekly farmers' market held each year from June until October in the park directly across the street from the library. The village includes Butternut Hill, a 40 unit mixed housing development; Cambray Courts, a 100 unit senior citizen/handicapped housing area; Pine Grove, a 48 unit senior citizen/age restricted housing area; Kilkarney Court, a 12 unit senior citizen/handicapped housing area. The village also has a hospital and several group homes operated by ARC for adults with disabilities. The Library serves one parochial school, an elementary, middle and high school. In 1990, a 1000 bed correctional facility was constructed just north of the village.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the town of Gouverneur had a population of 7,085; that includes the village of Gouverneur with a population of 3,949. The town encompasses 72.4 square miles with 2,724 housing units and the village has an area of 2.2 square miles with 1,832 housing units. The median income in the town for a household was \$27,701; the village had a median income of \$25,174 per household.

The RRAG was founded by a local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) with an initial operating budget of \$30,000. On January 14, 1886, the first reading room was established in a rented space over a store on Main Street. Forty books were available; only women could be members. In 1900, the reading room was expanded with the construction of the first section of the present building. Constructed of Gouverneur marble, it represents the original library structure. A second room was added in 1905. The children's room was added in 1953 and in 1970, a two story addition provided more shelf space on the upper floor and a meeting room on the lower floor. In 1995, these different levels were made handicapped accessible with the construction of an access ramp, a mechanical lift and handicapped access modifications to the public bathroom. In 2008, the attic over the first two rooms of the building was completely renovated into a loft area for reading, studying and meeting purposes.

Presently, the library boasts an inventory of approximately 20,000 books, a comprehensive collection of magazines and newspapers, audio books, and videos. Also eight on-line computers are available for free use by library patrons; the Library also provides instruction in computer usage. Library patrons have access to a copier, scanner, and fax machine, as well as to a microfilm/microfiche reader and the archival collection of local newspapers preserved on microfilm. The Library is connected to the regional North Country Library System (NCLS) and Northern New York Library Network (NNYLN) via computer. The Library is currently one of forty-six libraries in the NCLS tri-county region which has an automated circulation system and access to several current online databases.

Executive Summary

The Reading Room Association of Gouverneur has served the public library needs of the town and village of Gouverneur as well as the surrounding area since 1886. Over the years the Library has grown with additions. The library collection has grown in size and variety to include more than traditional print materials. Modern technological information tools rank high among the current resources the library offers to the community in its commitment to providing a multi-media resource of information both practical and recreational. A periodic trustee initiated needs assessment survey is conducted to ensure that the current needs and interests of the community are being served.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Reading Room Association of Gouverneur is to maintain and improve the quality of life for all citizens of our community by providing resources and programs that enhance and contribute to individual knowledge, enlightenment, and enjoyment. In partnership with local institutions the Library continues to encourage a commitment to lifelong learning in all patrons.

Vision Statement

The Reading Room Association of Gouverneur is a vital public resource that will continue to serve the community as a gateway to an expanding world of knowledge. The Library will achieve its vision and its goals with a philosophy that welcomes change and innovation. We will be committed to maintaining a viable collection of materials and keeping pace with technology.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

1. The Library has an enthusiastic, competent library manager and staff who are committed to providing patrons with friendly and knowledgeable service. The staff has the opportunity to attend a variety of NCLS workshops,
2. A strong partnership exists between the Library and the community. There is ongoing interaction between the Library and the Rec Center as well as with the elementary schools, including Head Start Gingerbread House, East Side Elementary, and St. James School. Service organizations and the Chamber of Commerce cooperate with the Library in several activities. Different groups use the library as a meeting place throughout the year.
3. A fifteen member Board of Trustees who are dedicated to keeping the Library an accessible, viable, and smoothly functioning part of the community is an asset. This volunteer group brings a variety of skills and talents to the Library.
4. The Library continues to receive strong support from its patrons and the community.

5. NCLS provides many services which support the Reading Room Association of Gouverneur. For example, the interlibrary loan program provided by NCLS is an asset to the Library's patrons.
6. The "library loft" provides a welcoming, comfortable space for various activities and/or groups.

Weaknesses

1. The space in the library is limited and there is little or no room for expansion. The computer area is cramped. The circulation desk area needs to be redesigned for more efficiency..
2. Wifi access in several establishments in the village compete with the library.

Opportunities

1. Throughout the year, the library offers a variety of programs. Some of the programs are financed by grants received by the library as a result of the grant-writing skills of the library manager.
2. Assistance is offered one on one to individuals using the library computers.
3. There is an active and successful Friends of the Library group in the community. They conduct a number of fund-raising activities during the year including a geranium sale in May, Arts in the Park in June, Trivia Challenge contests several times throughout the year, ongoing used book sales and other special events. They also help fund special programs and purchase items for the library.
4. Opportunities for local "experts" to share their talents is part of the Library's endeavor to provide stimulating/enriching programs.

Threats

1. Sustained funding is, and will continue to be, a major problem. The Library will receive no funds from St. Lawrence County and state support fluctuates. Local governments up to now have been consistent with financial aid.
2. Security issues are not a serious problem at the present time but we continue to be vigilant to be proactive in dealing with them.

Goals

1. Investigate ways of securing funding as public funding decreases.

To keep programs and services stable:

- Support Friends of the Library in their various fundraising activities
- Pursue appropriate grants as they become available
- Continue annual appeal in the fall

2. Build the collection of books, eBooks and other materials to meet patrons needs.

Patrons rely on the library as a source of high-quality books, eBooks, and materials in order to be informed, educated and entertained. Gouverneur residents should have access to a wide range of materials.

- Expand the collection of books, eBooks, and other materials- from classics in fiction to important works of non-fiction to current best sellers.

3. Improve current building spaces to better accommodate patrons

Patrons need comfortable, welcoming spaces for reading, studying, computer use and to attend programs.

- Provide work and seating areas for accessing different library resources
- Label shelving and library resources clearly for easy access

4. Enhance library staff members' ability to better serve our patrons

Staff members need to develop computer competencies and possess communication skills that allow them to interact with patrons and assist in their procurement of materials.

- Review and revise job descriptions as needed to reflect job responsibilities and desired communication skills required
- Provide an effective, comprehensive orientation program for new library staff
- Conduct ongoing continuing education and training sessions, utilizing NCLS staff whenever possible
- Value staff contributions

5. Use technology and computer resources to improve library services for patrons.

Patrons need access to computers and programs, and assistance in using them, to function in today's world.

- Keep computer technology and software up-to-date to facilitate the convenient creation of resumes and completion of job applications
- Assist patrons in the use of computers and e-readers and other literacy or library platforms

6. Develop a strong early literacy program.

Assist parents in enhancing learning and reading skills by providing a variety of grade level reading materials.

- Provide a diverse and current collection of books in various formats to address different learning styles

7. Foster community connections.

Awareness of public sentiment helps us meet the needs and wants of the community and brings more people into the library.

- Conduct and tabulate a needs survey in 2021
- Use our website and local advertising platforms to announce library services and programs
- Offer a yearly summer reading program with reading incentives
- Collaborate with at least one community group each year