

**Whitman Public Library
Long Range Plan
July 2018—June 2024**

**Submitted by the Board of Library Trustees
Susan Durand, Chair, and
Marcie Walsh-O'Connor, Library Director**

September 12, 2018

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Approval of the Board of Library Trustees:

The Whitman Public Library Board of Trustees approved the Long Range Plan for 2018-2024 at their September 12, 2018, meeting by unanimous vote.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan would not exist without the generous time and insight contributed by:

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Michael Ganshirt
Ann Trotta, Vice Chair
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The library is also indebted to other key members of the Massachusetts Library community:

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INTRODUCTION

Presented here is the Whitman Public Library's Long Range Plan: FY19-24. It is the product of a lengthy planning process undertaken to identify and develop a focus of goals for the Whitman Public Library over the next five years. Trustees and staff officially undertook the project in February, 2018, and with the help of the community, the Long Range Plan was completed in July, 2018. The Methodology outlines the timeline and actions taken to complete the plan.

The plan consists of three main sections. The first consists of an Assessment of User Needs, which provides background on the community and the library, and its direction for the future. The middle section and bulk of the plan describes the chosen Service Responses. These include goals, objectives, and activities. Goals are broad-reaching aspirations, objectives are concrete examples of how a goal is embodied, and activities delineate concrete actions that will be undertaken to ensure the Service Response is realized. The final section is an appendix with data from the last six years at the library, Town of Whitman 2010 census, and some of the results of the Long Range Planning survey.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Whitman Public Library seeks to be at the heart of its community by providing all residents with a wide array of popular and educational materials in both its physical and virtual spaces. The library also aims to deliver the resources and services to patrons which facilitate personal and intellectual growth.

METHODOLOGY

The Whitman Public Library's Long Range Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-24 represents the cumulative work of over a year of planning, data gathering, and community input. The Library Director, Board of Trustees, Library Staff, and a Community Planning Committee were heavily involved in the process.

Sandra Nelson's *Strategic Planning for Results* was used as a guideline and a touchstone for this process, as well as various in-person and online training opportunities provided by the Massachusetts Library System.

Beginning in FY18, the library started to lay out a timeline for planning. The first step was to seek approval from the library trustees, which was granted at the monthly trustees meeting on September 12, 2017. At this time, a trustee representative was selected to serve on the Community Planning Committee and all trustees were asked for other suggestions for committee members. The Library director and assistant director began recruiting other members of the Community Planning Committee, resulting in a group of 12 members (not including the Director) with the Assistant Director also serving as a Library Staff Representative. A full list of Planning Committee members can be found on the Acknowledgements page, but every effort was made to include representatives from a variety of backgrounds, community groups, and age brackets.

Once the Planning Committee was formed, an initial meeting was held in June 2018. This meeting focused on three key components: providing the Planning Committee with a community report led by the director; providing an overview of the library and its last five years by the director; and holding an exercise to examine the library's "Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results", led by a facilitator from the Massachusetts Library System. After this meeting, library staff and trustees were led through the same presentations and exercises. All results were recorded and shared between groups.

A second Planning Committee meeting was held in July 2018. This meeting focused on examining the potential library service responses and possible activities that could fall under those responses. The process began with voting, and the service responses receiving the most votes were discussed in detail, with potential activities also suggested. Again, this same exercise was done with both library staff and trustees, with responses shared between groups.

In addition to relying on the input of the Planning Committee, trustees, and staff, the library also released a survey both online and in print. Several distribution methods were used to ensure the best response possible: a survey was distributed to all Whitman residents who attended Town Meeting in May and the survey was made available online through SurveyMonkey and posted on the library's web site and through social media outlets. Nearly 360 responses were collected and analyzed.

Based on the feedback from all of these groups and individuals, the top five Library Service Responses were chosen. The director then fleshed out the goals, objectives, activities, and projected timeline for the Long Range Plan.

A finalized plan was submitted to and approved by the Trustees on August 8, 2018.

ASSESSMENT OF USER NEEDS

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Whitman, Massachusetts, population 14,489 (according to 2010 census data) was incorporated in 1875. The town retains much of its traditional ideals and historic charm, while bustling with new business and activity. Residents take pride in their local history, as evidenced by recent restorations to a former shoe factory in the heart of downtown, renovations to the more than 100-year-old town hall, and the care taken with the local historic park, designed by the famous landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted. Whitman is the birthplace of the chocolate chip cookie, which was first baked at the Toll House Inn in the 1930s by Ruth Graves Wakefield. Although the Inn was destroyed by fire in 1984, it remains a part of the town's identity. Whitman also has a long history in manufacturing and agriculture, though these occupations have largely been replaced. Approximately 70% of residents commute to work, with a mean travel time of 32.1 minutes. A large percentage of Whitman's population works in educational services, health care, and social assistance—26%—with the rest spread between construction, retail, professional, management, and scientific services.

The commuter rail has a stop in Whitman, and its location 20 miles south of Boston makes it a very desirable place to live. The median household income in 2016 crested \$75,898 and though this is considerably higher than the \$55,000 from 2000, when the figures are adjusted for inflation the change is not significant. Less than 8% of families are below poverty level. Although the town is still largely homogenous (95% Caucasian) it is becoming more diverse. The African-American population increased by 400% from 2010 to 2016, and Asian and Hispanic populations are also rising. The age of Whitman's population is evenly distributed—each decade from under nine to 59 hovers around 2,000 persons—with the exception of a larger group of 40 to 49 year olds. The median age was 38.2 (2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates), slightly older than the national median age of 36.5. Unemployment was at 5.3%, higher than the state average of 3.5%, in January 2018. High school graduates comprise the largest percent of the population's educational attainment, at 32.3%. This is followed by 19.7% with some college, 20.8% with a bachelor's degree, 11% with an associate's degree, 8.8% with a graduate degree, and 5.4% with no high school diploma.

Approximately 56% of eligible residents hold library cards, and in FY18 around 87,000 visitors passed through the doors. Circulation in the same year totaled nearly 78,000, with a continuing rise in the use of e-books and library museum passes. (Please see the Appendices for charts and graphs that illustrate both town and library data.)

HISTORY OF THE WHITMAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

In 1879, a group of citizens in Whitman, then known as South Abington, lobbied to establish a free public library for the town. At Town Meeting that year, voters approved an appropriation of \$500 to establish the library and appointed five citizens to spearhead the project.

The first Whitman Public Library consisted of a room in the Village Hall housing 1400 donated books. By 1882, a salaried position of \$1000 was created for the town's first librarian, William Vining. By 1886, a new reading room was opened with tables and chairs, and the library collection was enhanced with magazines, newspapers and reference books. In 1908, the library moved into the newly built Town Hall, where it would remain for nearly 75 years.

In 1930, Miss Mary Ella Pierce left a sum of \$5000 to the library, with an additional bequest of \$32,500 given to the library upon the death of her niece. Miss Pierce also donated a bookcase and over 200 volumes. Her generosity allowed the library to flourish during the 1940s and 50s, as the collection continued to grow and circulation figures increased steadily. A Children's Room and the Mattie Jenkins Genealogical Room were created from space upstairs in Town Hall during this time.

In 1982, faced with the prospect that the library would soon outgrow its space, the Board of Library Trustees proposed a new building for the library. A community needs survey, completed in November, 1983, indicated the citizens of Whitman overwhelmingly endorsed the idea; by 1988, the new library was constructed and opened on the site of the former Dyer School.

The library has adapted to changing information needs through the addition of technology and service enhancements made possible through a number of trust funds and endowments. These gifts include a trust fund of over \$300,000 from Carleton P. and Lillian F. Burrill; \$9000 from the Poole Family; and donations from the general public.

LIBRARY ASSESSMENT

When choosing the library's service responses, a number of things became clear. First, the library was seen not just as a repository for books, but a place where patrons can come to talk to neighbors, see friends, and gather as a community. In that vein, it was important to create a usable and patron-friendly physical space.

The library's current building was opened in 1989, and in 2004 an interior renovation was done that included new carpeting and paint. In the years that followed, the library suffered numerous building issues.

In 2013 a wall was constructed that separates the children's room from the rest of the library. This improvement has enabled the library to create a separate space for teens and youth and has vastly improved the patron experience in the entire library.

In 2015 the library received a bequest from the estate of Bruno Guerra. This bequest was over \$385,000.00 and has allowed the library to make significant improvements to the interior of the building. The first renovation included purchasing new carpets, furniture, and technology for the community room.

Thirteen new computers were purchased for patron use and a new circulation desk and computer tables were custom built for the library. The end caps and counter tops throughout the building were modernized and an art space was installed.

The library received a Green Communities Grant in 2016 and 2017. This grant was two-fold, first retrofitting all library lighting with eco-friendly LED lighting and next replacing the two library boilers which were original to the building with highly efficient models. These improvements will ensure that the library's physical infrastructure remains in excellent shape for years to come.

While these improvements have greatly added to the library's aesthetic appeal, there is still much work to be done. The interior paint job has suffered damage from leaks and other issues in recent years, and at this time these areas have been patched, but not painted. The library will also continue to work on its signage, including adding updated and detailed signage in the non-fiction section to make the collection easier to browse.

In addition to these smaller goals, the library will begin the work on creating a usable outdoor space for patrons to work, study, and play on the library's grounds. These projects, along with the already-completed improvements of recent years, will continue to make the library a "**comfortable place**" to visit for patrons of all ages.

Children received special attention from the survey respondents and planning committee, who indicated that establishing pre and early literacy skills and supporting students in school should be a primary focus of the library in the next five years.

The planning committee and survey respondents felt that the library should ensure that residents can "**connect to the online world**" by having free computers and high-speed Internet access, while also creating a strong virtual presence with its web site and social media activities.

In the past five years, the library has made great strides in its technology planning. The library's patron computers were replaced in FY10, as well as its time management and printing system. These changes have given staff greater oversight of library computer use, while automating the ways computers are reserved and documents are printed. Additionally, a new wireless router was purchased in FY11 that greatly extended the wireless signal for patron use and allowed an open system that is not password-protected

(and therefore much easier for patrons to use). The library also purchased a WiFi extender for its Community Room, which aids community groups and non-profits with any presentations that are made in this space. While all of this has been beneficial, the rapid pace of technological changes necessitates that the library continue to work to improve its setup. Library patrons and community users also feel that this is an important goal, and the long range plan clearly outlines the ways that the library will continue to upgrade its technology resources and equipment.

The library has also sought to improve its virtual presence with the creation of a new web site in FY11. This site was designed to be a user-friendly discovery platform for library services, materials, and programs. In that vein, a direct search box to the network's catalog was placed in the header bar on each page, as well as a 5-day preview of upcoming library events that links directly to the library's full calendar. Changes were also made to meet the needs of modern-day patrons, such as adding links to the library's social networking sites, quick links to relevant databases, and the addition of a "staff picks" and "staff blog" page. These features greatly enhance the web site for the thousands of patrons who visit each month. Continuing to regularly update the library's web site and social media presence will directly contribute to both the service response to "**visit a comfortable place**" (on the virtual side) and "**connect to the online world.**"

Additionally, our Community Planning Committee saw the library's existing programming as both a strength and an asset, and something that should be built upon. Our survey responses indicated that additional programming for all ages was in demand. Community responses both from the survey and the Planning Committee specifically requested more cultural programming, such as those focused on authors, art, music, and poetry.

A significant change that has contributed to the library's programming success in the years leading up to this long range plan has been the addition of an Adult Services Librarian/Assistant Director. The creation of this position has allowed for an increase in library programming and services offered to adults. This has also allowed the library to compete for and obtain two Library Service and Technology Access grants from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Without this position in place, it would have been impossible to dedicate the time and resources necessary for these projects.

Prior to the creation of this position, the only programming offered to adults was hosted by the Library Friends. Now, the library hosts up to 40 adult programs per year, with as many as 1,000 participants. During the long range planning process, the library found that the public desired more author talks, craft classes, and other cultural programming. These programs will help the library meet the service response to "**stimulate imagination.**"

It should be noted that while the Friends no longer directly create programming, they are the sole funding source for library programming outside of grants. Their year-round fundraising efforts allow the library to create exciting programming for all ages, and without them the library's efforts would be greatly reduced if not all together diminished.

LIBRARY SERVICE RESPONSES

FY19 Action Items (called “Activities”) *are bolded and italicized* below. Please note that some activities continue from year-to-year of the plan.

Service Response:

Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Goal: Increase access to the library’s physical space.

Objectives

A. Evaluate the appropriate number of days and hours to be open to the public along with accompanying staff needs and explore budget priorities relate to this evaluation.

Activities

- A. Survey the staff and patrons to find out desirable hours to be open.
- B. Examine hourly circulation statistics to determine which hours are needed.
- C. Evaluate the library’s budget to accommodate increased hours.

Goal: Create an outdoor space for reading and interacting.

Objectives

A. Utilize existing lawn space to create a comfortable and friendly space for patrons to read, study, and interact.

Activities

- A. Create a policy that will define how the library’s outdoor space can and will be used.***
- B. Hire or seek the services of a landscaper to develop a plan for a small and easily managed lawn space on the existing library grounds.
- C. Purchase durable outdoor furniture, including benches for reading and tables for study.
- D. Engage teen patrons in planning, watering, and planting for the outdoor space.

Goal: Increase and diversify programs offered the community

Objectives

- A. Add more programs for adults, teens, and older elementary children.
- B. Promote library programs online and in the building.

Activities

- A. Encourage all staff to come up with new program ideas for adults, teen, and children.***
- B. Use social media to post all events and programs. Investigate email marketing.
- C. Make pleasing flyers for events and programs. Encourage staff to discuss with patrons the events.

Service Response:

Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing & Listening for Pleasure

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

Goal: Patrons will have access to popular and current material in the formats that meet their needs.

Objectives

- A. The library will continue to select popular and current materials based on the community's preferences and recommendations.
- B. The library will continue to increase the materials budget for electronic materials.

Activities

- A. Highly evaluate circulation trend and purchase materials accordingly.
- B. Encourage staff and patrons to make purchase requests.

Goal: Promote and increase usage of electronic materials

Objectives

- A. Increase awareness of digital collections.

Activities

- A. **All staff will be trained in how to use Overdrive, Hoopla, and Mango.**
- B. Staff will promote digital collections while working with the patrons. Use social media to promote our digital offerings.
- C. Tech-Drop Ins and formal programs will be scheduled monthly to inform patrons of our digital offerings.

Service Response:

Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access

Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

Goal: Create a library with forward-thinking technology.

Objectives

- A. Make sure technology is in working order for staff and patrons.

Activities

- A. **Assign a staff person to check all the patron computers on a routine basis for malfunctions.**
- B. Report to Town Technology department all technology issues in a timely manner.
- C. Investigate having a separate company to support the library's technology needs.

Goal: The library will have reliable access to a user-friendly web site and updated

information about the library and community.

Objectives

A. Develop a more robust and engaging web site.

Activities

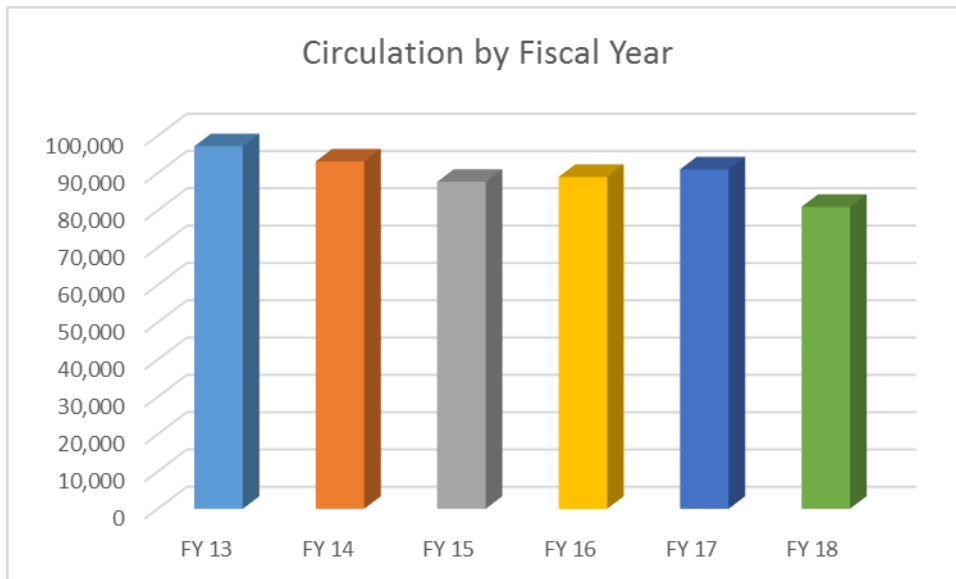
A. Get bids from three companies to redesign the library website.

B. Work with the Town Technology Department to find ways to use Civic Plus to its full potential.

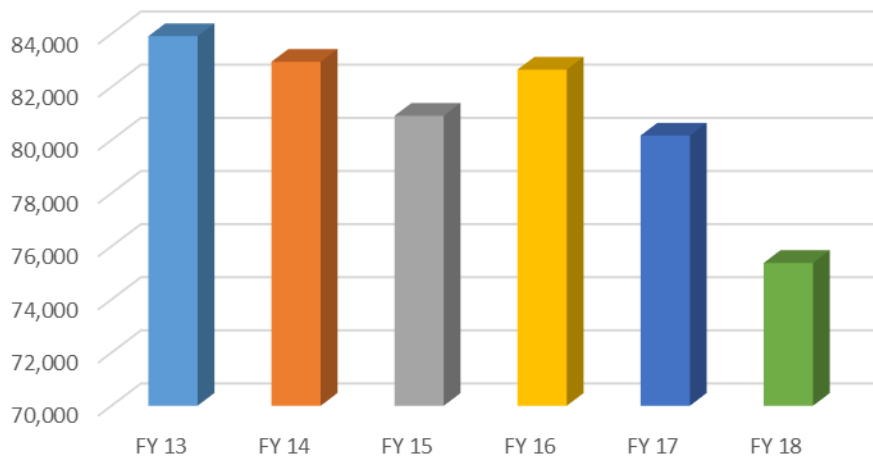
C. Evaluate the library's budget for feasibility of maintaining a new library website.

APPENDICES

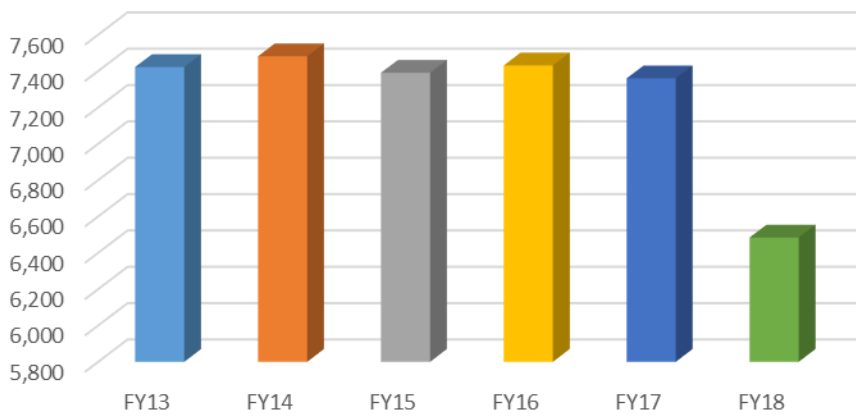
Please see below for graphs relating to library data from the last six years:



Library Visits by Fiscal Year



Number of People with a Library Card by Fiscal Year

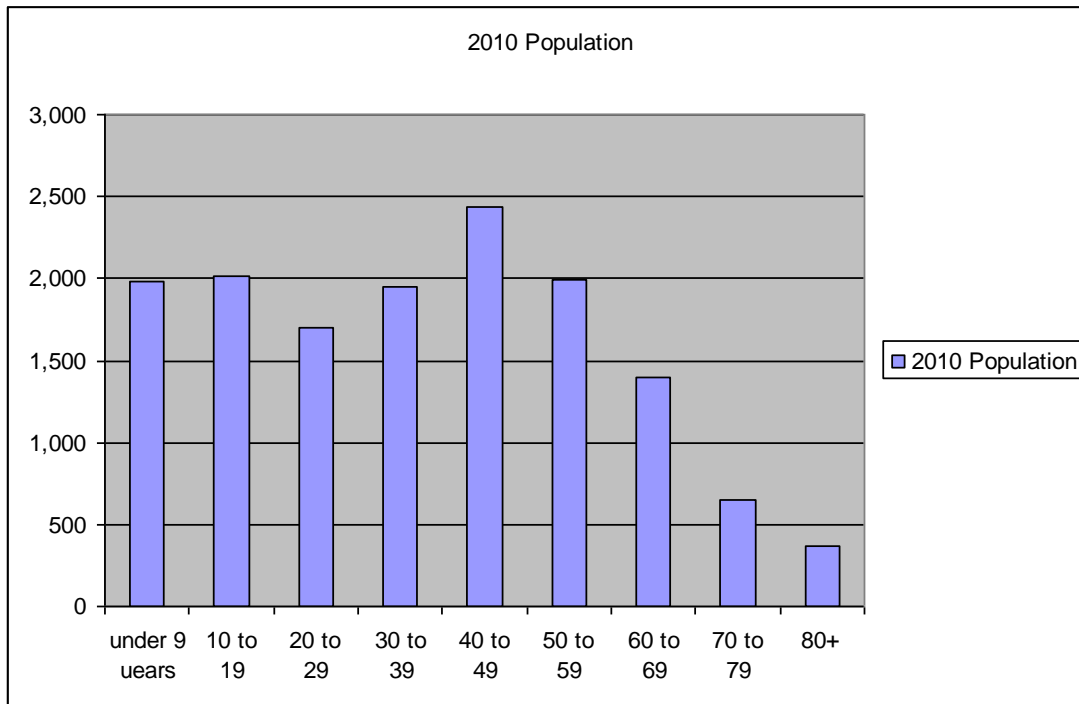


Please see below for charts and graphs related to Town of Whitman demographic data:

Total Population

2000: 13,882

2010: 14,489

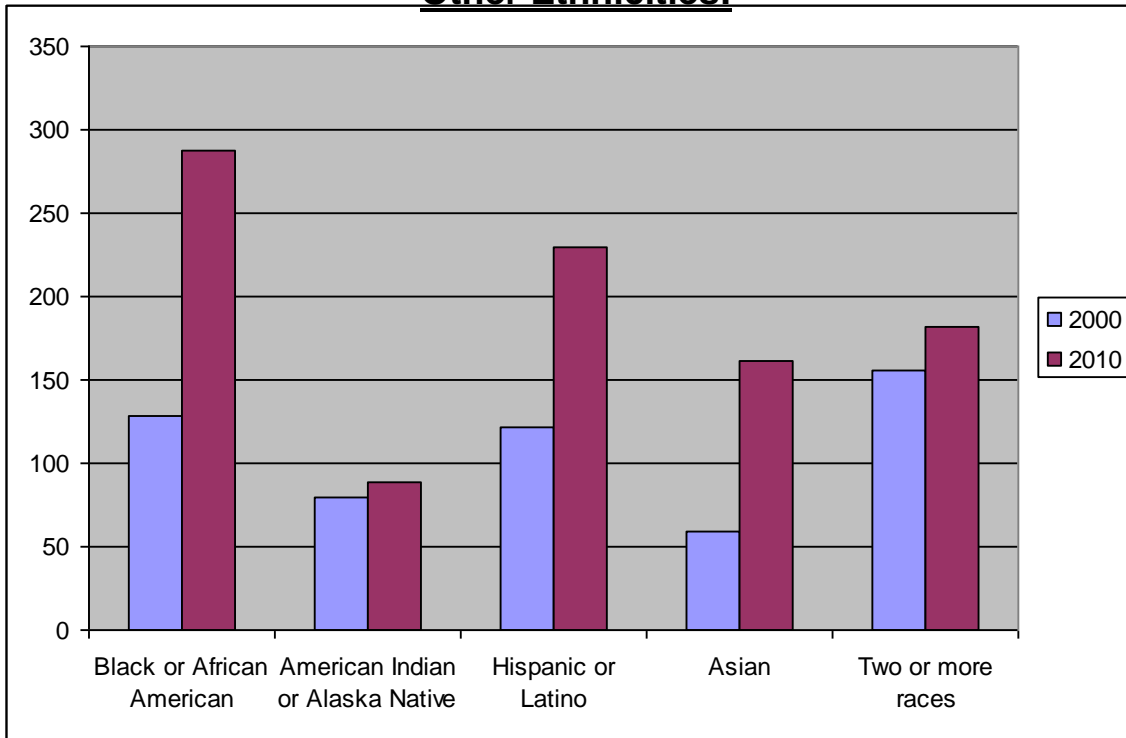


Caucasian population

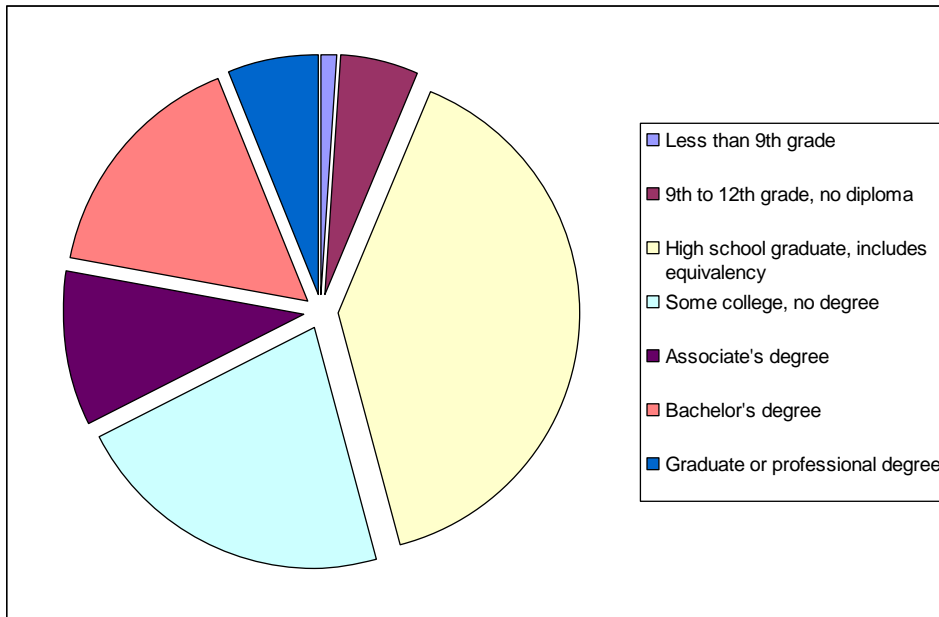
2000: 13,487

2010: 13,968

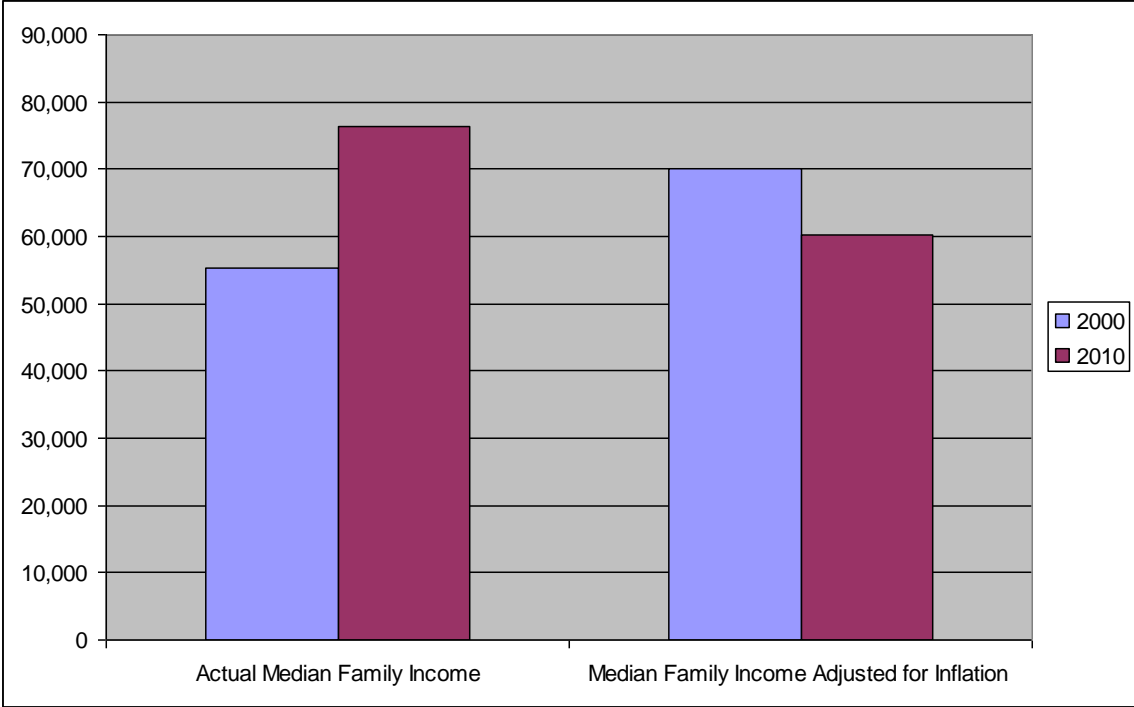
Other Ethnicities:



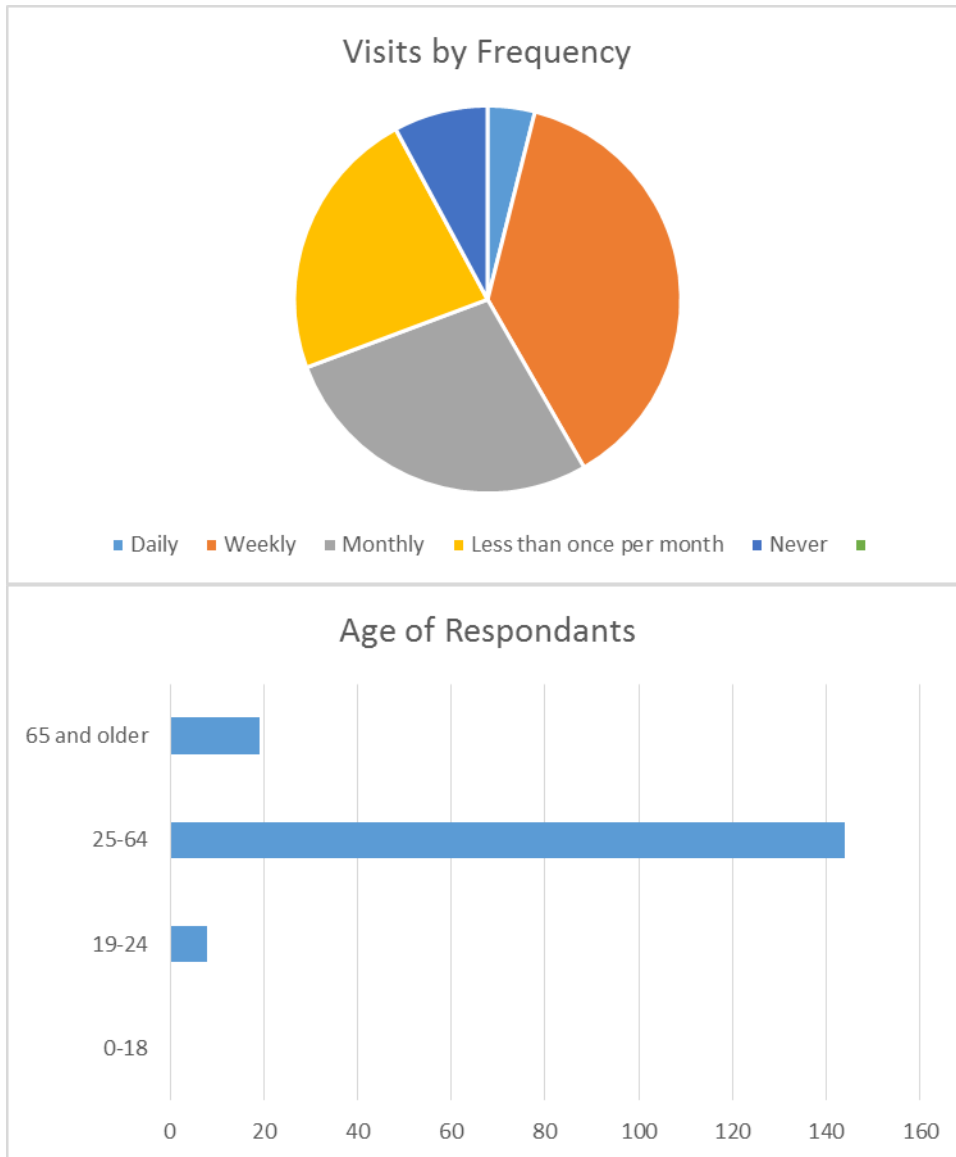
Highest Educational Attainment:



Median Family Income, 2000 & 2010:



Please see below for data from the Long Range Planning Survey (approximately 400 total respondents):



How Important Library Service is to respondent	Count
Access to Technology	539
Access to Materials	322
Hours of Operation	166
Programs	119
Community Room	106
Study Room	99
Reference Help	98
Newspapers and Magazines	72
Home Delivery Service	50

