

# Re-imagine, Renew, & Rejoice



Eastern Monroe Public Library  
Strategic Plan  
2016-19



This strategic plan is the result of a process undertaken by the Director, Trustees, and staff of the Eastern Monroe Public Library that identified and addressed challenges and opportunities facing the library as it enters its centenary through to 2019. The plan outlines a set of priorities, goals, and activities that build on the library's accomplishments, considers suggestions on how to adapt the Hughes Building facility in particular to accommodate changing use, and ensures that the library continues to grow as a center of civic engagement.

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Susan Lyons, *Library Director*

### **Consultants:**

Library Development Solutions

Leslie Burger

Alan Burger

John LeMasney

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## Letter to our friends and neighbors

**F**or 100 years the Eastern Monroe Public Library has played a critical role in our community. It is the place where children discover the world of books, stories and words, where teenagers find help with their school projects, where adults escape a hectic day by browsing for books by favorite authors, where job seekers locate resources and expertise to move forward, and where the entire community finds engaging programs to expand their personal and civic horizons.

Change has accelerated in the world, and that has created new challenges for our communities and libraries. Among them is an increase in digital resources and content and the subsequent need for digital literacy among all residents. This is an important change in the ways people seek information, new communication technologies, and transformations in the publishing industry. Twenty years ago, community support made it possible for the library to expand from a small Victorian building on Main Street to our current home at the Hughes central library. With the continued support of the community we are confident the library can rise to meet these new challenges.

This strategic plan will be a tool for guiding library staff and the Board of Trustees going forward. The staff and Board of Trustees developed the plan, with input from the community. The plan identifies key priorities for the next few years for meeting the needs of people of all ages, for maintaining the library's physical and technological infrastructure, and for responding to rapid change.

The Eastern Monroe Public Library consists of a dedicated staff, generous volunteers, and enthusiastic residents. We promise to continue to re-imagine and renew our resources every day and to rejoice in the life of our communities and libraries, as we respond to the quickly evolving needs of our residents.

Sincerely,

Susan Lyons, Director

Gerard Geiger, President, Board of Trustees



# The Eastern Monroe Public Library for the future

**I**n 2013, the Eastern Monroe Public Library began to think about planning for the future, eventually launching a process in April 2014 to guide the library's development. The Board of Trustees hoped to build on the library's achievements and to position the institution to anticipate and respond to future challenges in a thoughtful manner. At the same time, the Board began a search for a new director, after the announced retirement of long-time and well-respected director Barbara Keiser.

Trustees and staff thought that an open process would result in a more comprehensive and inclusive result. With that in mind, residents were invited to participate in a town meeting and complete an online survey. Every resident who wanted to participate was encouraged to do so.

During the course of the planning project, almost 2,000 area residents provided suggestions, comments, and ideas for the future.

The vision and direction outlined here provide a path in terms of library service and is realistic about changes the community will support. The library is committed to partnering with local governments and other local organizations and agencies to ensure that the Eastern Monroe Public Library continues be the social and cultural center of our community.

Consultants Leslie Burger, Alan Burger, and John LeMasney of Library Development Solutions assisted by providing a planning framework and facilitating meetings with members of the Board of Trustees, the Library Directors Susan Lyons, Barbara Keiser, and 39 staff members.

# This is what we believe



The Eastern Monroe Public Library is supported and used by tens of thousands of residents who value the role the library plays in all of our communities. Our interactions with residents helped shape our new vision and mission.

## Our Vision

*The Eastern Monroe Public Library is the community's center for social and cultural engagement and discovery.*

## Our Mission

*The Mission of the Eastern Monroe Public Library is to serve a diverse population by promoting lifelong learning and enriching the overall quality of life in our communities.*



## This is what we have accomplished



The library has many accomplishments to be proud of during the past few years. A few of these accomplishments include:

- The creation in 2014 of an expanded modern branch in Smithfield Township, with meeting space for community organizations
- Conservatorship of original art
- The creation of the Library's "BookHouse," providing a venue for eclectic literary and musical presentations from international artists at no charge to the public
- Forums and meeting spaces for political debate, author presentations, and community non-profits
- Digital book and magazine services, and expanded video collections
- First-rate customer service for those in need of specialty academic resources, inter-library loans, or insider tips on new novels
- An outreach to the community through social media including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Flickr
- A well-used and popular Bookmobile service
- Emphasis on customer service
- Weekly computer classes
- Redesigned website with easier access to the library's online resources
- Monthly Film series
- Annual writers' workshop and book expo
- Expansion of non-English language holdings
- Additional adult programming including workshops on finance, gardening, and genealogy
- Designation as a Family Place library
- Updated furniture in the children's area
- Monthly e-newsletter sent to 200+ patrons on upcoming programs
- Addition of AWE Digital learning computers in the children's area

## Our opportunity ahead



### **n already active place**

In 2014, there were more than 327,300 visits to the Eastern Monroe Public Library locations and more than 417,000 items were loaned.

The Eastern Monroe Public Library is the place to go for readers, children, adults, full-time and weekend residents and tourists, as well as visitors from area communities. There are significant changes happening in publishing, technology, newspapers, music, teaching, learning, and information seeking, and people continue to come to the library to enjoy the experience and interact with staff and each other as they learn how to navigate those changes.

Participants in the survey still identified the library as the place to go for popular materials. However, this plan also emphasizes the library's special role as a civic and social center. In addition, the plan addresses some of the constraints imposed by the Hughes Building, not originally designed as a library, on our plans for services in the future. The pace of change is speeding up, and the Eastern Monroe Public Library is here to meet our common community aspirations and priorities.

### **Greater awareness and use**

The county's diverse population is evident every day in our libraries, with people of all ages, backgrounds, and speech communities actively engaged in study, computing, reading, or learning. Based on a foundation of 100 years of service, our aim is to welcome many more residents who may not now be frequent users or visitors. The Eastern Monroe Public Library belongs to all residents, and over the next four years we will do our best to ensure that it is relevant and accessible to everyone.

We are committed to the strategies in this plan to improve and enhance collections, programs, staff, hours, services, and the facilities, especially the Hughes Building, that will excite and please residents of all ages.



## **The Future Eastern Monroe Public Library**

The Eastern Monroe Public Library, along with all libraries in the US, will change significantly in the next 5 to 10 years. Current trends indicate that library use will continue to grow as people rely on us for access to current technology, content distribution, and content creation, in addition to expecting libraries to serve as a social gathering space, learning and literacy center, and a place for civic engagement.

This plan will ensure that the Eastern Monroe Public Library thinks about the kind of future it wants to create and offer to the community.



## Strategic priorities

The strategic planning process resulted in four priorities for providing focus and direction from 2016 to 2019. The specific statistical outcomes along with the progress metrics will guide annual board and staff planning and budgeting.

The priorities through the year 2019 are the following:

- A. Engage the community in new ways
- B. Integrate technology in all that we do
- C. Invest in the library's infrastructure
- D. Increase advocacy and support to build a sustainable future



## A. Engage the community in new ways



any more community members will participate in all that the library has to offer during this plan. We want people to become acquainted with the library by becoming more involved, more committed, and passionate about it.

The library will invite, welcome, and engage larger numbers of residents by reducing barriers to involvement and increasing the rewards and benefits associated with attending library programs and activities. The library will focus on measuring and increasing the value of the user experience to help attract new users and advocates. Residents will avoid the dreaded Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) by participating in the much-talked-about library programs.

The library has the exciting opportunity to engage current customers, along with thousands of new ones, by attracting them to fun and high-energy new programming during this plan.

Invite the entire community to the 100th-year Birthday Party in 2016. Build up to the party all year to be celebrated in October/November 2016, with thematic programming. Create two to three iconic annual programs that people associate with the library and feel impelled to attend.

### **1. Increase community use of the Library**

### **2. Develop new programs that encourage active participation by larger numbers of residents**

#### **Plan key annual measurements:**

- Increase program attendance by 750 people in each year of the plan
- Increase library-sponsored adult programs
- Increase in library programs with another community sponsor

## B. Integrate technology in all that we do



Technology is the primary critical component of today's library. The library currently serves four generations of residents and users, but there are really two distinct generations: one consisting of young digital natives who are comfortable and competent with current and emerging technologies, and one of digital immigrants who arrive at new technologies out of necessity. The challenge public libraries face is in how to serve both groups using traditional and new formats and content and with staff that needs to curate and facilitate these formats.

Digital literacy and closing the digital gap are strategic plan priorities concerning a complete integration of technology into all that takes place in the library. Residents expect the library to be the place where everyone can find accessible useful technology devices as well as the technical assistance and instruction to help improve their comfort and competency with them. The consultants conducted a Technology Review in 2015, which is available from the library.

Through 2019, the Eastern Monroe Public Library will:

- 1. Implement recommendations from the 2015 Technology Review**
- 2. Develop a PC replacement schedule**
- 3. Provide technology devices for loan to users and staff, including iPads, Kindles, and Chromebooks or other small notebooks and devices**
- 4. Encourage a shared learning environment in which staff members learn about new technologies on a regular basis. Institute instruction and discussion sessions in which staff can learn or practice a new skill or service**

### **Plan key measurements:**

- Quick implementation of the 2015 Technology Review recommendations
- Launch the new website
- Add dedicated information technology staff

## C. Invest in the library's infrastructure



any of the 1,950 survey participants commented on the library facilities and left suggestions for improvements to the buildings, especially Hughes. Over 550 participants made specific recommendations for improvements to services as well as facilities. The consultants wrote a detailed study of the space use and made specific recommendations for meeting many of the community suggestions. The report is available from the library.

Through 2019, the Eastern Monroe Public Library will:

- 1. Update and refresh the Hughes facility to respond to community needs and create value-added user experiences, with assistance from an architect and/or space planner**
- 2. Formalize ongoing plans for updating and refreshing the library's collections and services**
- 3. Provide structured after-school homework help and other after-school programs**
- 4. Increase the number of volunteers and hours of operation and define volunteer jobs**

### **Plan key measurements:**

- 500,000 annual circulation
- 2,000 square feet (at least) of stack space repurposed for new uses, especially on the second floor
- Architect engaged for projects
- Increase self-checkout usage

## D. Increase advocacy and support to build a sustainable future



The Eastern Monroe Public Library currently reaches residents through 20,565 individual card registrations. An important challenge for the library in the next few years will be to increase awareness and use of the library by greater numbers of residents throughout the library's service area.

Invite the entire community to the 100th-year Birthday Party in 2016. Build up to the party all year to be celebrated in October/November 2016, with thematic programming.

- 1. Increase awareness of the library**
- 2. Expand advocacy efforts and reinforce the library's identity to more residents**
- 3. Align the Foundation, Board of Trustees and Director to focus on creating a sustainable library future for the next generation**

### Plan key measurements:

- Increase the number of registered card holders
- 500,000 annual visits
- 10,000 program attendance (all programs)
- Increase the email database for the e-newsletter
- 3,000 Facebook followers
- 2,000 Twitter followers
- Set goals, increase and measure followers on all social media
- \$3m endowment by 2018
- Annual appeals every year



longside the traditional statistics that are recorded annually by local libraries in Pennsylvania—such as program attendance, visits, circulation, and registrations—the following includes specific, newer indicators that the Eastern Monroe Public Library plans to use to gauge successful implementation of this plan.

### Success Indicators

- The community supports and advocates for the Eastern Monroe Public Library and provides the political and financial support needed to re-imagine and accomplish physical improvements to the facility
- The library conducts a short annual satisfaction survey and ranks highly
- The library is recognized as an important civic anchor, a vital partner with local businesses, and a key driver of local and area civic and social health
- The number of visitors to the libraries increases in each year of the plan
- The number of followers on social media and email recipients of the e-newsletter increases in each year of the plan
- The library receives regular positive press coverage and is weekly referred to in the local news and newspapers for its programs and activities



