

# JAMES BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PROGRAMMING 2015-2018



**Prepared by**  
Mary Girard  
Kirsten Smith  
Nicholas Westbrook

Southern Connecticut State University  
ILS565—Library Management  
Dr. Mary E. Brown  
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## Introduction

### *Purpose*

Libraries are about what they can do for and offer their community. In developing this strategic plan, we tackled one major way James Blackstone Memorial Library can offer the Branford community more: programming. Increasing the quality and relevance of programming will help to enrich the community and get them more involved in the library and what it has to offer. Programs will educate and entertain while bringing the community together—making the library a vital center.

### *Planning Input*

The previous JBML Strategic Plan, which started implementation in 2013, expressed a need for evolution in programming. We have taken that need and expanded it. We used the information from the plan to begin digging into the real programming needs of the patrons.

JBML recently surveyed the community for their feelings on the current state of adult programming available at the library. 85 patrons responded and were very satisfied with the current variety and quality of programs, but were unsatisfied with the dates and times of these programs. They also commented on which types of programs they would be most interested in attending.

Through interviews with the staff at JBML, we also discovered the current need for effective young adult (YA) programming—specifically through maker space initiatives. Since this library demographic has become so important in libraries today, JBML would like to increase programming and overall attendance in this age group. These members of the community deserve to be involved in the library's programs. There is currently a very small amount of programming dedicated specifically to this group.

The technological information need of senior citizens must also be addressed. The reference staff explained how frequently they receive questions about devices and the internet and we believe increasing technology programs would be helpful for the senior citizens.

### *Major Themes*

This plan has been created with the diverse members of the community in mind. We hope to improve the JBML experience for everyone. We will do so by offering better opportunities for our patrons to thrive in the library through our programming. Every aspect of the planning must keep the community members in mind. JBML must continue to monitor the needs and desires of the patrons in order to remain vital in the community. By responding to patron demand through programming, we can increase attendance and bring the community together. High quality programming is all about bringing groups together—with this plan we will consistently provide the community with high quality programs that get them interested. This will allow the community to learn and grow together at James Blackstone Memorial Library.

## Section 1: Guiding Statements

### *Mission Statement*

The James Blackstone Memorial Library provides essential access to information, resources, and unique shared experiences to help ensure Branford is an educated and enriched community (Blackstone Memorial Library Strategic Plan, 2012).

This access can be provided to the patrons through a variety of programs and developing programming in problem areas such as:

- Adult programming.
- Young adult programming.
- Senior citizen programming in response to technology needs.

### *Vision Statement*

- **The library is the community's gathering place for learning, enrichment, and for the exchange of ideas.** The library will provide programming to encourage and enhance the learning of the community while allowing the members of the community to gather together.
- **The library offers a wide range of programming focused on educating our community to achieve their greatest potential and inspiring their intellectual and cultural curiosity.** The library provides new programs for all age groups and will use the resources of the community to offer unique informational programs.
- **The library provides technological support and training to the community to utilize new tools and resources to access information in a multitude of forms.** The library will provide programming and services to help assist the public with their technical problems.
- **The library will be a promoter of literacy for all ages, both traditional and non-traditional (financial, health, cultural, and other life skills).** These subjects of literacy will also be areas that the library will attempt to provide more programming for these subjects and provide the opportunities for patrons to express the interests in their programs.
- **The staff of the library continues to be its strongest asset and expands and cultivates their skills through professional development to meet the evolving needs of the community.** The staff can also provide valuable resources for future programming and gain a better interest of what the public wants to know about by general census of the public's questions and queries.

## Section 2: About James Blackstone Memorial Library

### *Organizational Analysis*

The James Blackstone Memorial Library has a very basic structure of organization, which can be found in Figure 1 below. Business Manager, Kathy Oxsalida and Library Director, Karen Jensen provided this information.

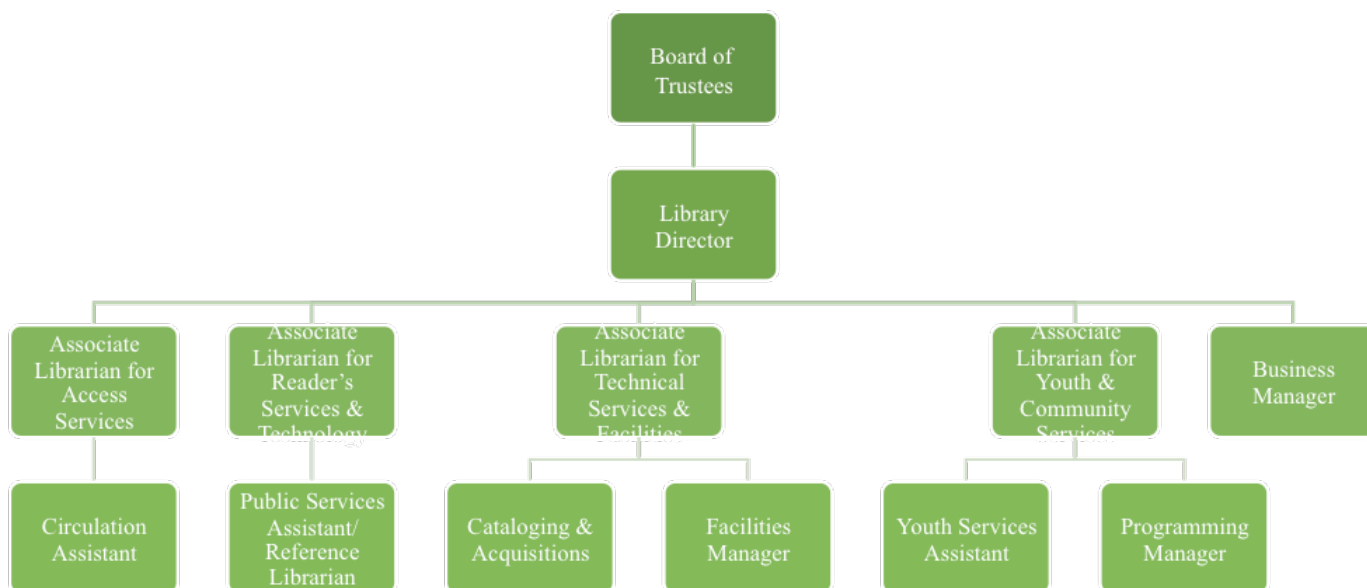


Figure 1

At the very head of the organization is the Library Director, Karen Jensen. The library director orchestrates the daily operations of the library. Jensen, in turn, reports to the library board of Trustees, who decides the direction and decides what services would be best for the town with the budget that they have.

Each department of the library (Children's, Reference and Circulation) meets twice a month, in addition to full staff meetings once a month to ensure that the library's goals are being met. Within these departments, there are specific "Associate Librarian" positions to ensure that the library's resources are all working together. The Associate Librarians, in addition to a business manager and project and development coordinators, report to the director with any problems and issues that may have arisen while trying to obtain the goals of the library.

- Associate Librarian for Access Services: Deirdre Santora. Santora's position oversees the circulation department. The duties include managing the circulation staff in addition to assisting with patrons when the opportunity is needed. This department is responsible for checking books in and out, organizing holds that come in, calling specified patrons when their materials

have become available, shelving materials, pulling requested items, and many other basic circulation tasks.

- Associate Librarian for Reader's Services & Technology: Barbara Cangiano. This position oversees the Public Service Assistants/Reference Librarians. This department is responsible for the information needs of the public. They find and place holds on materials that the patrons request and they help with the technology needs of the patrons.
- Associate Librarian for Technical Services & Facilities: Gennett Grinnell. The technical services department handles damaged and missing materials. Grinnell also is in charge of incoming and outgoing materials in the popular ConnectiCar deliveries. In addition to these tasks, the Associate Librarian for Technical Services is in charge of coordinating processing of new materials. Grinnell is also in charge of Facilities Management, which takes care of the upkeep of the building.
- Associate Librarian for Youth & Community Services: Carly Lemire. The duties of this position are similar to the circulation department head. However, Lemire's duties specific focus on collection and circulation of children's and young adult materials. Lemire is also in charge of coordinating the programs and services for the children and young adult patrons in the library.

Each of the associate librarians has designated assistants who the associate librarians can use to allocate duties to the support staff. The regular staff assists the department heads and associate librarians in any way they can to ensure that the goals of the library are being met effectively.

In addition to the associate librarian roles, there are other crucial leadership positions within the library structure:

- Business Manager: Kathy Oxsalida. The Business Manager acts a Human Resources specialist and takes care of office tasks such as payroll, organizing benefits and other duties that relate to the staff and employment. This position also includes and legal forms or tax documentation that the library is required to fill out or provide for its employees.

This method is very efficient. By giving each of the department heads someone to speak to about specific problems in their areas, the librarians can get problems solved efficiently. Problems with technology for example have a specific individual to talk about the library's technology problems. If the problem is one that the technical services associate librarian cannot fix on his or her, the director can be made aware of the server problem and the library can work toward repairing any issues that may result from it.

The position of business manager is also very important because it provides someone to assist the director with the tasks of human resources. The director can, as a result, focus on problems more specific to the library. The most the director has to worry about bills to make sure there is enough money allocated in the budget for the general upkeep of the library.

## *External Scan*

### **The Community of Branford**

The town of Branford is located along the Connecticut coastline. The town has a population of over 28,000 according to projections based on the 2010 census material (United States Census Bureau). While there is a representation of minorities and younger people in Branford, a majority of the population consists of individuals over 45 years of age and a majority of the population identify as white. With an average income of over \$70,000 per household, the town of Branford is in a fairly stable economic situation.

### **The Library**

The Blackstone Memorial Library is part of the LION Library Consortium, giving them access to the collections of nearby libraries. This is a major benefit both to the Blackstone Library and surrounding institutions. The collection owned by the Blackstone Library numbers in 79,560 books, 1,136 Audio Materials and 4,023 Video Materials (GeoLib Public Library Database). Patrons also have access to a variety of databases and access to a full Reference and Circulation department. Materials are circulated for two weeks (or less depending on the item). The library also offers 21 free-use computers and wireless access for free.

The programs and services offered by the staff from the Adult and Youth Services are free to attend. In the past, adult programs and programs designed specifically for children have had more success than the programs and services more aimed for the 'young adult' demographic that comes to the library. The library also gives patrons a collection of historical materials relating to the town and surrounding areas to do research on local and family history. The public has access to 15 trained staff members (8 full-time librarians and 7 other part-time staff), most working directly with the public on a daily basis.

The library currently has an operating budget of \$1,321,814. Below is a graph (Figure 2) of the breakdown of the current 2014-2015 budget of the library. JBML's director, Karen Jensen, provided this information. A clearer list of the numbers can be found in Appendix A.

The majority of the budget is dedicated to the salaries of the staff and related expenses. JBML is lucky enough to have the dedication of their fundraising group, “the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library,” to assist with most of the costs for programming. JBML only has to dedicate a small portion of their budget to programming expenses at the moment. Instead of relying so heavily on the Friends of JBML for programming needs, some space in the library’s budget should be dedicated for this cause in order to further improve program offerings.

### Internal Scan

Based on information collected from interviews with the library director and library staff and from survey results from patrons, we have identified the following strengths and challenges:

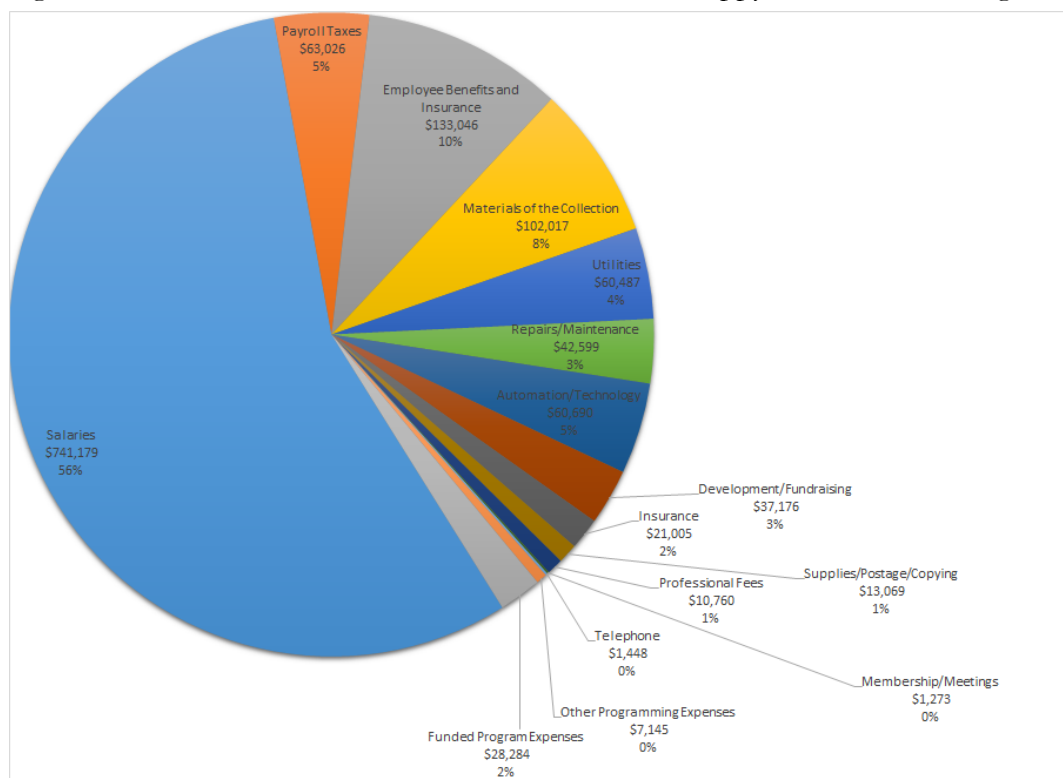
#### Major Strengths:

- Wide variety of programming—JBML offers several programs in various topics of interest. The community has expressed that they are very happy with the variety of programs held at the library.
- Children’s programming—Children’s programming (from birth to approximately age 10) is quite

Figure 2

possibly the most popular at the library. Programs held for this group are consistent and well attended. Patrons in attendance express satisfaction with the children’s librarians in the programs.

- Strength of the staff and customer service—Patrons are happy with their exchanges with staff



and their capabilities in the library.

**Major Challenges:**

- Young adult programming—The library services do not offer enough for the patrons in the young adult (YA) demographic. They define this group as grade 5 through 12, or roughly age 10-18. The few YA programs that have been held were not well attended.
- Unable to fully gauge success or failure of programs—Staff expresses a need to know how the public felt about their programs. They want to know what worked and what did not and why. They need to know how to assess success in the programs.
- Seniors and technology—Reference staff explained the high frequency of technology questions they deal with. Most of these questions are from older patrons (around age 50 and up). There are a few programs available, but the high demand requires more attention and new solutions.



## Section 3: Action Plans

JBML has an active programmatic element to their library service system. Programming is segmented into the following categories: Senior Programming, Adult Programming, Young Adult Programming, Child Programming, Infant/toddler Programming, and General (All ages) Programming. In the developing of the strategic plan, the staff and community contributed in enhancing the understanding of the requests of the population the library serves.

### *Action Plan 1: Adult Programming*

A recent programming survey conducted at JBML allows us to see what the community wants to see in JBML's programs. An evaluation of the surveys was prepared by reference librarian, Whitney Gayle, and presented to us for review by the library director.

The adult programming should support the findings of the survey. This means adjusting focus of programs. This survey has assisted the library in finding out how the public feels about their programming—which was identified as a weakness of the library. Further information collection from the public should also be made a priority.

#### **Goal 1A: Popular public programming**

The public responses to the programming survey expressed a strong desire for programs in fine arts, music, history, and plays. They also expressed some desire in programs on food, health and aging, nature, crafts, science, and author talks. Therefore, these subjects should take precedence when choosing and scheduling programs.

#### *Short Term Goals*

- Brainstorm potential program ideas—based on all of the desired subject areas—in staff meetings to develop a list that can be used for reference. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by February 2015]
- Schedule at least one program from one of the strongly desired subject areas. This can be staffed or done by hiring a professional for lecture or workshop. Requires either staff involvement or funds. [To be completed by February 2015]
- Develop a recurring workshop series or club based on the popular topics. This is important to provide a consistently popular program that residents can attend. The subject should be derived from the strongly desired subjects to maximize interest and attendance. Requires staff involvement, funding, and library space. [To be completed by September 2015]

These goals are a priority because they provide a foundation for the programming aligned with the public opinions. Popular topics are also subject to change, therefore the programming based on this

evaluation of popular topics must be only for the first year of the plan. This is why there are only short-term goals included.

The first two goals start small and should be completed as soon as possible after the beginning of the plan implementation. The first goal is intended to get a single program out there that the public asked for. The second is to get the staff thinking about programming and what the public would like to see. Finally, a workshop will cement the idea of consistency. A recurring event in place will provide more than a one-time program to get the residents involved in library programming.

### **Goal 1B: Scheduling programs within the most preferable time frame**

Patrons have busy lives and sometimes cannot attend programs they may be very interested in because of other engagements. The recently conducted survey asked patrons when they would be most likely to make it to library programs. The majority of Blackstone patrons (27%) prefer to attend library programs on weekday evenings, followed closely by Sunday afternoons (26%) and Saturday afternoons (22%).

#### *Short Term Goals*

- Schedule proposed programs during the popular times and days. During the first six months of the plan, practice scheduling programs during all of the popular times. Aim for at least one program at each of the popular times during this time period. “Weekday evenings” should be on varying days of the week. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by June 2015]

#### *Long Term Goals*

- Balance the time and day of programs. Have a fairly even number of programs across the three most popular times throughout the year. This allows patrons to have access to a wide variety of potential times for programs. If they have prior engagements on a specific day, they would be able to make it to programs on different days. Keep track of how many programs took place at each time of the week and schedule programs evenly. Requires staff involvement, funds. [Ongoing, evaluation of balance should be done at the end of 2015 and every year following]

It is important to spread programs across popular days and times to ensure different residents can attend. If programs were held on the same evening every week, the same people would most likely be available to attend. It is important to get in the habit of spreading them across these popular days and times to satisfy all members of the community. The short-term goal listed is a priority to begin catering to the requests of the community as soon as possible. After that, it is a long-term goal to regularly schedule programs on various days and times to allow all residents equal opportunity for attendance.

### **Goal 1C: Continue to seek feedback for future programming**

As stated in the past two goals, it is important to continue to check in with the community in order to adequately meet their information needs.

#### *Short Term Goals*

- Develop program evaluation rubric. This should consist of attendance numbers, day and time of program, topic of program, and cost. Rubric should numerically assess the success of the program and results should be kept on record. Requires staff involvement and information collection. [To be completed by June 2015 at the latest]
- Assign staff member at each program to keep track of attendance. Numbers are important for assessing the success of the program and its popularity. It is difficult to keep a head count, so a specific staff member should be in charge of greeting and an accurate head count. Specifically scheduling a staff member makes this a priority. Requires staff involvement and information collection. [To be completed by February 2015]

### *Long Term Goals*

- Maintain and even increase patron satisfaction with programming at the library. Through continued attention to the popular subjects in town, we can increase the enthusiasm and satisfaction with the programming. Continue to check in on the most convenient attendance times for patrons. Satisfaction can be evaluated with yearly programming surveys. Requires staff involvement. [Ongoing. Initial re-evaluation to be distributed in December 2016, and yearly thereafter]

The long-term goal here is an ongoing goal. It is intended to keep the community involved in the programming decision-making at the library. The short-term goals are intended to immediately begin evaluating the success of the programs based on library standards. By pairing the opinions of the public with more in-depth program statistics, the library will be able to keep track of any improvements in programming.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

Outcome One: Attendance is an indicator of meeting the public's requests for times that are convenient. Programs would be added on weekday evenings and weekend and programs consistent with the requests of the community.

Outcome two: Patrons increased participation in programs would be reflective of the libraries responsiveness to developing programs that are meaningful and at times that are convenient. Additional staff at programming, either throughout or at the beginning and end, will assist with the collection of additional information from patrons to be used in expanding, changing or adapting future programming.

### ***Action Plan 2: Young Adult Programming***

Young Adult Programming consisted of 29 programs during 2013, compared to 389 children programs and 138 adult programs. Many of the YA programs only have about 3 to 5 teens in attendance. Young Adult Programming at JBML is still in developmental stages and therefore JBML is seeking opportunities to expand programming and general services for this age group.

Moving forward, JBML should plan to increase the amount of designated programs for young adults per month. This will make this type of programming a priority and make it a more consistent part of the JBML calendar of events.

### **GOAL 2A: Maker Space Programming**

JBML hopes to become a member of the Maker Space movement. Maker Space programs and centers allow participants to express themselves, create, and learn together through various activities involving building and discovery. The JBML staff has expressed a great interest in developing their own Maker Space initiatives and programming.

#### *Short Term Goals:*

- *At least* one staff member in the Youth Services (YS) department should attend a Maker Space workshop or webinar. Requires staff involvement and possibly funding (depending on the cost associated with the workshop/webinar chosen). [To be completed by: March 2015]
- Hold an informational staff meeting to educate the staff on Maker Space. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by April 2015]
- Purchase materials appropriate for Maker Space programming for teens. The appropriate materials can be found through research and experience in Maker Space. Requires funds and information. [To be completed by May 2015]

#### *Long Term Goals:*

- Develop regular and consistent Maker Space programs and curriculum. These activities should occur at least monthly, bi-monthly is preferable. Requires staff involvement, funding, and [First program to be held by September 2015]
- Increase interest in the program and increase attendance at Maker Space programs and workshops. Goal is to have at least 20 teens attending Maker Space programs regularly. Requires staff involvement, dedication, and education. [Attendance goal to be met by January 2017]

The short term goals listed are intended to gradually get the staff up to speed on Maker Space and what it is all about. This will give JBML staff a greater understanding before beginning a more serious implementation of programming in this area. Long-term goals involve making Maker Space an integral part of the developing YA department programming. These are goals to keep in mind as the programs are developed and implemented.

### **GOAL 2B: Collaboration with Branford Public Schools**

Young Adult departments in the public library can be in competition with the public school library in a variety of ways. Public libraries and public schools share the same financial resources (taxpayer funding) and each must substantiate their value during the annual budget process. In addition, schools require learning experiences, technology usage and understanding, time allotted during the school day for research and writing, space devoted to specific age levels. In order to work

collaboratively, and not in competition, the public library young adult programs need to be offered in addition to the existing resources.

*Short Term Goals:*

- Contact school media specialists in the Branford intermediate school (Francis Walsh Intermediate School) and Branford High School. Ask how to support the curriculum and ask about any possible summer reading collaboration. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by March 2015]
- Conduct school visits to remind students about what the library can offer them over the summer. Emphasize summer reading, meeting friends at the library, volunteer opportunities, and supplementing education. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by the end of the school year: Mid-June 2015]
- Begin a homework help program to supplement what is learned in school. Contact schools again to obtain some subjects for different grade levels and to see if any teachers or student teachers would like to volunteer their time after school or on weekends. Requires staff involvement and information collection. [To be completed by September 2015]

*Long Term Goals:*

- Develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the school libraries in town. School libraries should recommend library materials, databases, and services. JBML must be able to offer help to area teens in required subjects. School media specialists and JBML staff should be comfortable reaching out to one another for assistance. This takes time, but is an ultimate goal. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by December 2018]

Short-term goals for this goal are to be completed during the first few months of the plan. These goals are worked around the school schedule to maximize effectiveness. These actions help to build toward the long-term goal of a good relationship with the school libraries.

## **GOAL 2C: College Bound Focus**

One of the biggest concerns of high school students is applying to college. From college essays to filling out applications, the library has a variety of resources to help students enter their schools of choice.

*Short Term Goals:*

- Develop and implement a college-planning workshop. Discuss test prep, selecting colleges, college essay writing, application processes, selection, financial aid, scholarship availability and process as well as transitioning to college. This can be in a multi-part series. This will show the students that the library can also help them with this process. This can be staff-led (requires staff involvement) or led by a professional (requires funding). [To be completed and begun by September 2015]

- Create a college prep section within the designated teen area of the library. College prep and test prep books are currently housed in the adult non-fiction section. These materials should be moved to the teen area as soon as possible to hit the target audience of the materials and make them easy to access for teens. This will reinforce what is taught in the college-planning workshop. Requires staff involvement. [To be completed by September 2015]

#### *Long Term Goals:*

- The initial implementation of the college planning program should be a precursor to a yearly college planning workshop series. Consistency is key with this subject because students will always need to plan for this life event. Young adults and parents need to know they can rely on the library for assistance and education. Again, this program series can be staff led or professionally instructed, depending on the funding available. [Ongoing, should be done yearly]

The short-term goals are to provide high school students with the information they need to prepare for college. This type of programming is essential for the older teens in town to ensure success in the application process. The short-term goals are to show the teens that their success is a priority. This is also to begin planning an annual college prep course, which will hopefully become an important event for all college-bound members of the community.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

Outcome One: Engage more young adults in library activities and programming. In developing programs such as the Makerspace the library will have the opportunity to connect young adults with technologies that enhance learning and creativity. Outcome statistics include an increase in the number of YA programs, number of participants, and increased participation in other areas of the library.

Outcome Two: Enhance the relationship between the library and the public school system in a collaborative way that provides programming when the public school library and services are not available to teens.

Outcome Three: Establish the library as a resource for College bound students as well as older adults returning to school. Outcome statistics include numbers of programs, participants,

### ***Action Plan 3: Senior Citizen Programming***

The major goal of senior programming is to connect senior citizens with technology. Reference staff identified that one of the largest information needs is technology help among senior citizens. This will respond to that need with effective programming.

### **Goal 3A: Increase Senior Citizen Technology Education**

#### *Short Term Goals:*

- Begin hosting a monthly technology lecture. This can be led by reference staff and the types of reference questions being asked can determine topics. Topics can vary from different devices to

popular social networking sites to Microsoft products. This is a fairly simple program to implement. Requires staff involvement and library space. [To be completed by September 2015]

- Begin a “Teens, Technology and You” program. Senior citizens would bring in technological devices that they are having trouble using or having a specific problem they are struggling with. The teens then show them how to solve this problem. In exchange for their assistance, the teens could have the opportunity to earn community service hours from the library. This workshop is beneficial for two target library user groups. Requires library space. [To be completed by January 2016]

These short-term goals are designed to meet the needs of the senior citizens in town. The ultimate goal is to encourage senior citizens to turn to their local library for tech help because of the superior programming offerings we offer. The lecture is priority because it is easier to implement. It only requires the knowledge and experience of the reference staff. The teen/senior program takes a little more time to orchestrate.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

Outcome One: Reduce the burden on the staff for the education of adults and seniors in the use of technology. This will help the library use its limited resources to serve a larger population.

Outcome Two: Increase the number of young adults in the library as they work with adults/seniors on the use of technology.

Outcome Three: Continue to increase the participation rates of seniors in the library. By assisting them with technology issues library, and volunteer, staff will have the opportunity to introduce this population to other services available in the library.

Outcome Four: Improved technology expertise among librarians and staff. The statistical measurement of numbers of patrons assisted with electronic devices is one measure. With rapidly changing technology available to patrons and requests to staff for assistance, the second measurement is based on annual statistics for internal training and education of library staff to new technology.

## Conclusion

In the digital information age, libraries have had to change the ways in which they make information available to the public. JBML is no exception. In addition to presenting a stronger digital front in response to this informational shift, JBML cannot forget the importance of the interpersonal level in which they can present information. Through a variety of programs for all ages, JBML can actively engage the community in learning.

This will require some additional funding. While this income may be difficult to get for the programming budget, the library can attempt to offset any additional costs by focusing on fundraising efforts through the Friends of the Library and applying for grants that the library meets the requirements for.

By following the outlined strategic plan, the library can achieve its goals in a timely manner to enhance the quality of their programs. The outcomes of these goals mean higher attendance rates of adult, teen and senior programming.

With a focus on outcomes based programming the library will be able to quantify its value to the community in a consistent and clear way. By establishing meaningful and measurable outcomes the library director and board can shift and expand resources in a way that is responsive to new initiatives and changing community needs.

JBML will use the outlined plan to better meet the public's information and programming needs while creating a stronger sense of community within the town and making the library feel more welcoming to patrons of all ages. The library can also use these goals to provide an additional level of entertainment and education to patrons.

The end goal of any library is to provide a place for individuals to feel welcome and instill a sense of community. By strengthening the programming aspects of the library departments, then the library can provide an atmosphere conducive to both entertaining and educating the entire Branford population.



## References

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## James Blackstone Memorial Library 2014-2015 Budget

<b>Item</b>	<b>Expense</b>
Salaries	\$741,179
Payroll Taxes	\$63,026
Employee Benefits	\$133,046
Materials of the Collection	\$102,017
Utilities	\$60,487
Repairs/Maintenance	\$42,599
Automation/Technology	\$60,690
Development/Fundraising	\$37,176
Insurance	\$21,005
Supplies/Postage/Copying	\$13,069
Professional Fees	\$10,760
Memberships/Meetings	\$1,273
Telephone	\$1,448
Other Program Expenses	\$7,145
Funded Program Expenses	\$28,284
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,323,203</b>