



# CLAPP MEMORIAL LIBRARY LONG RANGE PLAN

2020-2025

19 South Main Street  
Belchertown, Massachusetts

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Sheila McCormick, Library Director

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Approved September 17, 2019

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## I. MISSION STATEMENT & VISION

### Mission Statement

The Clapp Memorial Library is a welcoming and lively center for lifelong learning, personal enrichment and community interaction. It is dedicated to serving greater Belchertown as a vital cultural resource and community center, and recognizes its role to promote the value of reading and self-expression to local youth. The Library meets community needs as they evolve over time and connects its users to ideas, technologies, experiences, and to others in the community and the world at large.

### Vision

The Library seeks to exert a positive impact on the lives of our users. Our services will help individuals learn new skills, gain knowledge, and explore creative outlets. The Library will bring community members together, fostering communication, bonds, and understanding. Our presence, through new and accessible materials, services, and technologies, will enhance life in the community.

## II. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2018, the Library Director began planning the process for the development of a new long range plan. The planning process is part of our ongoing commitment of service to the community. Our aim is to identify and review community needs for library services, to evaluate present services and facilities in relation to these needs, and to identify improvements and new services that will fill those community needs. We seek to produce a working document of over-arching goals and objectives that will guide the library through the next five years.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Using the Public Library Association's guide Strategic Planning for Results to frame the process, the Library Director determined the general approach and produced a timetable for completion. With a focus on soliciting community input, the director devised a community use survey. The survey was actively promoted in the library over the course of a six-week period and was accessible online through the Library website.

Department heads developed five-year goals, and several staff meetings were devoted to the plan. The Trustees also provided input into Library goals and priorities.

To further solicit opinions from townspeople, two public forums were held in April, one on a weekday evening, the other on a Saturday morning. Meetings were advertised in the Library, in the local

newspaper, on Facebook and the local cable access channel, at Town Hall, and through the Library email newsletter. Invitations were also sent to a variety of town residents. The meetings, which were attended by a total of 23 individuals, were facilitated by the director of the local cable access channel. The results of these outreach efforts were combined with previously targeted issues, ideas, and needs to arrive at the six overarching goals that will guide the Library in developing programs and services to meet the needs of the local community. The Library Director wrote the plan, with input from staff and Trustees. The plan was submitted to the Board of Trustees and approved on September 17, 2019.

## IV. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Belchertown, with a population of 14,929, is located in southern Hampshire County, in Western Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley. The town was incorporated in 1761, with an agricultural base that included farming, lumbering, orchards, and livestock. The abundance of water in the area powered various types of mills. A thriving carriage and wagon industry took hold in the early 1800's, and by the turn of the century, Belchertown had established itself as a summer spa, with two large hotels.

Two significant state developments took place in town in the early 1900's. In 1921, the Belchertown State School for the Feeble-Minded was opened on 800 acres west of the town center. With 1,000 employees and 1,500 residents at its peak, the school significantly altered the landscape of the town. Closed in 1993 following a highly publicized lawsuit, some buildings were razed. The remaining buildings are largely empty and in poor repair. A few are in use by the town. The site is now designated an economic opportunity area, encouraging development through tax incentives. A new assisted living facility has been constructed on the State School land, and other proposals are being developed. Town planners envision that this area could evolve into a second town center.

The other major development was the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir in the 1930's to supply water to Boston. The damming of the Swift River, which resulted in the flooding of four towns and the relocation of residents, created the Quabbin Reservoir and its watershed, covering over 4,000 acres of Belchertown land. Some of these displaced residents and their homes were moved to Belchertown. The Quabbin provides a number of outdoor recreational opportunities for area residents and is viewed as a valuable addition to local quality of life.

Today, Belchertown is a bedroom community that retains its rural appeal. Over half of town acreage is forested. Due to its proximity to the Five College area, Belchertown has increasingly attracted the faculty and staff of these institutions. Belchertown boasts three lakes, a town beach, and two golf courses. Close proximity to the Massachusetts Turnpike allows townspeople convenient commuting access to a

wide radius of cities and towns, and Route 9, the major east-west route from Central Massachusetts to the Berkshires, runs through town. 85% of residents now work outside of Belchertown, a predominantly middle-class community where roughly 82% of homes are owner-occupied, and 6.4% of housing units are subsidized. In the New England tradition, Belchertown is governed through town meeting, aided by elected boards and volunteer committees.

The following is key Belchertown demographic data from the United States Census Bureau:

**POPULATION BY AGE - 2015**

5 years and under	6.8%
6-11 years	7.7%
12-17 years	9.9%
18-24 years	8.9%
25 – 34 years	7.7%
35 – 44 years	12.6%
45 – 54 years	19%
55 -- 59 years	7.8%
60 – 64 years	6.7%
65 – 74 years	8.2%
75 +	4.7%

- 93% of residents are white, 2.6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1.4% African American.
- The median age is 40.5.
- Overall population density is low, with 268 people per square mile.
- 10,447 residents are registered voters.
- 25% of residents over age 25 have a Bachelor’s Degree, slightly above the state average of 22% percent, and 16% possess a graduate or professional degree.
- Belchertown unemployment in 2015 averaged 4.0%, below the state average of 6.7%
- Belchertown’s current residential tax rate is \$18.32 and its FY2020 operating budget is \$55,055,772.
- The median value of a single family home is \$261,551 (2016).
- Median household income is \$86,165 (2017)
- 93% of residents speak only English at home
- Four state-aided housing projects provide 206 subsidized housing units for the elderly, the disabled, and low income residents (Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development).
- In 2017, 5.8% of residents were living below the poverty level.

Belchertown's Master Plan emphasizes careful business development and environmental conservation as priorities for the future. Maintaining the town's personality and protecting land and ecosystems are top goals. Encouraging business development that supports Belchertown's "community character" is acknowledged as an important priority. A mix of general business types is strung along the three main routes crossing through town. With a land area of 52.4 square miles, the town is huge, reportedly the sixth largest in area in the state. At the same time, only 3% of town land is in commercial or industrial use. Overall, 9% of town land is state-protected. Belchertown has experienced rapid growth since 1980, and for extended periods was one of the fastest growing communities in the state. Between 1980 and 2010, the population grew by 75.6%. Given the large land mass occupied by the town, under certain circumstances it is estimated that as much as 40% of the town's land could be available for future development. While the economic slide that began in 2008 stalled growth and new home construction, the potential for accelerated future growth and the demand for services that accompanies such growth, does exist.

Belchertown supports its own independent school district, with approximately 2,600 students enrolled in five public schools in town. Planning is now underway for the demolition of the two oldest schools in town, Cold Spring School, which houses all kindergartners, and Jabish Middle School. These student populations would be combined in a new facility.

## V. LIBRARY DESCRIPTION

Belchertown native John Francis Clapp set off for New York City at age 16. Later in life, when he had achieved wealth and success, it is said he regretted never having enough to read as a boy. Hoping to spare other Belchertown children this fate, he left a bequest of \$40,000 in the hands of his brothers, with the provision that it be used for the construction of a library and for the purchase of its contents. Clapp, who died in 1882, had stipulated that work on the project must be completed within five years. On June 30, 1887, the Clapp Memorial Library building was dedicated on a plot located on Main Street, across from Clapp's childhood home. On September 1, 1887, the library opened its doors, with two of Clapp's brothers among the original trustees.

The handsome, Romanesque Revival style building is arguably the most noteworthy in town. The interior of the building is dominated by two large stained-glass windows, one at the south end, donated in honor of John Francis Clapp by his brothers, and the other at the north end of the building donated by original trustee Susan Bridgeman in her husband's memory. The building is owned by the Trustees of the Library. While the town does not provide for the maintenance of the building, most other basic library

operations are funded through town appropriations. The building is part of the Belchertown Historic District, comprised of 74 properties, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As the town has grown over the years, driven by the accelerated home building that began in the 1980's and continued through 2008, hours of operation, services, and usage increased steadily. In 2001, a Planning & Design Grant was awarded to the Clapp Memorial Library by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). Subsequently, a library building consultant was hired to complete the Clapp Memorial Library Building Program, followed by the selection of an architect to guide the proposed expansion/renovation of the Clapp into a 30,000 square foot facility. In 2005, the library was awarded a state Public Library Construction Grant in the amount of \$2,910,926 and was placed on a construction waiting list. An extensive and carefully planned fund-raising and informational campaign was begun to raise support for the project.

By 2008, the grant award had increased to \$3.3 million and considerable support for the project had been generated in town. Over \$800,000 had been raised through fundraising efforts, when voters at a Special Town Meeting in November, 2009 voted 485-407 to defeat town financial support of the expansion/renovation. Although the project had passed by a vote of 4,445-2,451 at an earlier town election, the sharp drop in the economy and fears surrounding increased costs for a larger building resulted in defeat of the request for \$4.4 million in Town support for the project. The state grant lapsed, and Library Trustees shelved plans for future renovation and expansion until significant economic turnaround in the state was demonstrated. While the hope for an improved and expanded Clapp Memorial Library remains and signs of economic recovery stoke the optimism of library supporters, Library Trustees are carefully considering the feasibility of another campaign.

Today, the Clapp Memorial Library is a member of the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) and the Central/Western Massachusetts Resource Sharing (C/WMARS) network, a consortium of over 144 libraries of all types, with combined collections numbering over 9 million items.

## Governance

A Charter was granted to the Clapp Memorial Library Corporation by the Massachusetts Legislature on March 31, 1887. While the Library is a Town department governed by a self-perpetuating seven-member Board of Library Trustees, it is also a non-profit 501c3 incorporated entity. The Chair of the Select Board is an ex officio board member. Responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the public is delegated by the Board to the Library

Director. The Library Director is appointed by, and directly responsible to, the Board and is an employee of the Town of Belchertown.

## Staffing

The Library Director and library staff work a total of 247 hours per week, for a full-time equivalent of 6.1. The Library is currently staffed as follows:

**LIBRARY DIRECTOR** - 40 hours per week. Responsible for overall library operations and all aspects of library management including planning, budgeting, collection development, staff supervision, state reporting, grant management, equipment upkeep, public relations, and facilities management.

**HEAD OF CIRCULATION AND REFERENCE SERVICES** - 40 hours per week. Oversees and supervises activities at circulation/reference desk, including scheduling, training, and supervision of circulation staff and volunteers. Responsible for adult fiction collection development and some recurring adult programs.

**HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES** - 40 hours per week. Plans, organizes, and administers all aspects of Children's Services, including collection development and program planning, with considerable community outreach. Participates in Young Adult service planning.

**TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNICAL SERVICES LIBRARIAN** - 40 hours per week. Responsible for all aspects of technical services, including cataloging and processing of materials as well as all technology-related initiatives, including computer maintenance and upgrades, and website maintenance. Provides technology instruction to patrons and staff; supports all library technology, and investigates new technologies.

**TEEN SERVICES COORDINATOR** - 5 hours per week. Plans, promotes, and implements teen programming. Works with Teen Advisory Board; designs displays; manages teen social media.

**2 CIRCULATION ASSISTANTS** - 25 hours each per week. Perform all circulation tasks, process overdue notices, Interlibrary Loan requests, assists patrons with reference, reader's advisory, and library use inquiries.

**3 PAGES** - 17 hours per week total.

**CUSTODIAN** - 15 hours per week



**VOLUNTEERS** – Shelving, shelf reading and straightening, materials processing, and other duties as assigned by library staff.

## Hours

The Clapp Memorial Library is open 47 hours per week. Hours of operation are:

MONDAY	10AM-6PM
TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY	10AM-7PM
FRIDAY	10AM-6PM
SATURDAY	9AM-1PM
SUNDAYS & HOLIDAYS	CLOSED

July 1 through Labor Day, hours are reduced to 39 open hours per week.

## Collection Description

The Clapp Memorial Library houses a predominantly popular collection, with new material, particularly adult fiction, being in high demand. Because of the extreme space constraints imposed by the 1887 building, the collection is quite small for a town of this size. Nevertheless, demand is high and providing leisure reading materials for all ages remains a top priority. Of the 24,868 hard-copy books in the collection, 49 percent are adult titles, 44 percent are juvenile, and 7 percent are young adult. Adult items account for 48 percent of book circulation, with children's titles accounting for 46 percent and young adult circulation at 6 percent. A wide selection of popular adult magazines and a small number of young adult and children's periodicals are available, for a total of 75 print magazine subscriptions. The library also loans fifteen museum passes to a variety of area cultural institutions and a few non-traditional items including a ukulele, a telescope, a Finch robot, and Makey-Makey kits. The Library subscribes to the Overdrive Advantage Plus program, which allows us to purchase digital titles that circulate exclusively to CML patrons. This is in addition to the Overdrive Digital Collection available to our patrons as a member of C/WMARS.

The library's collection of documentary and feature films is in high demand and circulates well, although some decline in that circulation can be explained by the popularity of streaming services. Maintaining an eclectic collection in good condition, with a balance between genre favorites, new releases and classics, is a high priority. Although demand for audio books on compact disc holds steady, lack of shelving space hampers the growth of this collection. Interlibrary loan remains an essential service for our patrons.

The Children’s Room offers a heavily used collection of picture books, easy readers, juvenile fiction and nonfiction, parenting books, board books, and juvenile audiovisual materials. A small alcove adjacent to the adult nonfiction stacks is dedicated to Young Adult materials, primarily fiction, but also including audio books, magazines, and graphic novels. Young Adult Nonfiction is interfiled with Adult Nonfiction.

We offer a decent-sized collection of large print materials for adults and a Local History Collection of approximately 750 titles. For security and space issues, this collection is housed upstairs in the Director’s Office and is available for in-library use only.

Through our membership in the resource sharing network, C/WMARS, our patrons have access to a digital catalog of 60,993 eBooks, 20,645 audio books, and 1,464 videos. The small size of our collection increases the importance of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services. Loan activity is high, with 13,645 ILL's received from other libraries and 12,466 provided to other libraries in FY2019. Items circulated to non-residents totaled 8,644.

COLLECTION STATISTICS

HOLDINGS AS OF JUNE 30, 2019

<b>PRINT BOOKS</b>		
Adult Volumes	12,089	
Young Adult Volumes	1,696	
Children’s Volumes	11,083	
Total Books		<b>24,868</b>
<b>AUDIO/VISUAL MATERIALS</b>		
Video	6,527	
Audio	4,557	
Total AV Material		11,084
<b>DIGITAL CONTENT</b>		
E-Books	61,030	
Audio	20,692	
Video	1,464	
Total Digital Content		83,186
<b>OTHER MATERIALS</b>		
Periodical volumes, kits, games, etc.	1,950	
<b>TOTAL MATERIALS HOLDINGS</b>		<b>121,088</b>

## CIRCULATION STATISTICS FY2019

Adult Books	24,452
Young Adult Books	3,133
Children's Books	24,371
Periodicals	1,732
Videocassettes/DVDs	26,154
Audiobooks	7,498
Electronic Formant	560
Ebooks, Downloadable Audio, Video	12,235
Miscellaneous	419
<b>Total Materials Circulation</b>	<b>101,554</b>

## FY2019 SERVICES

• Number of Belchertown residents registered as borrowers	7,164
• Library attendance	84,142
• Program attendance	13,949
• Volunteer hours	3,992
• New library cards issued	374
• Internet sessions	3,500
• Wireless sessions	3,640

## VI. LIBRARY FACILITY

The Library is located in the town center, separated from the Town Common by the Town Administrator's office and Town Hall. A shared parking lot unites the three buildings. The Library is within walking distance of Cold Springs Elementary School (home to the school system's kindergartners) and is also located in the Belchertown's business district. This advantageous central location makes the Library an anchor in the town center. The Library is comprised of three floors with gross square footage of 9,930. Of the total square footage, approximately half is net useable space.

## VII. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Clapp Memorial Library is fortunate to benefit from an appreciative community, a supportive Friends of the Library group, a committed Board of Trustees, and a knowledgeable, experienced staff.

The Friends of the Library fund most programming, with the exception of those funded through the Belchertown Cultural Council (typically two to three per year), and recent funding for Summer Reading programs provided by a local bank. This support allows the Library to continue to offer high quality programs and an extensive summer reading program for youth that is popular and well attended. The Friends of the Library also provide essential support for large projects. Most recently, they provided half of the funding necessary to install air conditioning and a new boiler. In the past, they have purchased computers, equipment, furniture, and museum passes in addition to funding some annual maintenance costs, such as carpet cleaning and elevator and photocopier maintenance. The Friends of the Library work tirelessly year round on their biannual book sales, which generate the funds for so many library improvements.

Our biggest operational obstacle, however, is posed by this very beautiful, historic library building. A building built in 1887 to serve a population of 2,300 people cannot adequately or efficiently serve the library needs of 14,949 people in the year 2019 and beyond.

The current building has effectively stalled collection growth. Continual aggressive weeding is necessary to free space for new materials. As a result, the collection is quite current but lacks depth. The building is noisy, offers minimal display space, virtually no storage, improved lighting thanks to a recent lighting upgrade, very little patron seating, no privacy, no quiet rooms, and a space that is technically handicapped accessible, but is not handicapped friendly. A new HVAC system was installed in the spring of 2019, introducing central air conditioning into the facility for the first time. While the size and configuration of the building can hamper programming, staff ingenuity and determination results in high attendance at the programs that are offered.

The Library offers two monthly adult book discussion groups, a weekly knitting group, a cookbook club, and a seven- week meditation class, along with a wide variety of events like International Games Day, musical performances, author talks, arts and crafts workshops, lectures, and a popular Summer Reading Challenge for adults. While the public would like additional adult programming, as communicated in the survey results, the library presents a healthy and diverse roster, given the physical circumstances and small staff size. Children's programming is a high priority and includes three weekly preschool story hours, book discussion groups and a changing roster of programs and events of all types for a range of age groups. A Teen Advisory Board has been in existence, to varying degrees of success, for four years. The Teen Coordinator offers a diverse selection of creative programming of high quality. Engaging with a broader teen population and getting them into the library is a challenge that we continue to address.

Library strengths, as cited by staff members, include our center-of-town location; the historic nature of the building, good though small collections with ample funding for those collections, terrific ILL within our consortium, positive community relations, supportive Friends of the Library and Trustees; well-attended programming, reliable Wi-Fi, quick processing of new materials, and high caliber tech assistance. In a perfect world, staff would love to offer curbside service, more art exhibits, lounging areas, open access to special collections, plants, a makerspace, laptops, inviting outdoor spaces, a story hour garden, space for more book carts, and improved building sight lines.

## VIII. COMMUNITY INPUT

As part of this planning process, community focus groups and a library usage survey were employed to reach into the community to both assess our services and to solicit community input into the blueprint for the library's future. The information gathered will aid the Library in formulating, refining, and improving services to meet new and changing community needs.

The compiled survey results and focus group feedback helped pinpoint areas of strength and also highlighted weaknesses. The personal level of customer service offered is a big plus and a huge contributor to high levels of user satisfaction. Staff members know many patrons by name, and often anticipate their reading, listening, and viewing preferences. The Library's central location is advantageous, and helps contribute to its role as a community center. A cooperative relationship has been established with the Belchertown Schools and new opportunities for collaboration with them are always welcome. The building, despite its limitations, rated well in regards to its atmosphere, historic beauty, and fine craftsmanship. Seating, quiet space, and study areas received noticeably low marks along with slight dissatisfaction with parking. Building size and design frustrates many of our users.

### Focus Group Summary

Focus group attendees contributed useful ideas, perceptions, and suggestions. Discussion was thoughtful and lively. When asked why people choose to live in Belchertown, many mentioned affordability, citing the lower cost of housing and land relative to some surrounding communities. The peaceful, rural setting of the town is highly valued, with reference to Belchertown's "small town feel, where you feel like you know everyone".

Location is another important consideration and commuting is "do-able" from here. The central location and easy access to many destinations makes Belchertown a convenient jumping off point. Relatively convenient access to the Mass Pike is advantageous along with convenient access to the second and

third largest cities in the state and to the University of Massachusetts. Outdoor opportunities abound, open space is plentiful, and natural assets are many. The quality of the public schools is highly prized, with community values incorporated into the curriculum.

One focus group participant was drawn to town by the forward-thinking attitude of town government and town residents, noting that the outlook for the future is positive, with new leadership and renewed momentum in town government. Other attractions noted included the Library, the Common, the Quabbin, the lakes, the Belchertown Fair, Town Meeting, and the many opportunities for community involvement. The presence of old, established families in town is viewed as a tradition-centered benefit. On a broader scale, it was referenced that people need places to congregate and socialize and there are not enough such options in town.

Other unique and appreciated aspects of Belchertown include:

- Small Farms Institute with 4H Garden on premises
- Garden at Swift River School—produces fresh produce for lunches
- Belchertown Schools Athletic Departments
- Conservation Department
- Concerts on the Common/Community Band—genuine Americana
- Quabbin Arts Association
- Belchertown Art Week
- Friends of the Library Book Sale
- Belchertown Cultural Council
- Food Truck Friday
- The Sentinel Newspaper
- B.U.C.C Quilt Show
- Jessica’s Playground
- Overall high quality of life
- McCarthy’s Pub
- Christopher Heights (assisted living facility)
- The Senior Center
- Churches—many faith options in town
- Food pantries
- Orchards & farms
- Farmer’s Market
- New small businesses

- Just enough commerce—can accomplish tasks without leaving town
- Police Department
- Stone House Museum/Historical Association
- Fire Department Museum
- One central polling site—makes voting a community event
- Proposed improvements to Route 202 corridor

When envisioning the ideal Belchertown of the future, residents expressed the desire for walking, hiking, and cross country skiing trails, sidewalks, and more destinations reachable on foot. They'd like more varied options for dining out—not fast food or chains. Participants desire a variety of amenities and itemized these needs:

- Dog park
- Non-chain restaurants
- Book store
- Art house/cultural space for exhibits and performances
- Walking destinations
- Cohesive community calendar
- More bus stops
- Kids center/play space
- Art classes
- Second hand kids swap shop
- More businesses
- Small business advice
- Idea incubators
- High speed internet alternative to Charter
- Support for writing community
- Innovative ways to support millennials
- Trail maps
- Intelligent centralized city planning
- Expanded library
- More recreational space for organized sports
- Improved town website—losing new adults due to poor/confusing information delivery
- Difficulty attending Town Meeting with young children at home
- Lack of racial diversity in town population
- Enhanced, centralized information sharing method

Many attendees expressed their interest in striving toward a greater sense of community in town, with more opportunities for social networking and community interaction. Weaknesses cited included communication issues that result in uncoordinated information delivery, and the need for more ways to connect with, and meet, others in the community. The town faces additional challenges as articulated by the group:

- The diverse but segmented population can be difficult to engage in community affairs. More people need to attend Town Meeting
- Education and information relative to town needs and opportunities is necessary to engage and energize voters.
- The Common needs more businesses. An interesting mix of stores in a pedestrian-friendly environment is highly desirable.
- Transportation without a car is difficult and bus routes are limited. Expanded PVTA routes needed.
- Residents often drive considerable distance for entertainment, restaurants, and other services.
- Adult residents need a reason to remain in town once children are grown; adult children need a reason to stay, or return.
- Belchertown must make it easier for retirees to remain in town. Expanded senior residence options needed.
- Implement smart ordinances that control growth while still encouraging it. Expand non-residential tax base in a way that does not erode the unique character of the town. At the same time, must ask the question, “Do residents want a large business tax base?”
- Change and development are good, but residents worry about tax increases.
- All improvements and new initiatives require adequate funding.
- Attract out-of-towners to Belchertown and give them a reason to spend money while they’re here (restaurants, shops, etc).
- A lack of community meeting space, performance space, and gathering spots is identified as a critical issue that strangles the cultural life of the town
- Difficulty of disseminating information: how do people separate fact from fiction or hearsay?

Future development should fit the town image without destroying the small town character. The Library was described as being a center for town engagement, and is viewed as fulfilling the function of a community center more than any other town entity. However, it was acknowledged that to truly fill that role the physical facility would need to expand. Some felt the Library should function as the communication center for the town, calling it “the town water cooler”. There was universal agreement that community events create strong bonds among residents.



## Library Use Survey

The Library Use Survey netted a good deal of information and a large data set to work with. Completion numbers were impressive with 415 adult surveys and 26 teen surveys collected. 175 of these were completed online. It should be noted that survey responses reported as percentages are based on the number of actual responses to a particular question (some participants did not answer every question).

An aggressive in-house effort was made to encourage survey participation and that effort paid off. Of adults surveyed, 36 percent reported that their library usage had increased in the last year, 7% cited decreased use, the remainder cited no change in usage. Books still lead the way in popularity. Eighty-nine percent of respondents come to the library for books, followed by 49 percent who come for movies, 49 percent visit to attend a program, 31 percent borrow audio books, 35 percent come to borrow a museum pass, and 25 percent visit to make a photocopy. Remaining categories all polled under 25%

Of the 216 respondents who answered the question "Members of my household would use the library more if it offered..." 46% cited more open hours (with longer weekend hours being listed most frequently), 47% would like additional programs, and 15% said they would visit the library more often if it had quiet study areas or more seating. Ten percent of respondents visit the library several times a week, 42% visit weekly, 35% come monthly, 13% seldom come. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents are Belchertown residents.

When asked what respondents liked most about the library, greatest appreciation was expressed for staff, the programs, the building, location, the collection, and atmosphere, in that order. When given a chance to rate our services, highest marks went to expertise and helpfulness of staff, followed by cleanliness of building, wireless, public computers, and children's programs. Lowest rating was assigned to "Library size to meet community needs, with only 27% of respondents giving this quality an "A". Overall, with the exception of this category, disapproval of collections and services was quite low. In fact, the majority of Library collections, programs, and services received a high percentage of "A" grades. The adult book collection rated an "A" from 56 percent and "B" from 34 percent of respondents, with similar approval ratings for the children's book collection. Please see the appendix for more complete survey results.

When asked if respondents use other libraries, the most common reasons for an affirmative answer were more comfortable building, separate children's area where noise is easily tolerated, quiet spaces and meeting rooms, and larger collections. While the Library collection cannot be appreciably increased

due to building constraints, offering new downloadable content, new programs, improving the building comfort factor, and responding to patron requests will increase user satisfaction over time.

General comments on the library were typically quite favorable. “You do a great job with what you have” was a common response and “The staff are the most cheerful and helpful I’ve ever encountered” came from another library user. “It’s perfect”, stated yet another patron. While the Library isn’t typically held to that standard, staff were often encouraged to “keep up the great work”, with much appreciation expressed for the convenient location of the Library and the personal service the library staff provides. On the other hand, there was also constructive and helpful criticism. Recurring comments referred to the need for more new items in the children’s collection, an improved children’s area, more classics, increased programming for all ages and nicer spaces for those programs, more book groups, an updated décor, more e-books, extended hours (especially on weekends), and the need for weekend children’s programs. The complete lack of quiet study areas was frequently mentioned, as was the lack of adequate seating.

While the teen data set was small, 26 completed surveys is respectable enough for this age group. Responses were overwhelmingly positive despite the reality of the cramped teen space and small collection size. When asked how often they visit the library, 34% responded “rarely”; 30% visit weekly; 27% come monthly. When they do visit, 84% report checking out books, 52% come to study and the same percentage come for programs. Forty percent come to meet friends, and 32% visit to borrow movies. Sixty-two percent report no change in the frequency of library use, 23% use the library more, 15% use it less. Fifty-four percent would visit the library more if it offered quiet study areas. Thirty-three percent said they would visit more if it offered additional programs or services, but declined to suggest what those might be. Interestingly, 75% do not read e-books or listen to downloadable audio books.

When asked what they like most about the library, teens cited the staff, the atmosphere, the teen section, teen programming, and the quiet environment, in that order. They also noted that we need more programs, better seating, more comics and graphic novels, more new young adult novels, and quiet study areas. They learn about library programs first and foremost from Instagram, followed by email, and finally friends. A small number mentioned learning about events at school.

The collected surveys confirmed the need for increased marketing and publicity for the library, and the refrain of “Expand” was one of the most consistent comments among adult users. The overall recurring theme can be summarized as “expand building, add hours, increase programs and collections”.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Adequate funding is essential to the fulfillment of service roles, so that the Library is more appropriately staffed, technology is maintained and updated, and collections are cultivated. In the future, initiatives will focus on continued outreach to teens, new offerings for children, and expanded programming to reach teens and more adults. The demand for children's programming is seemingly endless. Expanding the Teen Coordinator position will free some demands on the Youth Services Librarian, so that the focus of that position can shift entirely to juvenile services. Working to educate the public about the range of library services available, raising awareness within the community about the Library in general, and mobilizing the community to be actively involved in promoting and supporting the Library will be major priorities in the coming years.

The construction of new library facilities in nearby towns has raised the expectations of area library users. Highlighting what the Clapp Memorial Library does best, with emphasis on unique services and offerings, will be essential to remaining relevant and useful to the community. Optimal maintenance and functioning of the physical facility must be ensured. Continuing to implement building improvements will remain a priority. The feasibility of applying for a state Planning and Design Grant will be carefully considered in the coming months. With the overall goal of serving as the center for community learning and engagement, we will continue to adapt and reimagine the Library to meet community needs. The need for more space is irrefutable. While we will continue to improve the current facility to optimize the space we have, the need for more is never far from the minds of those guiding and working for the library of the present and of the future.

## X. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **I. Raise the Library profile in the community.**

- a. Improve public awareness of the Clapp Memorial Library, its programs and services through consistent marketing.
- b. Publicize news and events as widely as possible.
- c. Seek new opportunities for cooperation and coordination with Belchertown Schools.
- d. Develop partnerships with other town departments and community organizations.
- e. Maintain close ties and open communication with Friends of the Library.
- f. Increase number of Clapp Memorial Library card holders and bring new users into the library.

**II. Present a comfortable, user-friendly environment that is welcoming to all.**

- a. Continue, and improve upon, the tradition of friendly and knowledgeable personal service.
- b. Maintain and preserve physical facility.
- c. Increase services to Young Adult Population.
- d. Increase current library hours of operation.
- e. Optimize and facilitate ease of use of library services through effective policies.
- f. Integrate public opinion into library services as expressed on Library Use Survey and in focus groups.
- g. Improve navigability of services and spaces.
- h. Draft disaster plan.
- i. Improve and expand physical plant.

**III. Serve as a community center and cultural hub.**

- a. Provide programming for all ages.
- b. Add new, recurring programs for children; investigate passive programming for all ages.
- c. Sponsor annual Library Open House with special attractions.
- d. Expand art exhibit offerings.
- e. Revive community-wide reading program.
- f. Continually explore new services and technologies.
- g. Reinvigorate Teen Advisory Board.
- h. Introduce Non-Fiction Book Discussion Group.

**IV. Cultivate a dynamic collection to meet the recreational, informational, and educational needs of the community.**

- a. Update Collection Development Policy to reflect new media and changing community needs and interests.
- b. Showcase well-organized, up-to-date collections.
- c. Publicize and promote C/WMARS digital collection.
- d. Expand purchasing of digital titles through Overdrive Advantage and enhance and expand digital collections and services.
- e. Continue to implement collection preservation goals.
- f. Re-imagine current library spaces—update and improve.

**V. Serve as the community's gateway to innovative and emerging technologies.**

- a. Develop three-year Technology Plan.

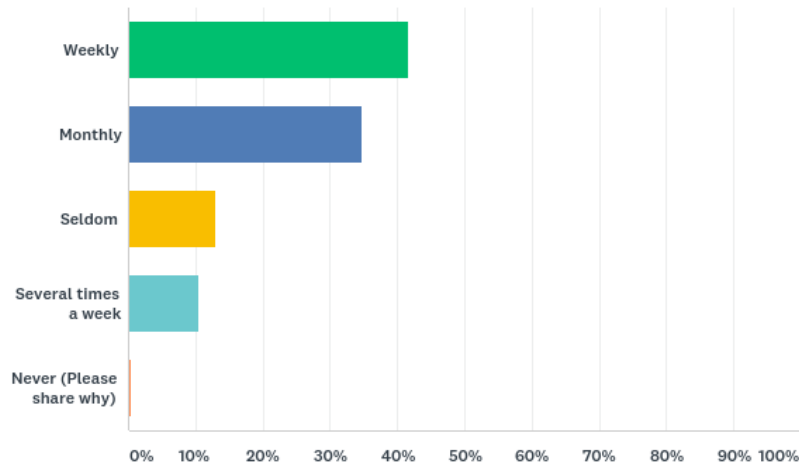
- b. Publicize subscription database offerings.
- c. Provide computer/technology training to community.
- d. Evaluate new services and technologies that may result in increased user satisfaction or added efficiency and cost savings.
- e. Introduce community to new technologies in explanatory and exploratory fashion.
- f. Assess website functionality and user experience.

**VI. Ensure the sustainability of the Clapp Memorial Library for future generations.**

- a. Continue to inform the Finance Committee and Select Board of the benefits of library services and operations.
- b. Work with town officials to guarantee Library budget meets all requirements for state aid.
- c. Plan annual retreat for Trustees.
- d. Trustees will attend regional workshops and seminars.
- e. Engage Trustees in researching new fundraising options.
- f. Devise strategy for new Trustee recruitment.
- g. Strengthen and enhance working relationship with Friends of Library.
- h. Trustees will advocate for an increased library budget that supports all previously stated goals.

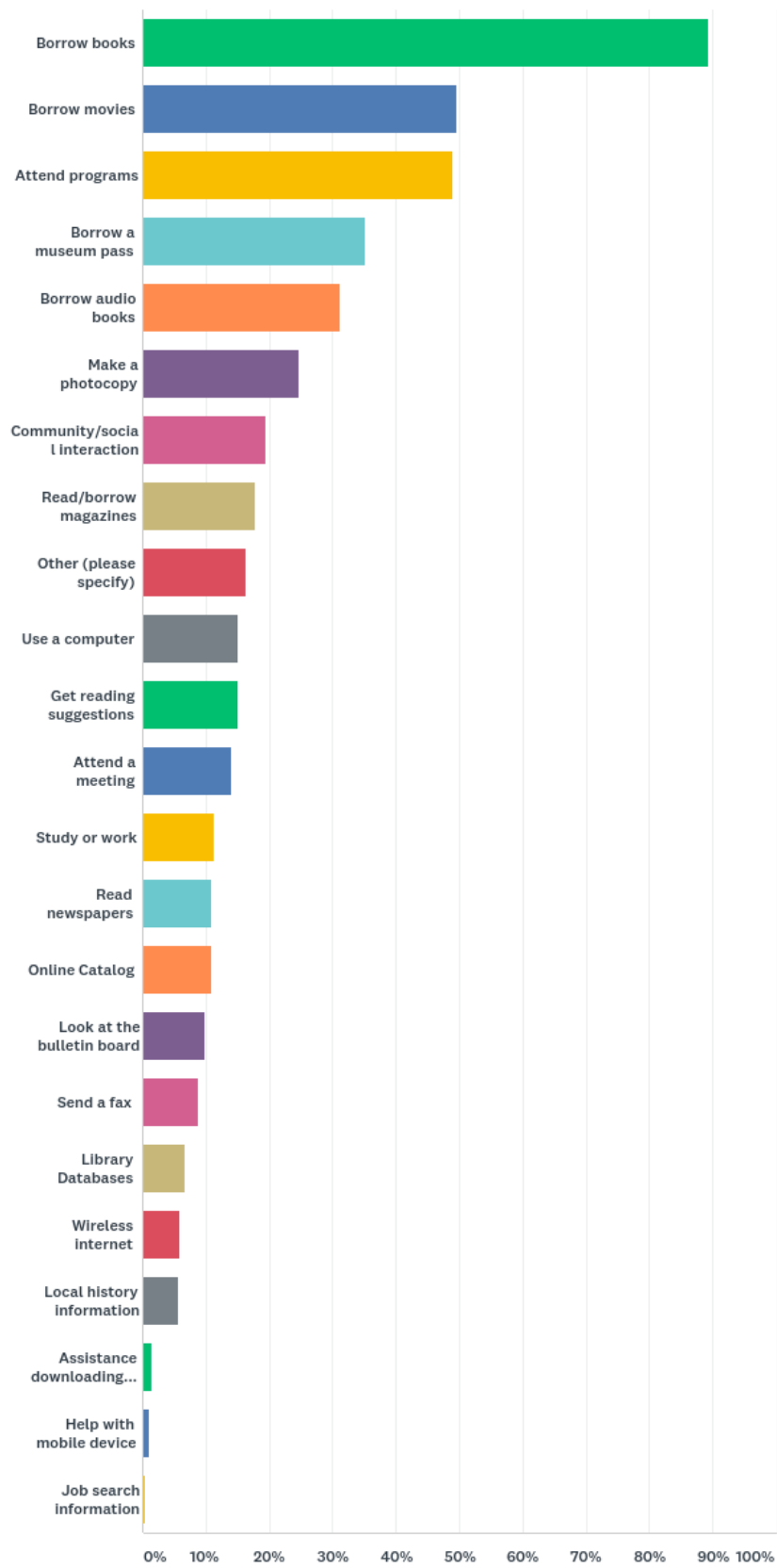
## XI. APPENDIX: LIBRARY SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 On average, how often do you visit the Clapp Memorial Library?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Weekly	41.58%	168
Monthly	34.65%	140
Seldom	12.87%	52
Several times a week	10.40%	42
Never (Please share why)	0.50%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>404</b>

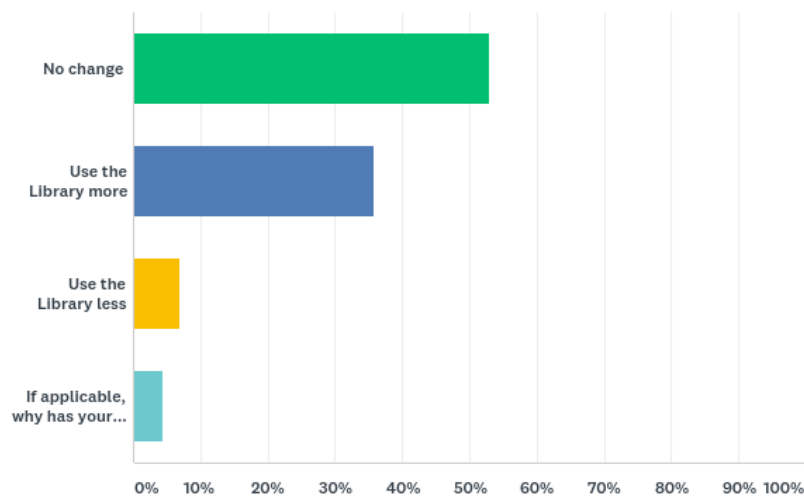
### Q3 Why do you visit the Clapp Memorial Library? Please check all that apply



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
▼ Borrow books		89.38% 362
▼ Borrow movies		49.63% 201
▼ Attend programs		48.89% 198
▼ Borrow a museum pass		35.06% 142
▼ Borrow audio books		31.11% 126
▼ Make a photocopy		24.69% 100
▼ Community/social interaction		19.51% 79
▼ Read/borrow magazines		17.78% 72
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses	16.30% 66
▼ Use a computer		15.06% 61
▼ Get reading suggestions		15.06% 61
▼ Attend a meeting		14.07% 57
▼ Study or work		11.36% 46
▼ Read newspapers		10.86% 44
▼ Online Catalog		10.86% 44
▼ Look at the bulletin board		9.88% 40
▼ Send a fax		8.89% 36
▼ Library Databases		6.67% 27
▼ Wireless internet		5.93% 24
▼ Local history information		5.68% 23
▼ Assistance downloading digital content		1.48% 6
▼ Help with mobile device		0.99% 4
▼ Job search information		0.49% 2
<b>Total Respondents: 405</b>		

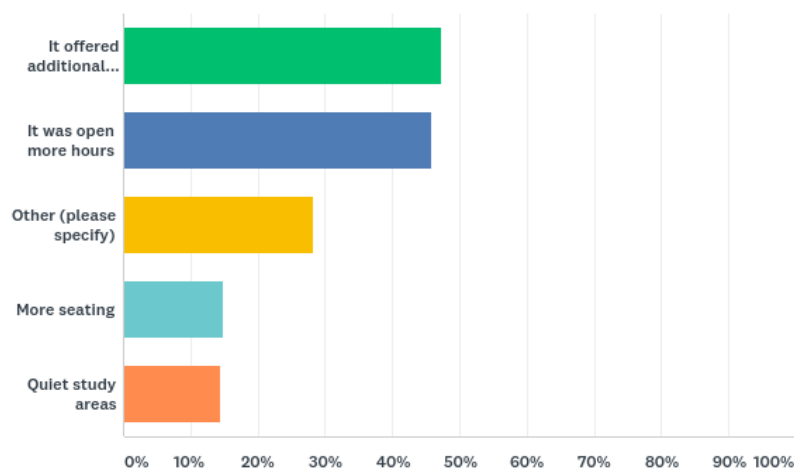


### Q4 Over the past year, has your use of the Library increased or decreased?



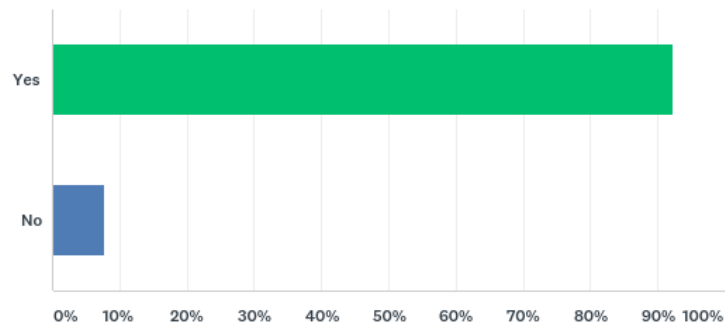
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ No change	52.84% 214
▼ Use the Library more	35.80% 145
▼ Use the Library less	6.91% 28
▼ If applicable, why has your use of the library increased or decreased?	<a href="#">Responses</a> 4.44% 18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>405</b>

### Q5 Members of my household would use the library more if... (check all that apply)



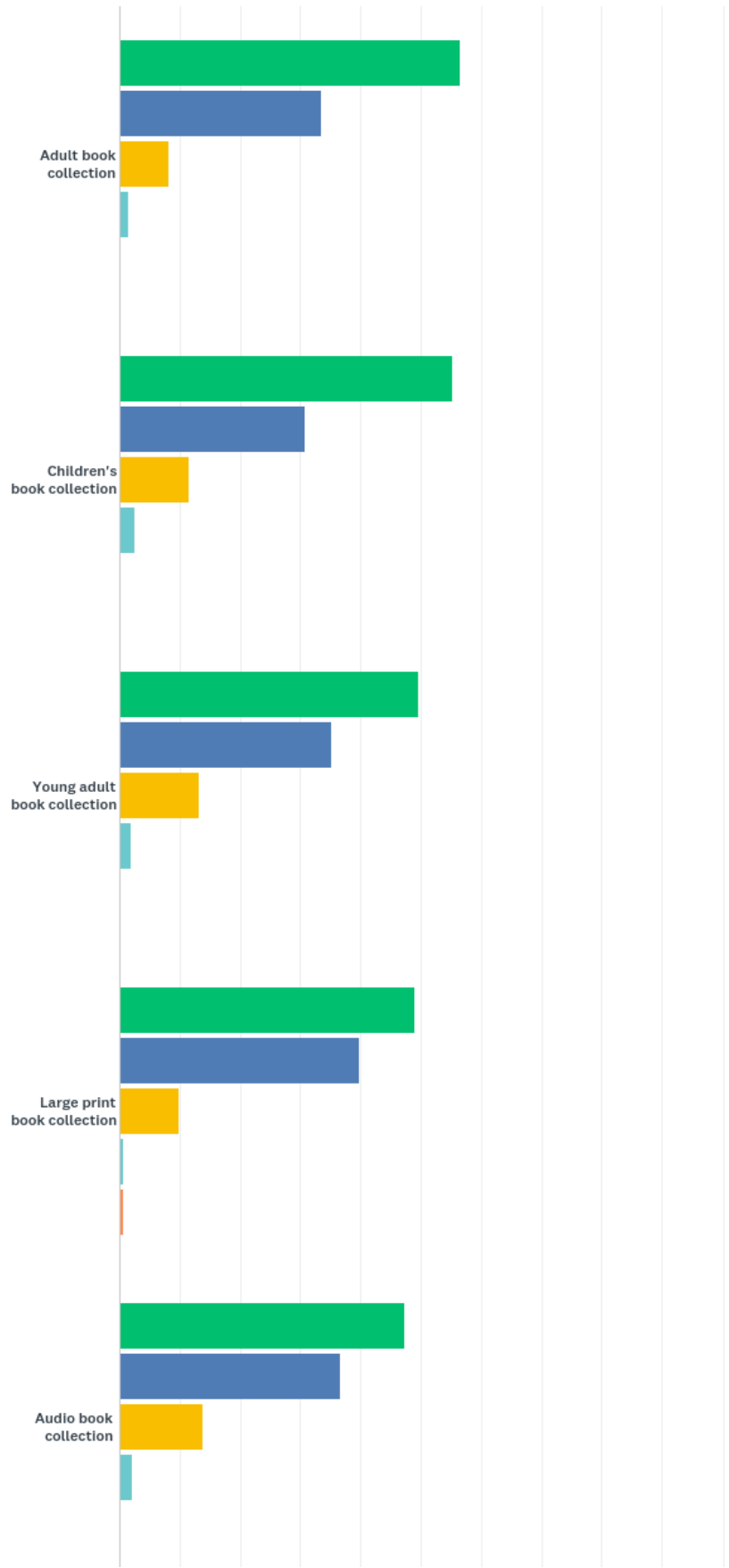
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
▼ It offered additional programs or services		47.22% 102
▼ It was open more hours		45.83% 99
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses	28.24% 61
▼ More seating		14.81% 32
▼ Quiet study areas		14.35% 31
<b>Total Respondents: 216</b>		

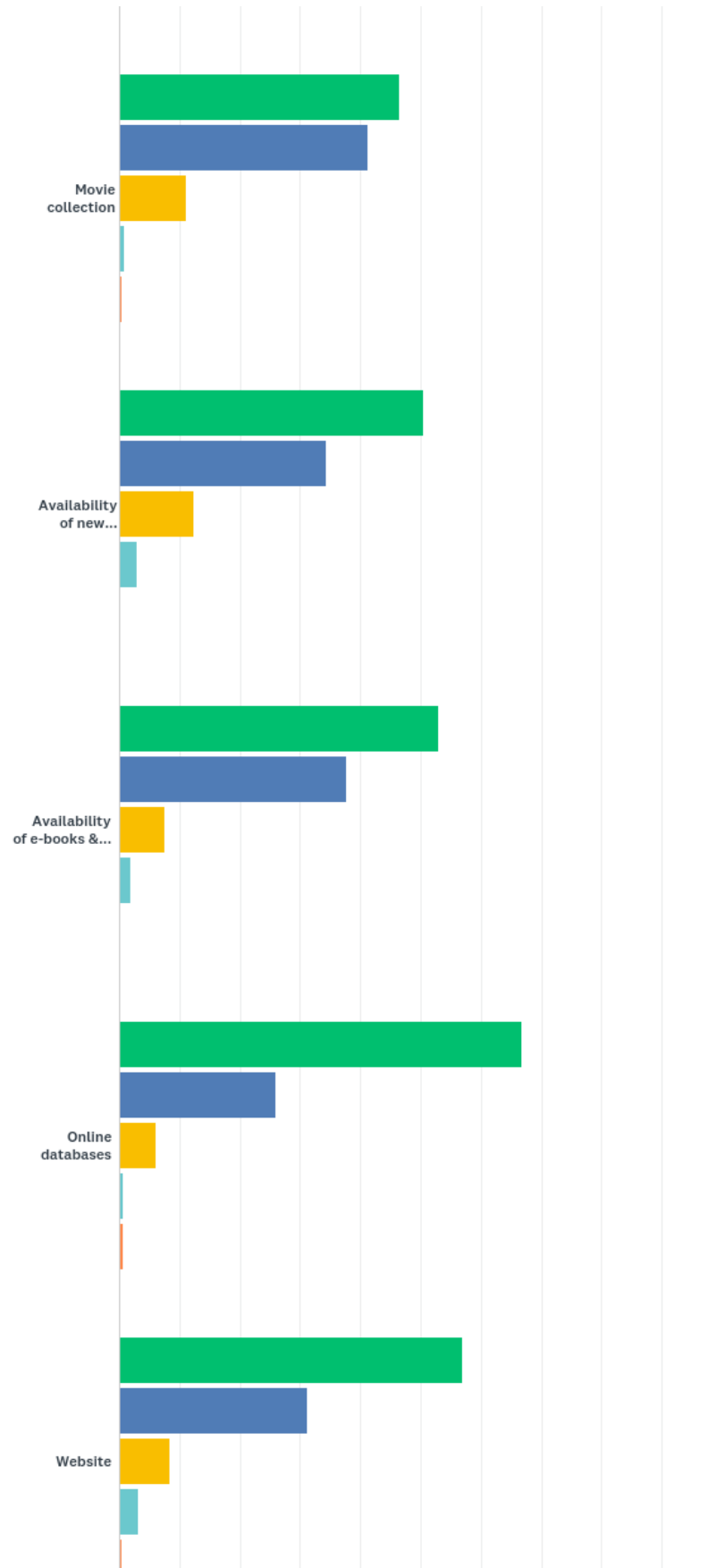
### Q7 Do you live in Belchertown?

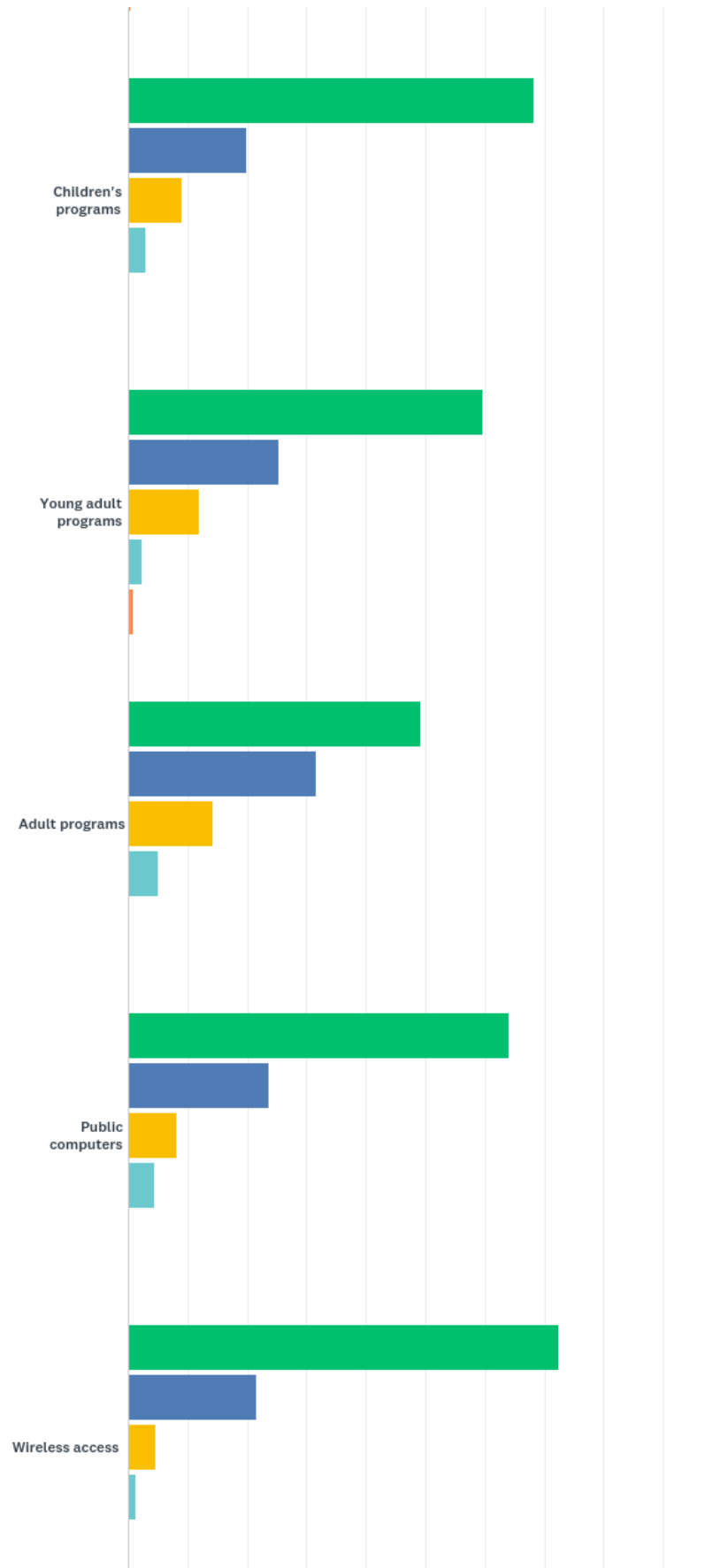


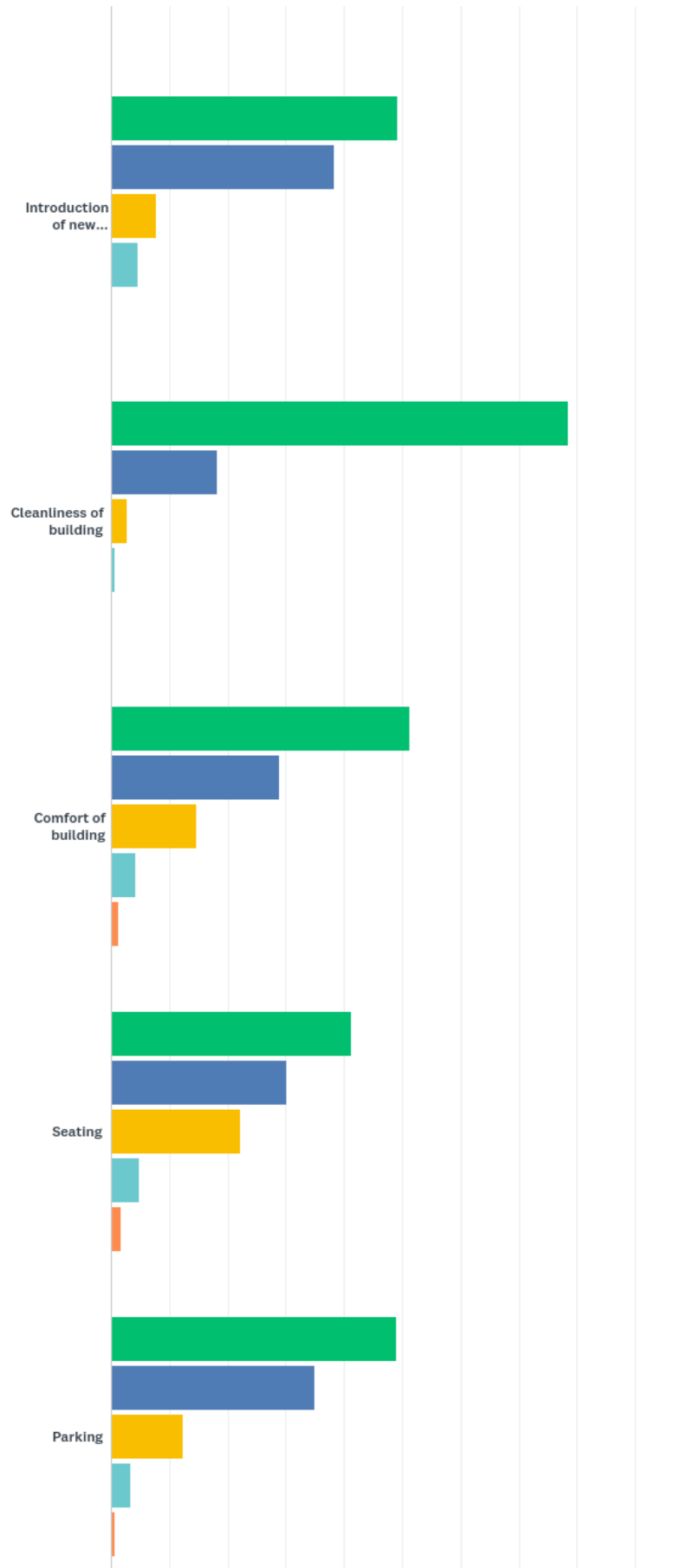
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
▼ Yes		92.21% 367
▼ No		7.79% 31
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>398</b>

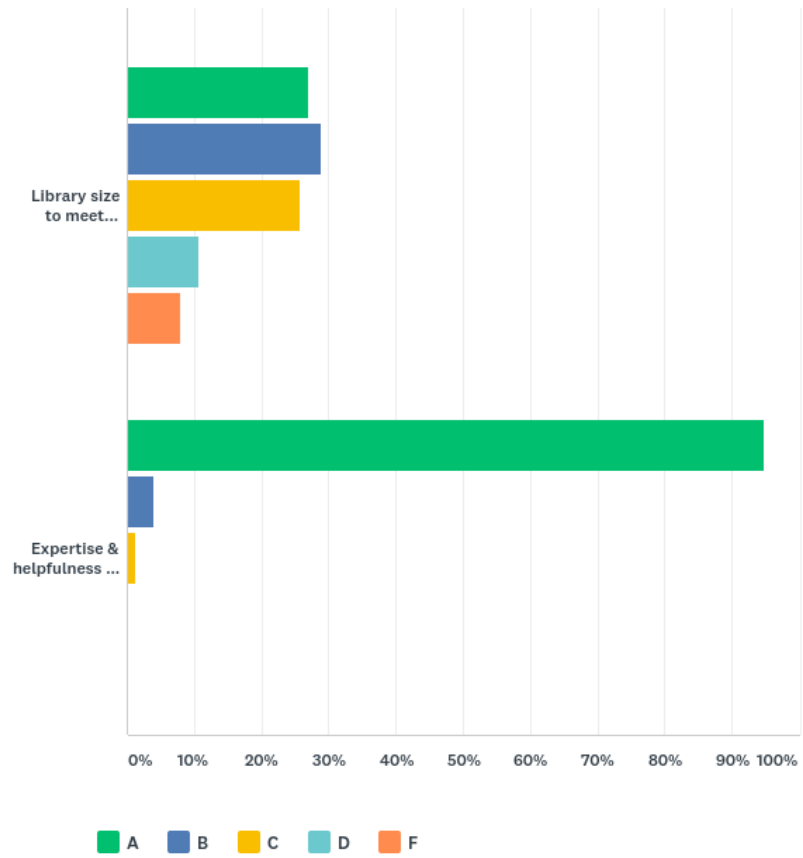
Q11 How satisfied are you with the following resources and services of the Clapp Memorial Library? Please give us a grade of A, B, C, D, or F.











	A	B	C	D	F	TOTAL
Adult book collection	56.40% 186	33.54% 110	8.23% 27	1.52% 6	0.30% 1	328
Children's book collection	55.22% 111	30.85% 62	11.44% 23	2.49% 6	0.00% 0	201
Young adult book collection	49.67% 76	35.10% 63	13.25% 20	1.99% 3	0.00% 0	161
Large print book collection	48.94% 69	39.72% 66	9.93% 14	0.71% 1	0.71% 1	141
Audio book collection	47.34% 89	36.70% 69	13.83% 26	2.13% 4	0.00% 0	188
Movie collection	46.53% 114	41.22% 101	11.02% 27	0.82% 2	0.41% 1	246
Availability of new materials	50.42% 119	34.32% 81	12.29% 29	2.97% 7	0.00% 0	236
Availability of e-books & e-audio	52.83% 84	37.74% 60	7.55% 12	1.89% 3	0.00% 0	169
Online databases	66.67% 98	25.85% 38	6.12% 9	0.68% 1	0.68% 1	147
Website	56.89% 128	31.11% 70	8.44% 19	3.11% 7	0.44% 1	226
Children's programs	68.18% 120	19.89% 36	9.09% 16	2.84% 6	0.00% 0	176
Young adult programs	59.52% 76	25.40% 32	11.90% 16	2.38% 3	0.79% 1	126
Adult programs	49.26% 100	31.53% 64	14.29% 29	4.93% 10	0.00% 0	203
Public computers	63.98% 103	23.60% 38	8.07% 13	4.35% 7	0.00% 0	161
Wireless access	72.48% 108	21.48% 32	4.70% 7	1.34% 2	0.00% 0	149
Introduction of new technologies	49.22% 63	38.28% 49	7.81% 10	4.69% 6	0.00% 0	128
Cleanliness of building	78.48% 269	18.18% 60	2.73% 9	0.61% 2	0.00% 0	330
Comfort of building	51.27% 162	28.80% 91	14.56% 46	4.11% 13	1.27% 4	316
Seating	41.30% 121	30.03% 88	22.18% 66	4.78% 14	1.71% 6	293
Parking	48.95% 163	34.83% 116	12.31% 41	3.30% 11	0.60% 2	333
Library size to meet community needs	27.05% 79	28.77% 84	25.68% 76	10.62% 31	7.88% 23	292
Expertise & helpfulness of staff	94.75% 307	4.01% 13	1.23% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	324

Comments (25)