James L. Hamner Public Library

Five-Year Plan

July 2018 - June 2023

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Revised by the James L. Hamner Board of Trustees on July 17, 2018

Executive Summary

How can the library provide free learning opportunities to Amelia residents of all ages? This question is the foundation of the James L. Hamner Public Library's mission, which guides this strategic plan. The plan contains ongoing objectives that the library works to meet. These objectives help provide continuity, even as the plan is revised annually in order to avoid stagnation.

This plan is intended to help the library operate effectively – meeting its mission and the needs of the community with as little cost as possible. Without the community, there would be no need for a public library. Therefore, people are at the center of the library's vision of success.

During the revision process, the planning committee considered the following questions. The answers helped shape the goals and objectives for the next five years.

What Is the Library?

The James L. Hamner Public Library obtained its charter in 1973 and is Amelia County's center for learning through all stages of life. According to the *Code of Virginia* (42.1-46), public libraries are part of Virginia's provision for public education. The library also serves as a community center, providing a place for people to connect with each other. A 21st-century library offers more than a warehouse of physical items: it provides a variety of opportunities for the community to access, evaluate, use, and create information.

Why Does the Library Exist? (Mission)

The library exists to facilitate connections that provide free learning opportunities to Amelia County.

What Kind of Library Should This Be? (Vision)

The library is a place that puts into practice the ALA Code of Ethics. When people come to the building, they leave encouraged or uplifted. When people use the website, they see an organization that values current technology and that wants to make users' lives easier.

What are the library's foundational values that give clarity of purpose through generations of operation?

- The library is an educational institution that embraces a variety of learning methods.
- The library is a source of popular reading and viewing.
- The library seeks to provide access to relevant technology.
- The library values well-educated staff.

Executive Summary, Continued

How Is the Library Different from Other Community Organizations?

- The library is free (outside of taxes).
- The library has a quantity and variety of resources difficult to find in another organization.
- The library offers extensive online services.
- The library is open after 5:00 p.m. and on Saturdays.
- The library promotes intergenerational learning.
- The library provides learning opportunities to all ages.
- The library requires no qualifications to be used.
- The library works to provide equal access to all.

What Is Happening Outside of Libraries that Influences How We Envision the Library's Future?

The following factors, among others, were considered when forming the objectives and goals. These ideas will be used to guide day-to-day operations.

- Attention spans will shorten as digital use increases.
- Changing careers will continue to be challenging.
- Digital literacy will not improve. People will increase use of technology without understanding how to do so safely.
- Distrust of authority, especially government, will continue with certain populations.
- Definitions of behaviors appropriate to be displayed in public will continue to evolve.
- Definitions of privacy vary among demographic groups.
- Empathy that requires personal responsibility is not valued.
- A first career job will continue to be difficult to acquire.
- Forward-looking technology will grow in value to students and businesses.
- In-person interactions can be uncomfortable for digital natives, even as this group desires to be influential in making positive changes in their communities.
- Meeting space will continue to be a valued library service.
- The need for wireless printing from personal devices will increase.
- Perception that all media should be free to use will grow, even as subscription services increase.
- Technology will continue to become more influential in all aspects of life and business.
- Use of personal devices will increase.
- Valuing intellectual property, Fair Use, and copyright law will continue to diminish.

Planning Framework

How the Plan is Formed

The trustees and the director of the James L. Hamner Public Library write the strategic plan. In order to receive state aid, a federal grant administered by the Library of Virginia, public libraries must have a five-year plan that is updated annually. The goals and objectives in the plan are created based on professional experience, community input, and formal studies. The 2018 revision takes into consideration the findings of the *Virginia Cooperative Extension Situation Analysis Report, Amelia County, 2013*.

Purpose of the Plan

The plan is intended to provide a framework on which to base decisions. It is not intended to detail specific tactics. It is intended to be a reference against which to test how proposed actions match the library's core values and mission.
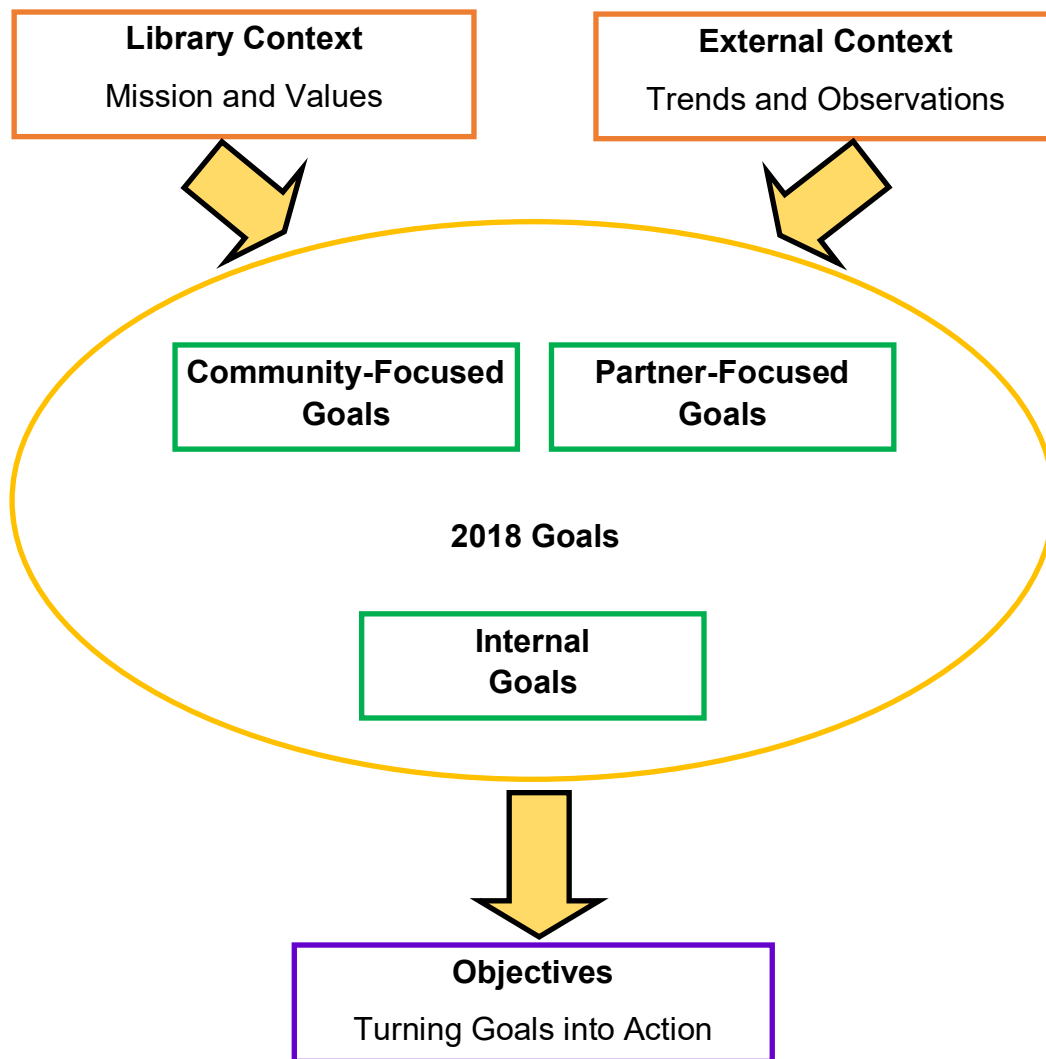
Assumptions

- Access to county governmental support is critical.
- The budget will be an annual budget based on the local fiscal year.
- The county population will grow at a rate of 1% - 1.5% for the next 3-5 years.
- The cost of operating the library (FT staff benefits, books, supplies, utilities, etc.) will increase.
- Demand for library services beyond borrowing media will grow.
- The economy will continue to improve.
- The need for current technology will continue to increase.
- All years are fiscal years.

Ongoing Goals

- Continue to cultivate positive public relations supported by appropriate funding
- Encourage use of the library building and its services by all Amelia residents
- Include systemic community input in the strategic planning process
- Maintain a safe, well-organized, and secure environment
- Nurture a harmonious relationship with the county administrator, the board of supervisors, and law enforcement
- Prepare for the future of the library
- Provide a current, well-maintained collection

Planning Framework, Continued

Library Context

Mission and Values

External Context

Trends and Observations

Community-Focused Goals

Partner-Focused Goals

2018 Goals

Internal Goals

Objectives

Turning Goals into Action

Existing Conditions

FY2018 Statistics

Hours Open	2,511
Visits	43,354
Questions Answered	4,421
New Registrations	365
Items Borrowed	31,584
Materials Added	5,087
Materials Withdrawn	6,686
Attendees at Programs	1,283
Public Computer Sessions	6,145
Faxes Sent	548
Copier Assistance Given	487

Existing Conditions, Continued

Structure

The grand opening of the current building was in October 1999. At the time, the building was designed to meet the community's needs for the next 10 years, or until 2010. The current estimated figures continue to show a 1% - 1.5% growth rate per year.

Over the years, the way the community uses the library has changed and our services have changed to accommodate those needs. The changes in how the library is used creates a need for more space. Even with consistent removal of outdated, damaged, or unused items, the collection has outgrown our floor space and the requests for meeting and quiet study space have expanded beyond what is available in the facility.

Requests for private study rooms, private space for small groups, and space for groups to use technology together continue to increase. In FY2018, the library recorded 216 times that a public group formally reserved library space to use for non-library meetings. That is an average of 18 times per month. These 216 reservations were for the same space that is used for library services and do not include the times that people met at the library without making a reservation. This rate of use points to a need for sufficient informal seating and dedicated public meeting space that is separate from library programming space.

The library building is about 7,700 square feet, with roughly half taken up by staff work space, public meeting spaces and restroom facilities, and the remainder for collections. The available work and storage space is insufficient.

Additionally, there is no dedicated space to receive shipments, assemble furnishings, stage programming preparations, hold surplus until pick-up, and other similar functions. Lacking this space, these tasks are done in the staff work room, blocking the walkways and taking up space staff need to perform their duties. It is difficult to store the things needed in the library, avoid safety hazards, and have room to conduct library business. We have an outdoor shed for storage, which helps, but is only a stop-gap measure. It would be better to have facilities that were designed to accommodate the storage and work necessary to operate a public library.

Existing Conditions

Staffing

The library has 4.5 full-time-equivalent employees equaling 0.4 FTE per 1,000 people in its service population. According to *Planning for Library Excellence* published by the Library of Virginia, the lowest level (A) libraries have 0.3 FTE per 1,000 population. To reach a AAA rating, the library should have 0.6 FTE per 1,000 people in it's service population. In order to reach AAA standing, the library needs 7.5 FTE.

The library has funding for three full-time and three part-time positions. Of the three full-time positions, two are filled by professional librarians with master's degrees in library science.

Library users cite staff as being one of the things that makes the library a welcoming place. Considering that each staff member accomplishes multiple tasks, often taking on duties not designed for their position or pay scale, this is a credit to their commitment to providing library users with the best possible service.

Each staff person is responsible for multiple areas. The broad range of skills required of one person means that it is impossible to hire anyone who is good at every task for which they are responsible. The ideal state would be to hire people for roles with more limited scope, thereby allowing for excellence in a greater number of areas. This ideal state has not been pursued because it would require additional funding for added positions. Below is a chart with examples of the variety of expertise each position requires. These lists are not exhaustive, but give an idea of the current state of affairs.

Existing Conditions

Staffing, Continued

Director	Budgeting
	Business Administration
	Public Outreach
	Publicity and Marketing
	Programming
	Records Management
	Staff Management
	Staff Training
	Technology Management

Technical Services Librarian	Cataloging
	Reference
	Readers' Advisory
	Acquisitions
	Bookkeeping and Reports
	Technology Management
	Staff Supervision

Existing Conditions

Staffing, Continued

Circulation and Office Manager	Circulation Management
	Invoice Processing
	File Management
	Product Displays
	Public Services
	Readers' Advisory
	Reference
	Service Promotion
	Staff Supervision
	Technology Maintenance
	Timesheet Processing
	Volunteer Recruitment, Training, and Supervision

Circulation Assistant, Part-Time	Cash Handling
	Circulation
	Customer Service
	Item Shelving
	Meeting Room Reservations
	Product Displays
	Readers' Advisory
	Reference
	Services Promotion
	Technology Help Desk Support

Existing Conditions

Staffing, Continued

Technical Services Assistant, Part-Time	Cataloging
	Circulation
	Meeting Room Reservations
	Program Promotion

Existing Conditions

Collection

The library's collection is designed to provide popular reading and viewing materials, along with educational resources. The library holds over 99,600 items, including e-materials. The funding for new materials is mainly provided by a grant from the state government that is administered by the Library of Virginia.

The library, a founding member and continual participant in the Southern Virginia Libraries United electronically (SOVALUe) consortium, provides library users with access to e-books and downloadable audiobooks from OverDrive Inc., as well as downloadable audiobooks from Recorded Books. Additionally, an online collection of reference books was purchased from Gale to replace seldom-used print reference materials. In FY2018, the library subscribed to Recorded Books' TV streaming service, allowing library users to access TV shows produced by Acorn Media, full-length concerts, and more.

JLH Public Library has a subscription to Britannica Online and Worldbook Encyclopedia, as well as online map, geography, country facts, and travel guide collections. We also provide Pronunciator, a language learning program that includes free, live conversation classes with native speakers and courses for non-English speakers, including a course to study for the U.S. citizenship test.

Existing Conditions

Technology

The library offers six public access desktop and three laptop computers, as well as one catalog-only computer and two offline games-only children's computers. For staff, there are four desktops and three laptops. The library also has several e-readers and tablets, including a Kindle and an iPad, for staff use and for teaching. As part of the library's hybrid-hosted integrated library system (ILL), there are two servers. The library also uses a file server for internal operations.

Computers run either Windows 7 or 10. The library is a hotspot for wireless internet access. Starting July 1, 2018, Kinex provides fiber internet service at a speed of 50 Mb x 20 Mb, as well as voice over internet protocol (VoIP) phone service. Funding for internet service comes through the federal e-Rate program.

Since June 2011, the library has used the integrated library system (ILS), Library.Solution. It is maintained by The Library Corporation (TLC).

Starting in FY2015 the library's website is hosted remotely through Go Daddy and uses Go Daddy's website building platform, which offers technical support.

Technology services at the library seldom meets patron expectations - a frustrating situation for users and staff. Some problems, such as slow internet service, are beyond the library's control. Other problems, such as lack of trained technology staff, can be remedied. Starting in July 2018, the library will have contract IT support to assist with network administration and other areas of technology that require specialized experience. Because this support is off-site, except for scheduled visits, library staff will continue to provide day-to-day technology maintenance and trouble-shooting for the library's technology.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Obstacles

Strengths:	**Weaknesses**
• The library employs two degreed librarians. • The library has an attractive meeting room that is free for the public to use. • The library has plenty of parking. • The library holds an extensive large-print collection that is housed in a well-lit area. • Library trustees are supportive. • Library trustees want to remove barriers to use of all library services. • Library staff want to find ways to say "yes" to patron requests. • Library staff want to know patrons personally, yet stay professional. • Library staff want to strengthen their skills in order to provide better service.	• The library does not have an AV return box. • The library is recovering from the public's negative perception. • Library technology and technology support lags behind what is available. • Policies may create barriers that might not be necessary, especially for minors. • Staff must try to do too many different things, leaving little energy for patron interactions. • Staff are responsible for too many different things, allowing tasks that would take the patron experience from good to better to fall through the cracks. • Staff are responsible for such disparate tasks that no one person can be skilled at everything required of one role. • Staff often learn as they go, rather than coming into the position with background knowledge. • Staff without background knowledge means resources are spent on training rather than serving the public. • No adequately trained technology staff in the building causes service that falls below the expectations of the public.
• **Opportunities** • The Friends of the Library are supportive, making it possible for the library to provide quality programs it could not otherwise afford. • The Library of Virginia provides resources and other support. • The Board of Supervisors has new members. • The Board of Supervisors sends a liaison to the Board of Trustee meetings. • Patrons more often use the library as it was intended, compared to recent years. • Multiple community groups are willing to work with the library.	**Obstacles** • Key players in the community have the impression that library services are obsolete. • The public lacks an understanding of the purpose and limitations of the library. • Lack of space leads to safety concerns and inefficient use of staff time. • Lack of space leads to conflicts between the ways users want to use the facility. • Lack of space leads to conflicts between public use of the facility and library use of the facility. • Lack of space leads to difficulty arranging items so that it is easy for users to find what they want. • People who do not use the library have a negative perception of the library. • Insufficient personnel funding makes attracting qualified candidates difficult. • Insufficient personnel funding makes retaining qualified employees difficult.
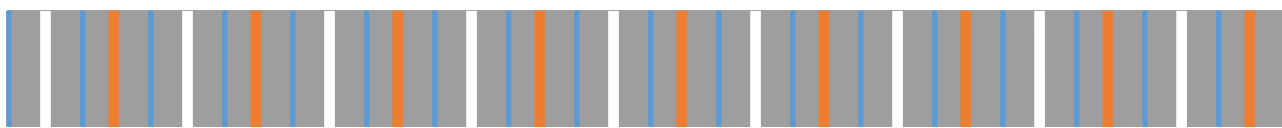
Goals and Objectives

The strategic plan is a guide to help the library get where it wants to be. The goals describe our desired state. The objectives help us get there.

The goals and objectives are divided into three categories. Community-focused goals are those which the library believes will best serve the community directly. Partner-focused goals are those which the library believes will help it serve the community most effectively in conjunction with other community organizations. Internally-focused goals are those which the library believes will help it effectively achieve its community- and partner-focused goals.

Community-Focused Goals

What impact do we seek to have in and on the community as we work to fulfill our mission?

- Contribute to users' health by offering an environment where they are treated as valuable individuals
- Increase the education and economic level of the community by providing opportunities for self-directed learning
- Promote technological literacy by providing up-to-date or better technology services

In what key ways do we already meet our goals?

- Annual per capita expenditure is $24.89 (FY2016), equaling $0.07 per day.
- Computers are 3 years old or newer.
- Computerized microfilm machine is maintained.
- Consistently enforcing the Code of Conduct is a priority.
- Library culture emphasizes greeting and saying goodbye to each patron
- Multiple physical and digital options for self-directed learning are offered.

What objectives will help us better meet our goals?

Technology: *The library will provide Amelia County residents with access to current technology.*

- Investigate ways to fund technology that meets user expectations (e.g. library app, trained technology staff, etc.)
- Maintain computers with operating systems no more than one OS behind the current release

Collections: *The library will continue to build a balanced, useful, and enjoyable collection that reflects the diversity and growth of Amelia County's population.*

- Investigate and, if appropriate, acquire databases useful to small businesses
- Only place physical items into a non-circulating collection when fiscally necessary

Partner-Focused Goals

What are we trying to accomplish by including partners as we work to fulfill our mission?

- Build a base of library advocates who understand what the purpose of the library is
- Increase the community's understanding of what the purpose of the library is
- Offer quality learning opportunities to library users
- Supplement library workers' skills by utilizing outside resources

In what key ways do we already meet our goals?

- The Friends of the Library provide significant financial support.
- The library decided to offer fewer, high-quality programs rather than many, lower-quality events.
- The library works with ACES reading specialist and the Academy librarian.
- Music teacher volunteers to lead 0 - 5 Story Time.
- Podcast created to address misconceptions about the library.
- Professional presenters bring events.
- The Summer Reading Program for children, teens, and adults emphasizes outside presenters who provide learning opportunities.
- Teachers and community groups offer classes.

What objectives will help us better meet our goals?

Technology: *The library will provide Amelia County residents with access to current technology.*

- Gain an average of one listener a month for the podcast during FY2019

Programs: *The library will offer services and programs that encourage reading and lifelong learning, while promoting the library as a community center for information, education, and recreation.*

- Use outside resources where appropriate rather than training staff

Public Relations: *The library will work to promote community understanding that leads to an appreciation of the library's value.*

- Ask those with an understanding of the library's purpose to be proactive in contacting local and state partners in support of the library
- Suggest for nomination to the Board of Trustees those who demonstrate an understanding of the library's purpose
- Take advantage of opportunities to share the library's purpose with the public

Internally-Focused Goals

What organizational assets must be created or improved in order to meet our community- and partner-focused goals?

- Change the use of the physical space as benefits library operations and patron use
- Connect people with already available resources rather than duplicating other organization's efforts
- Cultivate appropriately trained staff and support their continuing education
- Determine the hierarchy of library services that require space
- Evaluate the budget with the goal of increasing technology spending
- Have relevant technology and the resources to maintain it

In what key ways do we already meet our goals?

- Continual collection management aids in efficient use of the space
- Digital-file backups are created daily
- Furnishings are re-arranged dependent on library goals and how patrons use the library
- Staff have monthly continuing education requirements
- Trained IT support that specializes in public libraries is used
- Trustees participate in monthly continuing education
- Unneeded items are removed from the building

What objectives will help us better meet our goals?

Collections: *The library will continue to build a balanced, useful, and enjoyable collection that reflects the diversity and growth of Amelia County's population.*

- Continue call number clean up
- Continue patron catalog clean up
- Experiment with resources for the diverse demographic groups in Amelia
- Inventory the collection in order to improve the accuracy of catalog searches

Technology: *The library will provide Amelia County residents with access to current technology.*

- Evaluate the budget with the goal of increasing technology spending
- Find space for a virtual reality computer and other relevant technology

Staffing: *The library will employ a sufficient number of qualified staff and encourage the continuing development of their skills and knowledge in order to provide superior service to the diverse communities of Amelia County.*

- Find a way to increase salaries to no less than $12 per hour
- Refine the volunteer recruitment and recognition programs
- Send at least one part-time employee, at least once per year, to a training event provided by an outside agency
- Train staff in resources available from other organizations
- Write job descriptions for standard volunteer positions

Internally-Focused Goals, Continued

What objectives will help us better meet these goals?

Programs: *The library will offer services and programs that encourage reading and lifelong learning, while promoting the library as a community center for information, education, and recreation.*

- Add programming for senior citizens, as needs are shown
- Connect patrons with other resources rather than duplicating other organizations' efforts
- Hire someone solely to manage programming and outreach

Facilities: *The library will provide a clean, comfortable, secure, and organized facility for library patrons and employees.*

- Establish a disaster recovery plan
- Determine the hierarchy of library services that require space
- Implement the planned committee on library expansion

Public Relations: *The library will work to promote community understanding that leads to an appreciation of the library's value.*

- Develop a marketing plan
- Take advantage of opportunities to educate stakeholders about the library

Conclusion: Putting It All Together

Community is Central to the Library

Four of the library's 14 goals are specifically centered on community needs. Of the remaining 10 goals, four directly impact the community. Therefore, eight out of 14 goals focus intentionally on the library's service population, and the remaining six goals create support for meeting community needs.

Partners Enhance Library Services

Working with community partners is historically a valuable part of how the library meets community needs. This plan seeks to continue that tradition and to build upon it. While the library recognizes the value of community partnerships, it also recognizes that without a dedicated staff person, the library will be unable to make cross-organizational events a high priority.

Building on Strengths Brings Success

In order to be successful in this plan's objectives, the library will maintain or build its assets in the following ways.

People:

- Maintain necessary requirements for staff positions, even if it means that a position goes unfilled
- Match duties to personal talents, as is feasible while still ensuring that all duties are completed
- Provide consistent continuing education for all employees

Finances:

- Continue to meet all requirements for state aid and e-Rate grants
- Evaluate how expenditures meet community needs and adjust as needed
- Find a way so that no salary is less than $12 per hour
- Use grant and other funding to the extent that the cost of acquiring this funding does not exceed the cost of the grant itself

Facility:

- Evaluate the facility use and remove unused items, as is responsible
- Keep the library furnishings in good repair, as far as is within the library's control
- Update technology as often as is fiscally responsible and within the library's ability to complete a project

Conclusion: Putting It All Together, Continued

Putting Theory into Practice

The objectives in this plan are targets the library will work to hit, but what will that process look like in practice? While the process will evolve, this is what we do know:

- The library will be a place for everyone in the community.

- The library will not charge for core services. Core services are defined as those directly relating to accessing, using, evaluating, and creating information.

- The library will allow access to all of its items to any demographic other than restricted users.

- The library will promote confidentiality and guard against restrictions to free interaction with information, as outlined in the ALA Code of Ethics.

- The library will maintain a broad definition of learning that includes formal, self-directed, and experiential methods.

- The library will be a place where users have opportunities to make connections with information, whether in print, digitally, or by interacting with other people.

In conclusion, as the James L. Hamner Public Library seeks to meet its mission through the objectives in this strategic plan, it will continue to work with the community in order to meet most effectively the information needs of those served by the library.

The Strategic Plan was revised by the Library Board of Trustees on July 17, 2018. Questions about the Plan may be directed to the library director.