

Marie Fleche Memorial Library

REIMAGINE,
RESTORE,
Transform



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Attachment 1

Introduction

The Planning Process

The Marie Fleche Memorial Library, also known as the Berlin Borough Library, began its process for a new strategic plan in March 2016. The library had recently become a Municipal Library after leaving the Camden County Library System as an affiliated Association Library when residents voted to make this change. The historic Berlin Hotel was also moved to the library grounds in 2000 as a future addition. The library and the Borough have recently entered into a shared services agreement for the library to use the Hotel.¹

These events together with dramatic changes in print and digital technology, increasing demands for more current library material, and changing patterns in library use, all pointed to the need to think about the future. With the recent hiring of a new director and the need to think about expanding the library to better meet community demands, the Board of Trustees recognized that before making decisions on space use they should consider future directions and agree on strategies for improving library service and facilities.

Library staff, trustees, and patrons met on at least two occasions to develop scenarios to guide the plan. The Library's planning consultants worked with the Director, staff and Board of Trustees to develop this plan, which was reviewed and endorsed by the Library Board of Trustees in September 2015.²

¹ 1999 – Berlin Hotel moved adjacent to the library

2015 – voters approved the library to leave the Camden County Library System and become the municipal library of the Berlin Borough

2016 – a shared services agreement between the Borough and the library formalized use of space in the Berlin Hotel

² The Board of Trustees and the Director hired Alan and Leslie Burger of Library Development Solutions to work with them on a new strategic plan, as well as to conduct a space assessment and a technology review.

In addition to working with the planning committee, key components of the process included:

- Meetings with library staff and trustees to learn about the current service programs and to determine specific areas of concern that needed to be addressed.
- An online and print survey that was completed by 275 residents and local library users and non-users.
- An assessment of the current library to determine service constraints and ways in which the facility could be improved, including through the use of the Berlin Hotel.
- A review of the technology infrastructure and associated public offerings.
- A Community Conversation session with members of the Berlin community to learn more about what they value in the current library and what they would like to change.



Assumptions Guiding Our Planning

The following assumptions supported the Marie Fleche Memorial Library's strategic plan.

- Berlin will continue to attract new, young families who have high expectations for library service, especially vis-à-vis early literacy and after-school activities.
- The library is increasingly seen as the place to access the latest technology.
- Financial support from Berlin Borough may continue to be limited due to modest economic growth.
- People will increasingly support and value the library as it modernizes.



Issues and Trends

The Planning Committee identified a number of issues and trends affecting library services that were carefully considered in developing the plan's strategic direction.

- Residents want more and improved library service. People want the library to be more comfortable, convenient, and easier to use. People want the library to become more of a community destination.
- The library can build community. With the blend of new and old residents, there is a need to provide space where the public can come together as a community and explore issues of common concern. The library is a safe place for teens that can connect them to the community.
- More people are reading and talking about books with others at work, home, and in the library. Collections need to be responsive to current community interests.
- Use of space and environment are more important than ever. People want space to support a variety of uses, from book discussions and small group meetings to technology training. The library needs to provide people with a place to interact with each other, authors, musicians, and lecturers and be exposed to new ideas that they might not otherwise encounter.

We listened...

A review of conversations with Berlin Borough residents about Marie Fleche Memorial Library

The Library Board and planners wanted to learn more about why some residents may not be using the library and what the staff could do to encourage greater use. The consultants met with staff, Trustees and a large group of 25 residents to discuss these issues. In addition, 275 people completed an online and print survey about the library. A hard copy of the survey was sent to every household in Berlin.³

The information obtained highlighted trends in residents' perceptions about the library as well as specific suggestions for service and facility improvements, including suggestions for use of the Berlin Hotel, and will be helpful to planners for many years to come.

There was wide agreement among survey and conversation participants that:

- Berlin has experienced significant growth in the past 50 years, especially from 2000 to 2010 with a 23.4% increase in population to 7,588 people. Growth has slowed in the past five years, though the population has remained steady. Newer and younger residents have high expectations for service as the Berlin Community School and the regional high school have grown. The senior population has also remained steady as many people elect to age in place.
- Residents care about creating a Berlin identity that can focus on the needs and accomplishments of their community.
- Berlin residents have many choices today to spend their free and leisure time outside of their homes. Residents commented that they also use other area libraries for books and programs such as Camden County Libraries, as well as others.
- More hours, computers, technology training, access, popular and current materials, and programming are needed to appeal to local residents and other users who view the library primarily as a place to browse for new books and bestsellers, DVDs, and potentially as an after-school destination for students to do homework. Residents appreciate the children's programs and comment that the library is a perfect place for more of them and adult programs as well. They view the library as potentially Berlin's social center.

³ The report is attachment 1

A Vision for the Future

The Marie Fleche Memorial Library will become the center of community life.

We will support this vision through:

- An inviting, up-to-date, and expanded facility that supports learning and offers space for a wide variety of uses
- New and emerging technologies that enable people to use the library in-person and in their homes



- An ample supply of current popular materials
- Outstanding patron service
- A wide range of educational and cultural programming that encourages a lifelong love of reading and learning

Our Mission

The Marie Fleche Memorial Library,
the center of our community's life,
provides resources, programs, facilities,
and staff to educate, entertain, enrich,
and inform the entire community.



Goals

Strategies for Success

The three goals that the Marie Fleche Memorial Library will pursue over the next few years define the role of the library, its relationship with the community, and guide the strategic plan.

1 Make the Marie Fleche Memorial Library a central destination for all ages

Provide a variety of programs to attract people to the library – to enjoy a concert or lecture, meet an author, and engage in discussions around an issue of importance to the community. Make the library the anchor of the downtown and White Horse Pike. Provide easy access to popular books, both digital and in print, as well as audiobooks, and DVDs.

2 Build partners and advocates for the future

Align the library's policies, resources, and collections closer to the interests of the Berlin community. Accomplish this synergy through a renewed campaign to “engage” every community organization and group in a dialogue. Similarly, through a renewed focus on developing library advocates, including the Friends/Volunteer group, reposition the library as a vital institution in the life of Berlin.

3 Connect with the world

The world is growing smaller and is only a click away. By using a variety of traditional and emerging formats and tools, the library can become a source of learning and ideas. Providing emerging technologies will empower library customers to engage with each other and the world in new ways.

The Action Plan

Goal 1

Make the Marie Fleche Memorial Library a central destination for all ages

- A. Reimagine and transform the library to meet community expectations and demands**
- B. Provide current and up-to-date materials that respond to community interests, and provide a wide array of programs and services to meet the needs of all residents**
- C. Increase community awareness of the library to attract more people**

Goal 2

Build Partners and Advocates

- A. Develop partnerships with local organizations to enhance the library's ability to respond to community needs**
- B. Increase the number of library advocates**

Goal 3

Connect with the world

- A. Employ new technologies to improve the ability to provide desirable library service**



Attachment One

We listened...

Marie Fleche Memorial Library

We listened...

A review of conversations with
Berlin Borough residents about the
Marie Fleche Memorial Library

Prepared by:
Library Development Solutions
April 2016

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Introduction

During the winter of 2016, residents and staff were involved in a conversation about the future of the library. The library had recently hired a new director, Christine Flynn, who was already working to address some of the technology, staffing, collection development, and facility issues that required attention. Library operations and public perception of the library have steadily improved, as well as services. Following this transition, the trustees, director and staff were interested in listening to residents about their views of the library. The discussions with residents incorporated a set of open-ended questions designed to stimulate conversation about the library, its future, and its role in the community and provided important information for library planners and specific strategic suggestions.⁴

In addition to the community and staff discussions, an online and print survey was completed by 275 respondents. The consultants spoke with both frequent and infrequent users of the library, who were contacted through the following:

- A mailing to every Berlin Borough household
- Requests by staff for users, nonusers, readers, and nonreaders to participate
- Information in the local media
- Posted information in the library
- Facebook postings
- An email notice to many residents

⁴The Marie Fleche Memorial Library Board of Trustees hired Library Development Solutions, a library consulting firm, to conduct conversations with staff and residents and a survey with residents for the library's strategic plan. The intent was to hear community concerns about the library and to provide participants with an opportunity to offer feedback. The library board believes that information from the discussions and the survey will allow it and the director to make important decisions about library resources, including future use of the adjacent facility.

The Needs Assessment Process

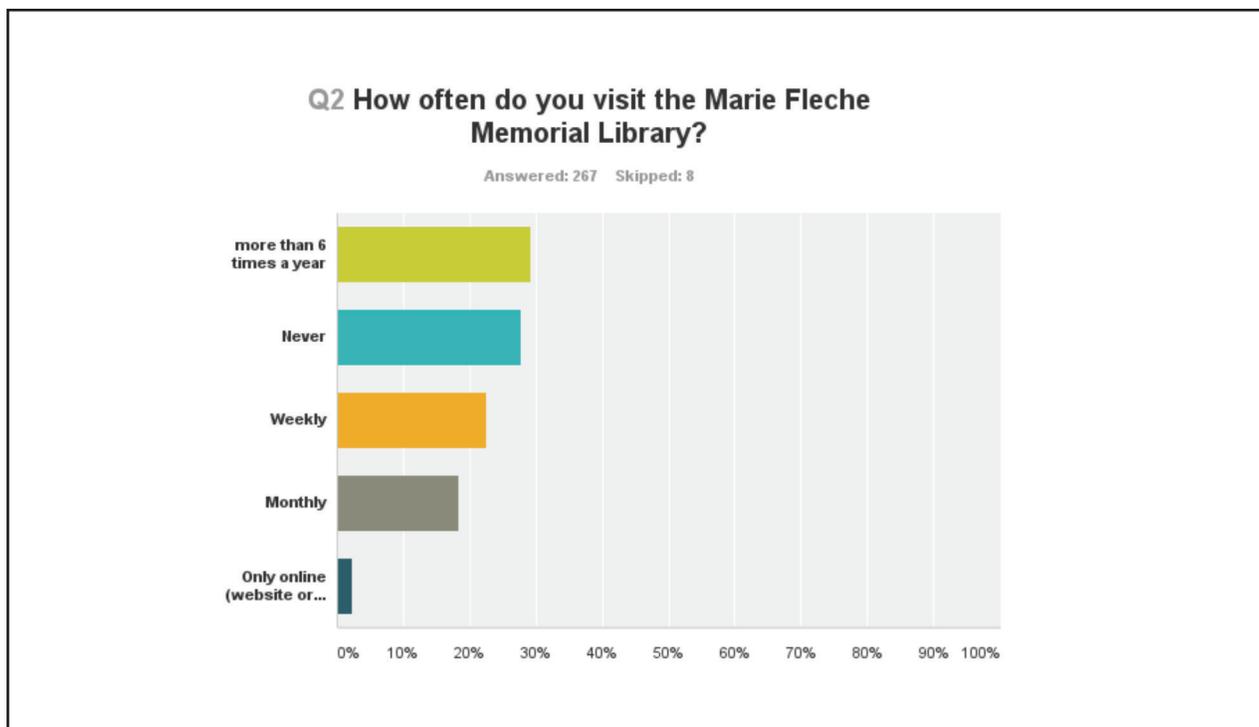
Conversation Group Participants

Community conversation sessions were held with staff and board members and with a group of 25 residents comprising parents, older adults, volunteers, readers, and others. The sessions lasted approximately 1.5 hours each. Comments from each session were recorded and transcribed to create a record. Participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in a dialogue about the library with other residents, and offered many helpful suggestions and ideas.



Survey Participants

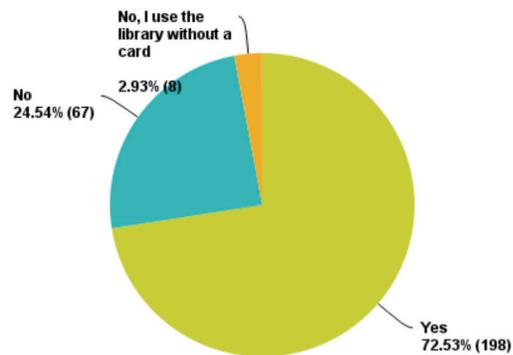
Up to 275 people participated in the library user survey.⁵ They described their use of the library, offered suggestions for improvement, commented about the library’s image, its role in the community and other subjects related to library use and support. They described mostly favorable experiences and suggested improvements, including reliable Wi-Fi use throughout the building, Wi-Fi printing, comfortable and quiet group study rooms, and a designated space for technology assistance, instruction, and digital learning. Some residents are proud of the Marie Fleche Memorial Library and are hoping to see changes and improvements. However, a surprisingly large number (27.74%) of residents never visit the library and 25.54% stated that they do not have a Marie Fleche Memorial Library card. Many participants stated that they continue to visit a Camden County Library branch, though they have to pay a non-resident fee every year.



⁵ A print copy of the survey was mailed to every household in Berlin Borough.

Q1 Do you have a Marie Fleche Memorial Library card?

Answered: 273 Skipped: 2



It has been 2-3 years since I have been in because it is not convenient to my family. I have 3 young children and work part-time. The story time is always on Thursdays when I work so I go to Voorhees Library. It offers more!

– Survey participant

My kids love going and we borrow books for school each week!

– Survey participant

Summary of Key Findings

The following are the primary areas of interest to participants:

- Berlin Borough is seen as a family-centered community, with good schools and a supportive government. Berlin is chosen as a home by residents for its quality of life, school system and convenient access to trains, highways, and affordable housing.
- Many residents are not aware of the library and the positive role in the life of the community. Those who are aware of the library praise it as a welcoming place for residents, especially for young children and older adults.
- Frequent observations by participants included:
 - The need to provide greater access to the library through increased hours and expanded collections
 - The request for additional interesting and compelling adult and children's programs that are accessible, topical, and informative
 - The need for adequate computers during peak times, upgraded software, and a reliable Wi-Fi signal and Wi-Fi printing
 - The expectation of computer and technology instruction
 - The request to refresh the library collection, and replacing worn and obsolete books, and to expand the collection in all genres, since the county catalog is no longer available to people without a county card.

Survey respondents indicated their top reasons, or ways, for using the library are:

- Borrow books (print) – 65%
- Borrow DVDs – 44%
- Browse – 37%
- Borrow Best Sellers – 34%



I homeschool my little girl so the library provides us a valuable learning resource in books and a place to just get out sometimes.

– Survey participant

The computers provide me with an amazing place to do homework.

– Survey participant

Didn't really realize that there was a library, we have lived here about 2.5 years.

– Survey participant

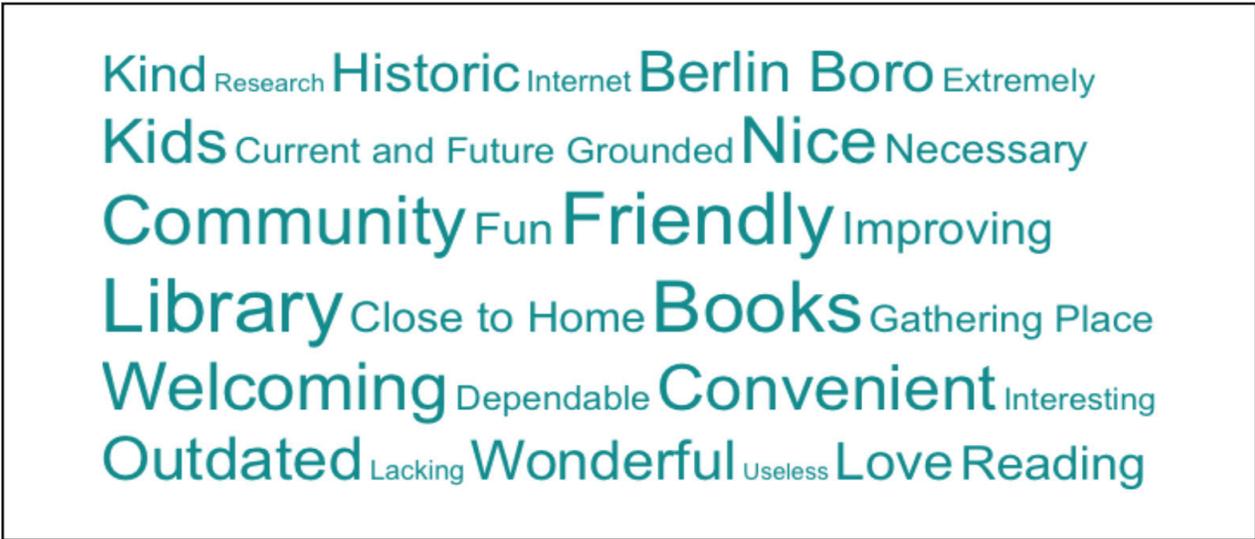
Other survey responses centered on the need for additional structured programming. Older adults also requested new and interesting programming. Early and effective publicity about children's programs were requested. The most frequent comments are about hours and programs, use of the library for various activities, communication and collections as indicated in these responses:

- More communication from the library
- Provide mobile devices and continually update computers and software
- Provide quiet and group study areas
- Offer technology training at the library and create a technology training lab if possible

The top words that people used to describe the Marie Fleche Memorial Library are:

- Library
- Friendly
- Books
- Community
- Welcoming

The following word cloud represents the 204 responses to the question about words that describe the Marie Fleche Memorial Library.



In response to the question of “How important the Marie Fleche Memorial Library is to you and your family and to the Berlin community?” The following results to this question show a lot of opportunity for improvement:⁶

- Extremely important or very important to the Berlin community – 78.40%
- Extremely important or very important to me and my family – 58.74%

Participants recognize the role that the library can play and the low ratings of its importance for themselves and the community.

⁶ These are the lowest numbers on this question that the consultants have found.

Initial Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are derived from the discussions and survey comments, and include observations made by the consultants.

1. Promote and grow the library every day

The Marie Fleche Memorial Library is the local institution that benefits residents of all ages, every day. The library offers many resources for everyone in the community, among them: a facility that is easy to get to and room to expand, growing convenient hours and collections, and a variety of programs for children. Residents would like to visit the library for many activities, such as browsing for a new book, a place to sit and read for a while, and a place to make friends.

The library today is an underutilized resource and increasingly can play a central role in resident's lives and the life of the community, as requested by participants.

During the planning process, the planners will review the library's vision and mission and think about an expanded facility and the library's engagement with residents while looking to the future. The library should continue to grow its email database and start a weekly email newsletter through Constant Contact, begin to strategically use social/new media, and plan for a new branding campaign. A shared focus for all board members, and staff is necessary to achieve this.

2. Refresh the library collection and programs

Residents expect to see copies of new bestsellers, feature films and TV series DVDs.

Residents indicate that a primary reason for coming to the library is for books (65%), DVDs (44%) and a bestseller (34%). They want collections that are topical, fresh, and dynamic, and reflect the interests of the community. Staff should continue to remove obsolete and uncirculated titles, replace damaged and worn books and DVDs, and remove all non-circulating materials to make room for newer materials. Staff indicated in the discussion group that there is an opportunity to refresh the collection.

Compelling and topical programming is needed for older adults, children and teens, in collaboration with other local organizations and institutions, where possible. Developing a routine schedule of interesting and fun programs is a good response in order to become the center of civic life in town.

3. Fully Integrate the library into the digital world

Technology must be included in everything that the library does. Update the website, develop and offer routine group and one-on-one technology instruction, and provide access to up-to-date mobile devices and the most current software for all library users. Teens especially are interested in all things digital, from Minecraft to iMacs.

Since the ILS, or library catalog, is new to the library, this is an opportunity to train both the staff and residents in the new system. The current challenge faced by libraries is how to teach staff and the public to use computers and other digital devices to support Internet searching, digital downloads of library collections, and other digital uses. Promoting and offering instruction in the use of social media, Internet searching, computer applications and all other skills involving the use of new hardware or software such as Overdrive is expected from the library. The library should implement the recommendations from the recent Technology Review conducted by the consultants.

4. Repurpose areas of the Marie Fleche Memorial Library and add space in the hotel thoughtfully

Respond to and meet changing needs of the community by reimagining specific areas. Some areas of the library today, especially the main room, are underused due to obsolete book stacks, tables, and seating. This area can yield space for newer more popular uses and will be expanded on in the space assessment report that the library can consider.

Discussion of Findings

The library is viewed as a hidden resource for Berlin residents. Most participants would like the library to become a much more central part of Berlin life.

The library needs to continually be aware that changes in the way people communicate and seek information, and the common use of social media and mobile devices, signal an important change in people's behavior. Additional comments about changes in the local community and area that may impact the way the library provides services include:

- More dual income families and grandparents who provide child care
- More young families moving in due to affordable cost of housing
- Many people are newly self employed or telecommute to work
- You need Wi-Fi and technology to do everything today

What do you like about the Marie Fleche Memorial Library?

Fun, cute, family/community oriented, gathering place. special place in our family.

– Survey participant

Participants and survey respondents commented favorably about the library and remarked about its role in serving residents. Participants were quick to commend the library on what it does well and pointed out a number of recent improvements that have been made by the new director.

Comments included:

- The staff is friendly
- The Museum Pass program
- Pinochle in the Library
- Tax preparation help

Both residents and staff members said the library continues to improve in response to residents' needs.

What would you like to improve?

Survey respondents and discussion participants were asked for suggestions for improvements and there were many areas of agreement.

The top responses from the survey and discussions about improvements to services, programs or policies include:

Extended Hours Interest Movie Nights Story Love
Better Communication Meet Think Reading Ages
Adult Membership Programs Family
Library Activities Books Technology
Services Line Catalog Book Club Nice Senior
Selection Loan Hard Card Catalog



More computers, more books, more kids' programs.
– Survey participant

Please offer programs for children under 3, they are the ones who need storytime when they are home with their parents! 3 & 4 year olds have the option to attend preschool! Why opt out of the Camden County system if you can't provide the same for our town!!!!

– Survey participant

New technology – computers or iPads.

– Survey participant

A Berlin book club, a once a month meeting group for various hobbies like crochet, knitting, cooking, where people can meet and share ideas and projects they are working on.

– Survey participant

Free STEM classes for children to promote math and science that is offered after dinner hours when most people are home. Activities for 1st–5th graders to keep their interest in reading.

– Survey participant

It would be so nice to see an electronic sign on the White Horse Pike announcing events at the library. It will draw more people in. I would like to be able to check out more than 2 (3 or 4) DVDs at a time.

– Survey participant



Participants commented about the need for increased communication and publicity from the library, as well as additional programming for teens, children, and a wider offering of programming for older adults. People commented about attending performances and programs in the library, especially at holiday times and town celebrations, and said that they would like more. There were several comments about the loss of access to the County system and the need for the library to replicate all that they lost in the transition to a municipal library.

Comments covered:

- More hours
- More bestsellers
- Programs for children under 3
- Better collection of children and teen resources
- Promote the activities better so that we all know what is available
- Use of mobile devices such as tablets and laptops
- Update the computers
- Charging stations for people's devices
- More communication about the library to everyone



I would like to see the library expand its resources since we are no longer part of the Camden County system. I would also like the library to expand its adult programs and offer different classes.

– Survey participant

I think better communication. I had no idea that the hours had changed!!! I also was not aware that Wi-Fi or ebooks were available. This changes a lot for me. Please continue to communicate!!!!

– Survey participant

Like any group offering a service, the library must meet the needs of its audience. Marie Fleche faces an uphill battle to get residents to consider using it vs other resources. A bank of VERY good computers would be a good start. I think adults will look for audio & ebooks as well as hard copy. DVDs would be GREAT! Marie Fleche MUST provide the same offerings as the Camden County Library at the very least.

– Survey participant

Concerning improvements to the facility and grounds, including the hotel, comments included:

- More current like the newer libraries
- Clean up flower beds and keep grass mowed
- Remove dead plants (evergreen) power wash benches and refinish, improve lighting at entrance driveway so we older folks can see the entrance in darkness
- Maintain the quaint feeling of the building and grounds. it is a highlight of the downtown area
- Add an area large enough for classes
- Need the community room opened to provide more programs and uses
- Add a bike rack



Conclusion

Information from the community and staff conversations and the survey will be reviewed and discussed by the library board, staff, and administration. They address the future needs of residents for spaces to meet, study and engage with each other in activities, digital collections, devices and resources and technology instruction, increased and new methods of communication



to residents about programs and facility improvements. The next phase in this project is the development of a strategic plan that addresses the issues that have been raised here.

Marie Fleche
Memorial Library