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# **STE. GENEVIEVE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **LIBRARY CONSULTANT PROGRAMMING REPORT**

**November 4, 2024**

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## CURRENT SPACE, FUTURE GOALS

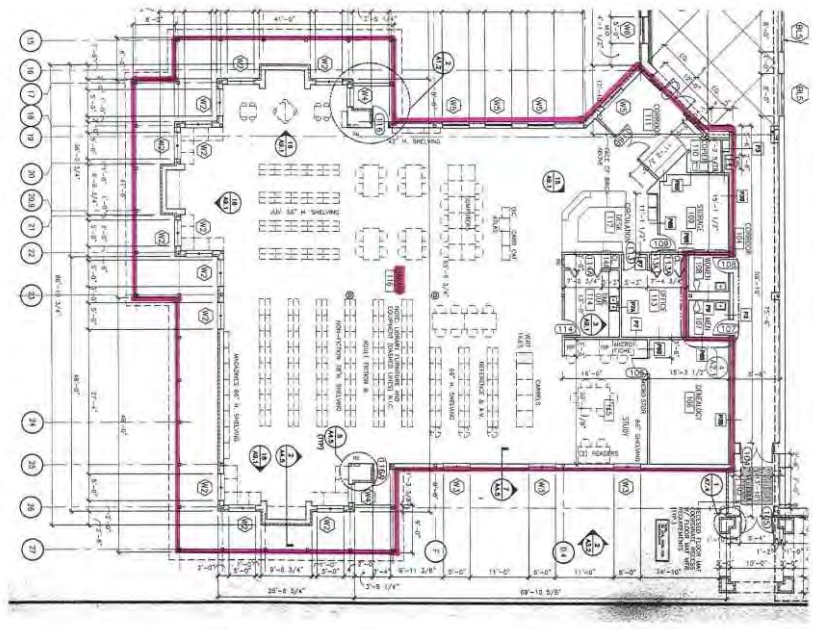
Building on the extensive research and observations, the planning work outlined here aims to enhance both the space and services of Ste. Genevieve County Public Library. The qualitative approach includes a thorough review of current library operations, followed by the development of innovative design concepts for potential space optimization.

The community can focus on these strategic improvements. Together we aspire to create a more functional, inviting, and adaptable library environment that better serves the residents of Ste. Genevieve County.

### Current Space

The Ste. Genevieve County Public Library is 4,850 gross square feet. The current location, built in 2000 as part of the initial Community Center project was built in relation to being part of the Ozark Regional Library system and not its own standalone library. However, the entrance is concealed.

According to ACA's standards, the town should provide a minimum of 1 square foot per capita. However, July 7, 2023 census reports that there were 18,642 residents in Ste. Genevieve. The current configuration creates a loss of approximately 13,792 square feet: in other words, the space that is actually available to the community is approximately 26 percent, when it should be about 70 percent minimum.



### Setting Future Goals

During the initial visit, we listened to the library board, community members, library staff, volunteers and community stakeholders. We held a series of Visual Scans with concerned citizens who are seeking to improve Ste. Genevieve as a destination and the library as a community resource for local folks; it is part of the fabric of the city neighborhoods and county life. The process was a dynamic dialogue with community representatives that provided a variety of insights.

The following goals were identified by the project team:

- Consider the possibility of a building renovation.
- Generate support for a public library service plan with modern services and programs.
- Develop a library building(s) that is big enough for reading, writing, creating, digital work, homework, casual reading, etc.
- Improve the Library's ability to offer cultural and educational programs.
- Offer more programs and meeting spaces (indoor and outdoor event space, use gym, etc.).
- Investigate whether the entrance can be improved; the porch, parking, traffic and access.
- Realign the main entrance to assist the handicapped and utilize the courtyard.
- Create a staff space plan to improve library circulation, program development and management.

Rethink the children's area, separate space for Storytime programs, events and tutoring services. Create more space for adult non-fiction (art and local artist) and genealogical research.

- Create more space for digital literacy; audio book and ebooks marketplace, book hub, etc.)
- Improve access to Library Entrance (e.g. space between the Gym, Recreation Center and Library).
- Create pedestrian access to Library Porch.

The initial meetings have brought forward several important questions. Our focus will be on enhancing the accessibility, comfort, and utility of both the Ste. Genevieve Library and the Recreation Center to better serve our community.

We aim to expand educational and cultural experiences within Ste. Genevieve County by introducing a variety of events such as educational workshops, book sales, art exhibitions, food festivals, and eBook parties. Additionally, we will examine the feasibility and prudence of utilizing the Recreation Center Gym as an extended library space. This expansion could potentially create a versatile area for meetings, summer reading programs, and book sales. Moreover, we are keen to explore how the library's current funding limitations impact access to its services and resources, and what steps might be taken to mitigate these constraints. Our collaborative efforts, supported by comprehensive data collection, community surveys, and focus groups. Here we strived to address the following:

- How can the Ste. Genevieve Library and the Recreation Center be made more accessible, comfortable, welcoming and useful?

- How can we expand educational and cultural experiences in Ste. Genevieve County (ex. educational events, book sales, art, food, and ebook parties and programs)?
- Is an option to expand into the Recreation Center Gym affordable and/or prudent?
- Could the Gym area become a meeting place, summer reading center?
- How does the library's lack of funding impact access?

The following pages summarize the group meetings, Visual Scan<sup>®</sup>, and discussions with community stakeholders, facilities planning committee and library board and staff. It is the first step in a process in which we will discover how to meet both space and service needs within the newly envisioned Ste. Genevieve Public Library.

## SURVEY

In January 2024, a survey was conducted to assess the needs and preferences of the Ste. Genevieve County community regarding their public library services. 188 individuals responded, providing valuable data that will guide future improvements and strategic planning for the Ste. Genevieve Public Library.

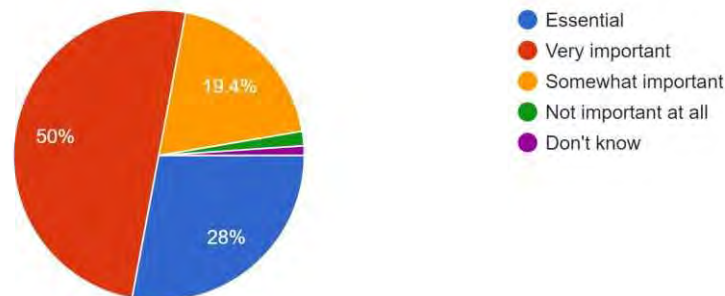
### Key Survey Questions and Insights

- **Importance of Library Services**

- **Question:** How important are library services to you in general?
- **Insight:** Revealed that the majority value library services as essential or very important, underlining the library's critical role in the community.

#### 2. How important are library services to you in general?

186 responses



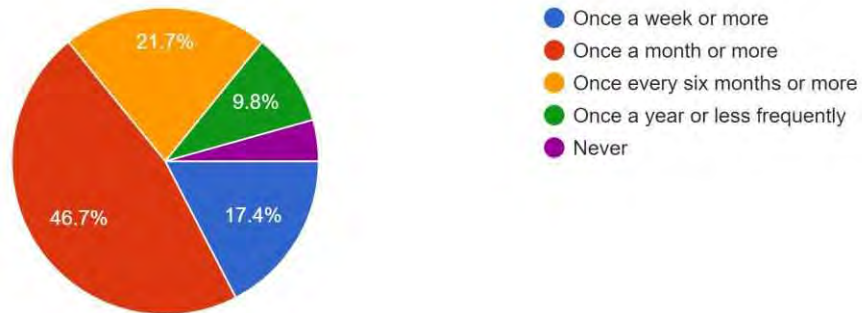
- 73% told us the library was essential and very important.

- **Frequency of Library Visits**

- **Question:** How frequently do you visit the Ste. Genevieve County Library?
- **Insight:** Provided data on library footfall and engagement frequency, highlighting how often patrons use the library.
- **NOTE: 68.4% Visit the library once a month or more.**

### 3. How frequently do you visit Ste. Genevieve County Library?

184 responses



- **Visits to Other Libraries**

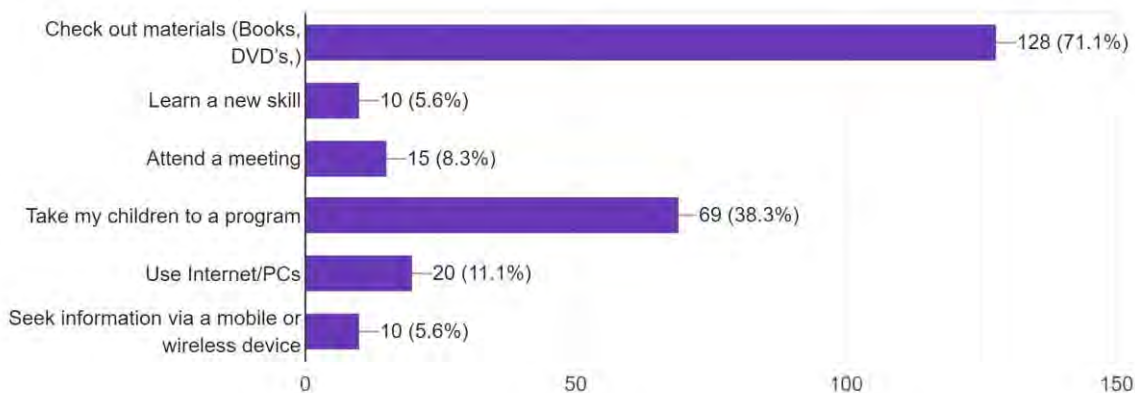
- **Question:** Do you visit other libraries? If so, which ones?
- **Insight:** Identified frequently visited alternative libraries, showcasing areas where Ste. Genevieve could improve to retain library users.
- **NOTE:** 72% do not use any other libraries in the area.

- **Main Reasons for Using a Library**

- **Question:** The main reason that I use a Public Library is to:

### 5. The main reason that I use a Public Library is to:

180 responses



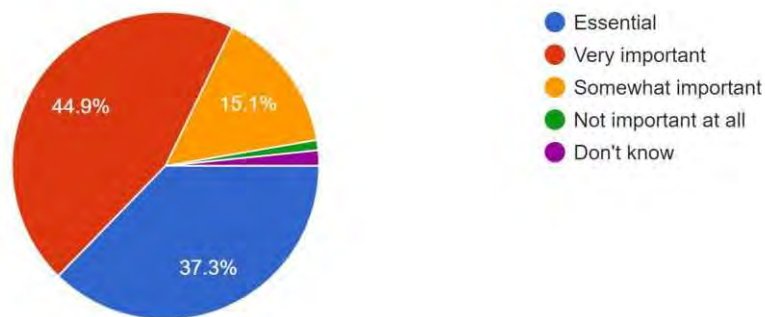
- **Insight:** The library is changing its services. This survey showed diverse uses, such as checking out materials, attending programs, seeking information, and using computer/Wi-Fi services.



- **NOTE: 46.6%:** take a child to a program and/or attend a meeting. This illustrates the need for more meeting spaces.
- **Importance of Local Events and Programs**
  - **Question:** How important are local events and programs to the Ste. Genevieve County Library?
  - **Insight:** Emphasized the community's strong interest in local events and programs, guiding future programming decisions.

6. How important are local events and programs to the Ste. Genevieve County Library?

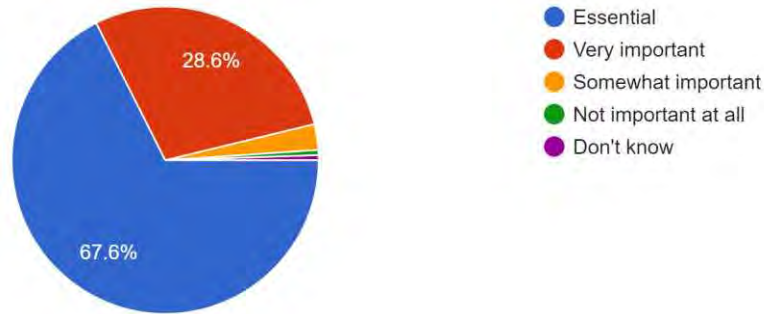
185 responses



- **NOTE: 82.2% believe the library is critical to support local events and programs.**
- **Importance of a Full-Service Library**
  - **Question:** How important is it to have a full-service library in Ste. Genevieve?
  - **Insight:** Highlighted the community's need for comprehensive library services and the potential areas for upgrade and expansion.
  - **NOTE: 96.2% want the county to provide a full-service library.**
  - **NOTE: the space deficiencies of almost 15k square feet (according to ACA library standards).**

7. How important is it to have a full service library in Ste. Genevieve?

185 responses

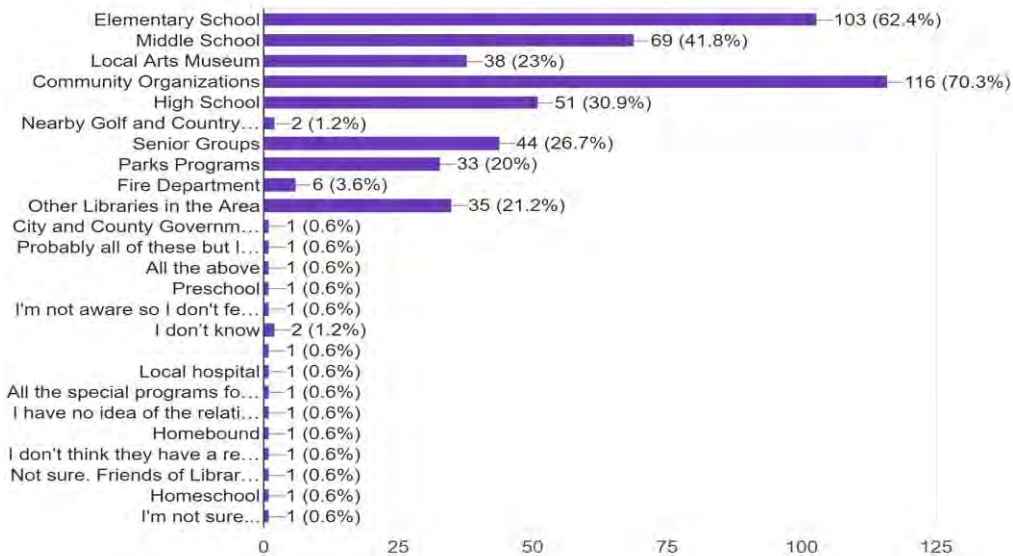


• **Library Relationships**

- **Question:** Which of the following do you feel your library has a strong relationship with?
- **Insight:** Identified strong existing partnerships and suggested areas to strengthen community ties, such as schools and local organizations.
- **NOTE:** the library supports education and independent learning. It is a vital part of the community.

8. Which of the following do you feel your library has a strong relationship with?

165 responses

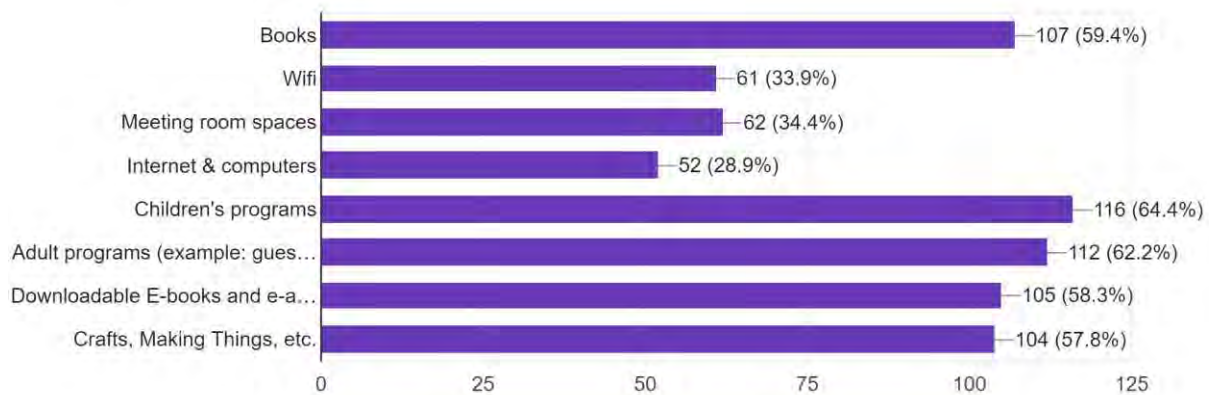


- **Desired Service Improvements**

- **Question:** If we were to improve the local library in Ste. Genevieve County, which of the following services should be included?
- **Insight:** Guided potential enhancements, showing demand for more meeting spaces, interactive zones, collaborative workspaces, enhanced Wi-Fi, and comfortable seating.
- **NOTE: Children’s and Adult programming ranks the highest.**
- **NOTE: Downloadable eBooks are the same percentage as books.**

9. If we were to improve the local library in the Ste. Genevieve County, which of the following services should be included?

180 responses

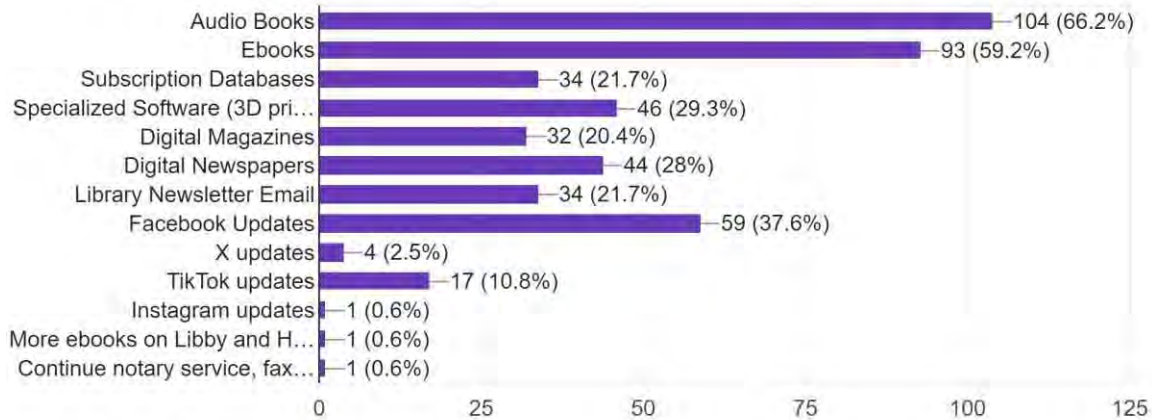


**Preferred Digital Services**

- **Question:** If you don't access traditional library resources, what digital services do you think we should offer?
- **Insight:** Explored the rising demand for digital services like eBooks, online courses, and other electronic resources to complement traditional offerings.
- **NOTE: we sometimes confuse ebooks and audio books. They are accessible through library services remotely.**

10. If you don't access traditional library resources, what digital services do you think we should offer?

157 responses

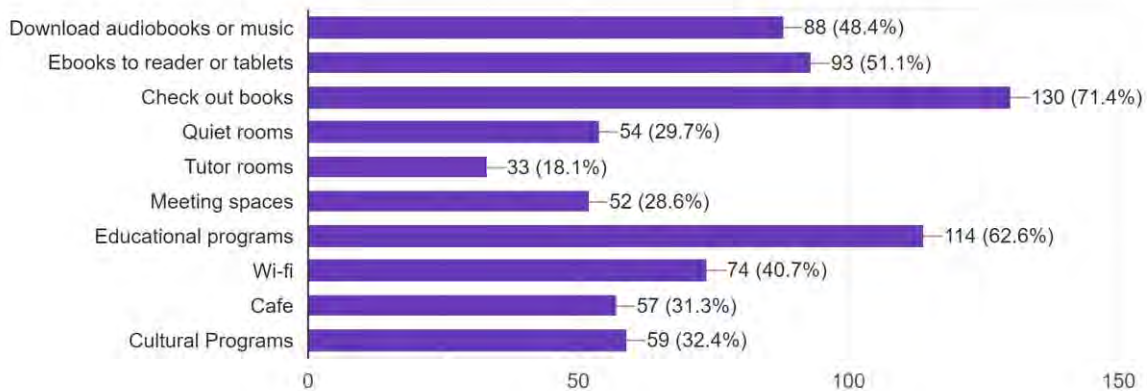


• **Interests in Library Services**

- **Question:** What is your interest in the following library services?
- **Insight:** Highlighted specific interests in educational programs, cultural events, and technology access, providing direction for service expansion.
- **NOTE:** checking out books is the most popular. However, educational programs were at 62.6% and cultural programs were 32.4% - again indicating a need for more meeting spaces.

11. What is your interest in the following library services?

182 responses

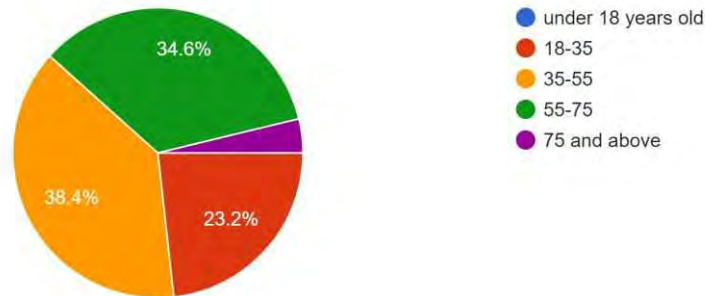


- **Age Demographics**

- **Question:** What is your age?
- **Insight:** Helped understand the engagement levels of various age groups, ensuring services meet the diverse needs of the population.

12. What is your age?

185 responses



- **Value of Library Without Tax Support**

- **Question:** If the library wasn't supported by taxes, how much would it be worth to the community?
- **Insight:** Assessed the perceived economic value of the library, reflecting its essential role in the community infrastructure.

13. If the library wasn't supported by taxes how much it would be worth to the community?

166 responses



- **NOTE:** the majority of the community will pay \$35 per family for library services. This illustrates that the current budget falls below the per capita needs of the community.

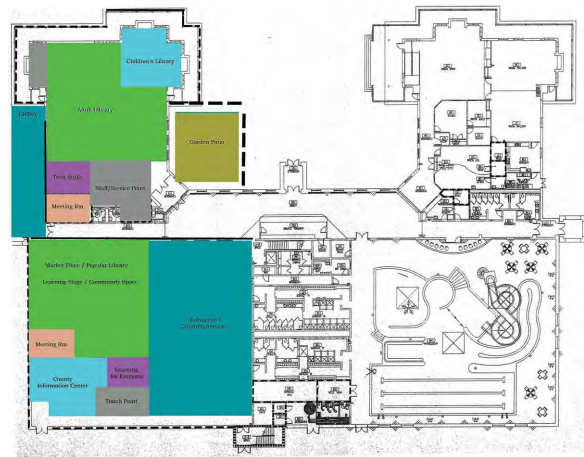
## LIBRARY PRIORITIES

### Review

#### Library Priorities / Visual Scan<sup>®</sup>

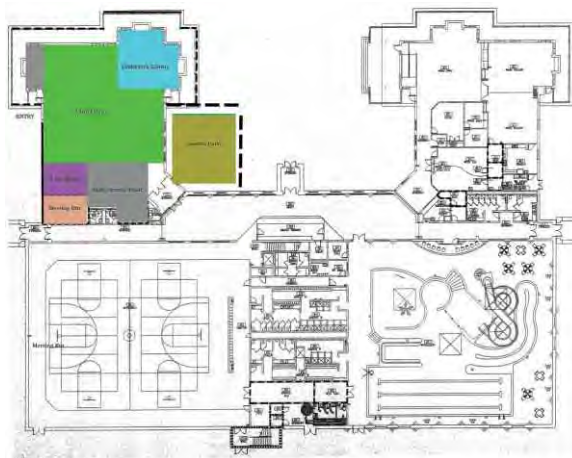
This document represents an open-ended conversation we had with the community. They helped us assess options to improve the Ste. Genevieve Public Library. To build a consensus, we asked participants to share their vision and exchange ideas in open dialogues.

The consensus is clear: the Ste. Genevieve Public Library located within the Recreation Center is outdated. While the existing building functions well as a gym and pool, the library space and common areas are significantly underutilized. The location faces traffic-flow challenges, though it benefits from ample parking.



Currently, the Recreation Center features a dedicated basketball gym that serves its intended purpose. However, the library lacks a public meeting space. The concept of creating an activity center to provide additional meeting spaces has not yet been explored.

Furthermore, the exterior porch and façade of the Recreation Center boast a historic architectural charm that should be preserved. For example, the courtyard can be incorporated into the future design plans. Addressing space planning and building utilization issues will be key to transforming the Recreation Center into a more functional and inviting community space.



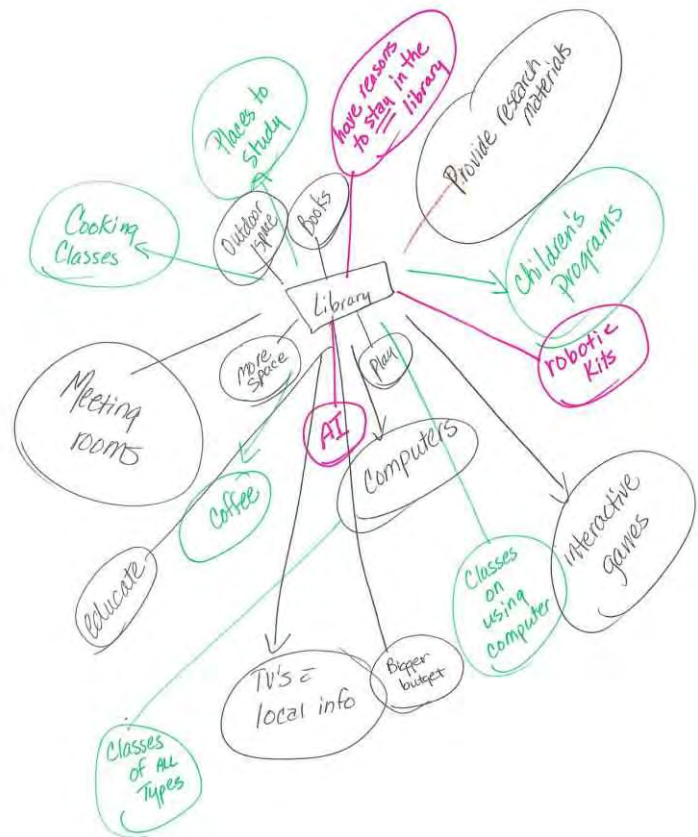
## Community Needs

Alexander Cohen consulted with the Ste. Genevieve Public Library Board, including Jean Johnson (President), Melissa Otto (Vice President), Robin Reynolds (Treasurer), Robert Bach (Secretary), and Cindy Nugent (Member-at-Large). During these consultations, the board identified several infrastructure priorities: creating additional space for parents and children, developing an enclosed outdoor space in the courtyard, installing a new entrance and restrooms near the parking lot, and introducing a self-contained sign with entrance indicators.

The City of Ste. Genevieve, founded in 1735, and the County shares the library service. Interestingly, the library pays rent to the county for its building, a unique arrangement highlighted by the consultant at the onset of the study. Despite limited space, computers, collections, meeting rooms, and reading areas, the current library environment enables the county to provide excellent services.

The City of Ste. Genevieve Library can leverage this planning opportunity to address the downtown community's evolving needs. There used to be a library downtown. The children walked to it after school. This is an opportunity to establish new learning spaces for children, expanding teen areas for after-school programs, and creating dedicated areas to promote local art, writers, musicians, and historians. They noted the following infrastructure priorities:

- More space for parents and children.
- Enclosed outdoor space in the courtyard.
- New entrance and restrooms near the parking lot.



## FINANCIAL AND STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

### Access to Information and Independent Learning Services

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Ste. Genevieve Public Library stands among 21 libraries in the state that do not qualify for state aid. The current population of 18,642 surpasses the combined populations of 19 other libraries lacking state aid, positioning us uniquely to advocate for greater utilization of resources and services.

Libraries are exceptional investments for communities. They serve as vital hubs for education, information, and social connection, offering numerous benefits:

- **Educational Opportunities:** Libraries provide free access to a vast array of educational resources, including books, online databases, and digital literacy programs.
- **Economic Benefits:** They contribute to the local economy by offering job search assistance, skill development programs, and business resources.
- **Community Engagement:** Libraries host events, workshops, and community meetings, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
- **Inclusive Services:** They serve diverse populations, providing access to resources and services for all, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, or background.

### Analysis of Library Landscape

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Most non-qualifying libraries serve populations under 1,000, relying heavily on volunteers and minimal staff. The Ste. Genevieve County Library is a rural system of resources. Although operating similarly through county tax support, this library faces challenges without state aid, missing out on potentially 8-10% of the budget and valuable grant opportunities.

### County Census and Tax Data

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Serving a population between 15,000-29,999, the assessed valuation significantly exceeds the median. This figure is helpful in understanding the potential for increased tax levies and funding.

- **Current Tax Challenges:** The 2017 property tax rollback to \$0.045 per \$100 significantly hampers the ability to save and expand.
- **Even with the high valuation,** a portion amounting to \$288,070,960 is under appeal, further complicating budget planning.
- **Potential Tax Levies:** Exploring higher tax rates could unlock substantial funding, with projections showing significant revenue increases at various levy rates.



## Budget Constraints and Future Projections

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Since 2019, the budget has seen a 35% increase, averaging a 5% annual rise, projecting a budget of \$560,401 by 2028. However, unresolved appeals and intergovernmental agreements cap the funding, requiring conservatism in financial planning.

- **State Aid and Federal Grants:** The current tax rate of \$0.045 per \$100 is below state averages, resulting in a loss of \$32,237-\$34,728 annually in state and federal funds. This loss equates to 7-8% of the overall budget.
  - **These funds can be used to support community volunteers**
  - **These funds can be used to provide homework help resources**
- **Historic Grants and Aid:** In 2017, the last state aid was \$2,185.90. Comparative state aid figures for similar libraries highlight the potential missed opportunities for financial support.
  - **The state does not provide enough support for the library.**
  - **The county needs to support local folks and rural families.**

## Architectural Plans and Community Needs

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In discussions, this document supports feasible improvements. We understand that the library can provide outreach services, such as, the locker system in Bloomsdale. Our team has explored available properties in Ste. Genevieve. Each property provides an opportunity for new investments into the families, high school, middle and elementary school children. The adults and seniors would benefit from a location downtown.

- **Library Size:** Currently under 5,000 square feet, we need expansion to meet community needs, ideally 27,963 square feet for a population of 18,642, with a projected cost of \$11,186,400. (1.5 sq. ft. per capita)
- **Recreation Building Upgrade:** Adjacent to the library is a typical basketball gym with a small amount of seating. This generally ranges between 7,000 and 9,000 square feet.
  - **Basketball Court Dimensions:** A standard high school basketball court is 84 feet long and 50 feet wide, totaling 4,200 square feet.
  - **Runoff and Buffer Space:** Allowing safety and movement around the court, you'll need additional space. This generally adds around 1,500 to 2,000 square feet.
  - **Seating:** Small bleacher seating for spectators might require an additional 1,000 to 2,000 square feet, depending on the specific seating layout and capacity.
- Putting all these factors together, the library can expand with a new concept for seating. It might be a good strategy to add approximately: 7,000 to 8,000 square feet.

## Strategic Considerations

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To ensure the library's growth and sustainability, it is imperative that we advocate increased City and County Library support. Here are the key reasons why we need to increase funding and explore higher tax levies:

### 1. Enhancing Library Services

- **Expanded Offerings:** Additional funding will allow the library to expand its range of services, including digital literacy programs, technology access, and educational resources.
- **Modernization:** Upgraded facilities and technology will keep the library relevant in the digital age, meeting contemporary user expectations.

### 2. Addressing Community Needs

- **Inclusive Access:** Increased funding can support programs and services that cater to all community members, including underserved and marginalized populations.
- **Customized Programs:** With more resources, the library can develop targeted programs based on community needs, such as job search assistance, health literacy initiatives, and cultural events.

### 3. Infrastructure Improvements

- **Facility Upgrades:** Higher tax levies can finance necessary renovations and expansions, creating welcoming and functional spaces for all users.
- **ADA Compliance:** Ensuring the library meets accessibility standards requires investment, making it accessible to individuals with disabilities.

### 4. Economic and Social Impact

- **Economic Growth:** Libraries contribute to local economies by supporting workforce development, small businesses, and entrepreneurship through access to information and technology.
- **Community Hub:** Libraries serve as vital community centers, fostering social cohesion and providing safe spaces for individuals to gather, learn, and engage.

### 5. Leveraging External Funding

- **State and Federal Grants:** Increasing local funding and tax levies strengthens the library's eligibility for state and federal grants, which can further enhance its financial resources.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Adequate funding allows the library to form partnerships with other organizations, amplifying its impact and reach.

### 6. Long-Term Sustainability

- **Financial Stability:** Higher tax levies ensure a stable financial foundation, reducing reliance on unpredictable funding sources and enabling long-term planning.
- **Resource Allocation:** A robust budget allows for strategic allocation of resources, enabling the library to address pressing needs while planning for future growth.

### 8. Expanding Outreach Opportunities:

By increasing our outreach efforts, we can significantly enhance the library's ability to connect with the community. Currently, dedicated library staff makes visits to half of the schools in the county, providing valuable resources and fostering a love of reading. Looking ahead, the library is excited about the potential to extend this outreach to local daycares and other community centers, ensuring that everyone has access to the rich resources and support the library offers. While their current staffing levels limit some of these efforts, they are committed to exploring new strategies and partnerships to broaden the impact and reach more members of our community.

This version focuses on the positive prospects of expanding outreach and acknowledges the current efforts while looking forward to future opportunities.

### 7. Community Investment

- **Public Support:** Advocating for more funding and higher tax levies is a testament to the community's commitment to its public library. It reflects the value placed on life-long learning, literacy, and cultural enrichment.
- **Legacy Building:** Investing in the library today ensures that it remains a valuable resource for future generations, preserving its role as a cornerstone of the community.