



# The Richards Library

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## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR **2025-2030**

**JULY 2, 2025**

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 PLANNING SUMMARY**

To ensure our association public library is meeting the needs of our chartered communities, The Richards Library Board of Trustees and Director updated the Strategic Plan originally created in 2019. Using community data from the 2020 Census, the draft Warrensburg Town Plan and the draft Warren County Plan an analysis of our communities served was created. Through a SALS Construction Grant Butler Rowland Mays Architects, LLP were hired to conduct stakeholder interviews, survey the Library building and grounds and then create possible projects to benefit the Library and its community members. A survey was also made available online and in person to community members. The results were collated and shared with the entire board.

## **1.2 HISTORY OF THE RICHARDS LIBRARY**

The Richards Library's history begins with the model generosity of iron magnate Andrew Carnegie. Although his largesse did not extend to the town of Warrensburgh, you may say he did, however, inspire, in a roundabout way, two sisters, Miss Clara Richards of Warrensburgh and Mrs. Mary Richards Kellogg of Elizabethtown to give the town of Warrensburgh a library.

The sisters started by organizing and establishing a small lending library made up of books from the churches located in Warrensburgh and donations from others, including Stewart A. Farrar. In 1890, the Warrensburgh Circulating Library was established in the Church of the Holy Cross, the local Episcopal Church. A one dollar annual fee was instituted for the use of the library.

The sisters eventually felt that the library, although popular, did not meet the requirements of the town, so they were determined to change the current situation and install within the town The Richards Library. A charter was granted by the University of the State of New York on 1 July 1901. The cost for the land and building was \$15,000 with an added endowment of \$40,000, the total cost to the sisters was \$55,000 (Approximately \$2,048,290 in 2025). The Library was built of granite (dolomitic limestone) native to the area and was quarried from David Brown & Sons near the county home. Jonah Hess of Johnstown did the construction and David VanNess, also of Johnstown, did the stonework. A.W. Fuller of Albany was the chosen architect. At the time, funding for the Library came from the State of New York and the town, each contributing \$100 per year (\$3000 each in 2019 money) and the remainder coming from profits supplied by investments through the endowment.

The original Board of Trustees was comprised of Miss Richards, Mrs. Kellogg, Dr. Daniel Brown, MD, Ezra Wilkins Benedict, Principal of the High School and Rev. Harte Purdy, Rector of the Church of the Holy Cross. The members were to serve 5 year terms, each member electing their own replacements, with the sisters being on the Board for life. The only change is that now the Board of Trustees can be comprised of 5-15 members.

The Library collection was initially catalogued by Miss Bartlett of the Pratt Institute and the first librarian was Miss Mary S. Crandall who assumed her duties on 1 September 1901. The Library continued to expand when the sisters financed and had built an addition in May of 1911. The stone, once again, came from the quarries of David Brown & Sons. In December 1914, a fire destroyed the interior of the Library leaving only the walls and chimney standing. The sisters announced at a Board meeting that they would pay for the reconstruction, but the town would

have to replace the books. The Library was rebuilt and reopened in 1915, having been rebuilt by R.H. Rheinlander.

In 1943, Miss Crandall retired due to illness and Mrs. Jennie Cameron was selected to succeed Miss Crandall, having served as an assistant since 1933. Mrs. Cameron served until 1990, when Sarah Farrar assumed her duties until her retirement in 2013. The next Director/Librarian, Michael Sullivan, assumed the duties from 2014 until 2021. Shelby Burkhardt was then named the current Director.

During the years the Library continued to expand. In 1963 a children's room was added and in 1964 the Albert Emerson Wing was built. However, as the years went by, the Library became more and more in need of rehabilitation and expansion. In 2003, funds were again raised to accommodate an expansion of the building. Local entrepreneur/philanthropist Charles A. Wood donated \$50,000 and Mrs. Grace Hastings bequeathed \$100,000 to the Library and a building fund commenced. Assistance also came from then-Assemblywoman Betty O'C. Little and the good people of Warrensburg. To ensure the completion of the expansion and rehabilitation, the Board secured a Library Construction Grant from the New York State Department of Library Development and secured renewable funding from the town in the way of an annual tax levy which would supply operational/administrative support. The Richards Library "re-opened" in October 2013.

\*This narrative was written from facts contained in an article in the Warrensburgh Historical Society newsletter, Vol. 2, Issue 2, dated March 1998, by Sarah Farrar entitled, "The Founding and Early History of The Richards Library".

## **2. DEMOGRAPHICS**

It is important to understand the needs and interests of the members of both Warrensburg and Thurman so we can obtain materials and offer programs to better serve them. The demographic data, listed below, is gathered from the most recent U.S. Government Census in 2020 and from the 2024 Annual New York State Library Report.

Warrensburg Population: 3,959

Thurman Population: 1,095

Total Population of Both Chartered Communities: 5,054

Population under 5 years old (Both Communities): 196

School Age Population (5-19; Both Communities): 834

Adult (20-59; Both Communities): 2,429

Seniors (60-85+; Both Communities): 1,538

Hours Open per Week: 47

Library Materials Circulated: 15,564

Interlibrary Loan, Materials Borrowed from Other Libraries: 4,369

Interlibrary Loan, Materials Loaned to Other Libraries: 3,080

Programs Held: 193

Program Attendees: 1,024

Library Visits: 10,854

Funding for Fiscal Year 2024 came from the following sources:

<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$256,147</b>
Ed. Law, Sect. 259 Tax Levy	\$246,624
Warren Co. Aid	\$5,432
LLSA (IMLS Federal Funding)	\$1,560
Library Charges	\$2,531

### 3. VISION STATEMENT

The Richards Library provides opportunities for its patrons to develop as global citizens, where all are welcome to learn, discuss, explore, share and grow. We empower our patrons to make a positive difference in their lives by building partnerships, sharing ideas, and championing the cultural lives of the communities we serve.

### 4. MISSION STATEMENT

The Richards Library provides a wide range of unbiased sourced materials and utilizes traditional and modern methods that will educate, inform, entertain and provide the basis for a life-long learning experience. We offer the communities of Warrensburg and Thurman a safe space that encourages inquiries, free thought, an exchange of ideas and a forum for discussion. As we strive to expand the communities' global knowledge, we also endeavor to expand and preserve its cultural and historical uniqueness within that global setting and to ensure that The Richards Library remains forever relevant.

### 5. GOALS

#### Goal 1: Raise the Library's Profile

*Objective:* Enhance the Library's visibility and presence within the chartered communities of Warrensburg and Thurman, as well as the Warrensburg Central School District (WCSD). Feedback from stakeholder meetings highlights a need to communicate more effectively that the Library offers much more than books and that it is a welcoming space for all.

#### *Plan of Action:*

- Attend Town of Thurman, Town of Warrensburg, and WCSD Board of Education meetings on a rotating monthly basis to maintain visibility and engagement.

- Establish a presence at Thurman town-wide events, such as the newly created Farmers Market.
- Maintain participation in Warrensburg community events, including its Farmers Market.
- Collaborate regularly with WCSD librarians to align and promote Library programs relevant to current school curricula.
- Diversify and expand advertising strategies. Potential methods include:
  - Requesting the Warrensburg Fire Department to display Library programs on their electronic marquee.
  - Advertising through school announcements and digital displays.
  - Creating take-home flyers for elementary students.
  - Reach out to local churches to have events mentioned at their announcements
- Explore adding an additional social media platform to reach new and varied audiences.

*Resources:*

- Apply for Occupancy Tax funds to support advertising initiatives, such as promoting the Library's calendar of events in local newspapers.
- Purchase a portable chalkboard sign for event promotion at the Farmers Markets and in front of the Library to attract walk-by traffic.

*Measurement and Evaluation:* Success will be evaluated based on measurable increases in Library visits and program attendance. Tracking these metrics over time will inform the effectiveness of outreach efforts and guide future adjustments.

## **Goal 2: Attract More Young Adult Patrons**

*Overview:* Library survey results show a significant gap in engagement from individuals aged 11–30. While this demographic can be challenging for libraries to reach, targeted outreach, inclusive programming, and direct engagement are critical steps in building stronger relationships with Young Adults (YA). The Director and Library Staff will work to create opportunities that reflect YA interests and encourage their ongoing participation.

*Objective:* Continuously evaluate and refine programming for Young Adults, while addressing different age ranges, to ensure offerings are relevant, engaging, and aligned with their interests, with the ultimate goal of increasing their presence and participation in the Library. For the purpose of this plan we will break down the ranges to 11-18 year olds, 18-21 year olds and 21-30 year olds.

*Plan of Action:*

- Review current programs geared toward 11-18 year olds to identify which are successful and which need to be revised or replaced. This may include surveying similar-sized libraries and communities for proven programming ideas.

- Determine optimal days and times for 11-18 year olds programming through direct feedback and attendance analysis.
- Partner with WCSD to co-develop programs that support the school curriculum while also appealing to students' extracurricular interests for 11-18 year olds. This could involve going to the High School to meet with students for surveying.
- Explore reconfiguring Library spaces—such as swapping the current YA room with the computer area—to provide more natural light, privacy, and a welcoming environment for 11-18 year olds.
- Identify and reach out to organizations that serve 18-21 year olds. This could include community colleges, continuing education programs, skills and trades training programs, North Country Ministries, the Wait House and more. Seek their input on this demographics wants and needs. Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with these organizations and possibly collaborate with them on relevant programs.
- Solicit feedback from 21-30 year olds on their interests, wants and needs. This can be informally done by staff and volunteers. Develop programs and curate spaces that would serve their identified interests. Examples include programs targeted for only this age group including, but not limited to a book club, indoor/outdoor live music or gaming sessions just for Young Adults.
- Appeal to young parents to create a social play group similar to the current homeschool group.

*Resources:*

- Utilize input gathered directly from all age ranges of Young Adults and community stakeholders to inform any new resource needs, including materials, staffing, space reallocation, or technology.
- Recruit older students to start programs that draw in their peers or to mentor to younger students. This could include identifying students who want to go into early education careers and have them read to younger kids.

*Measurement and Evaluation:* Based on current SALS reporting requirements, we will only be able to measure an increase in YA program attendance of ages 12-18 year old. Anecdotally Library staff can gauge any increase in Library attendance, program attendance and overall engagement of Library services from all the age ranges of 11-30 years old. Attendance figures will continue to be tracked by the Director and Staff as part of their regular responsibilities.

### **Goal 3: Continue to Serve the Older Population (60+) by Increasing Accessibility**

*Objective:* Identify and address barriers that hinder access to Library services for older adults. These may include physical challenges (e.g., entryways, mobility), digital literacy, navigation within the Library, and ease of accessing materials and receiving assistance from Staff.

*Plan of Action:*

- Conduct a community survey to gather input from older community members and individuals with disabilities, allowing the Library to better understand accessibility challenges from multiple perspectives.
- Collaborate with the Towns of Warrensburg and Thurman to identify senior-specific program needs and opportunities for outreach.
- Maintain and regularly assess existing physical accessibility features such as the elevator, handrails, and entrances/exits to ensure safety and compliance.
- Advocate for a public transit stop at or near the Library, should a public transit system be established in Warrensburg.

*Resources:*

- Partner with existing organizations that serve homebound individuals to distribute information about Library services.
- Explore options for supporting digital access among seniors, such as:
  - Providing hands-on assistance with the Libby app and other digital tools.
  - Developing a volunteer-based delivery and pickup service for Library materials.

*Measurement and Evaluation:* Success will be gauged through community feedback collected via surveys and conversations, as well as observable improvements in Library accessibility and senior participation. Specific attention will be paid to the number of seniors utilizing new services, requesting digital assistance, or participating in related programs.

#### **Goal 4: Maintain and Improve the Library Building**

*Objective:* Preserve and enhance The Richards Library building as the architectural and cultural crown jewel of Warrensburg, in keeping with the original vision of the Richards Sisters. This includes maintaining both the functionality and historic integrity of the building's exterior and interior to ensure it remains a safe, welcoming, and inspiring space for all members of the community.

*Plan of Action:*

- Replace the historic stone chimney cap, as recommended by professional contractors, to preserve the building's structural integrity and historical accuracy.
- Repair or replace the cracked historic stone steps at the building's entrance and assess underlying drainage issues to prevent future damage and protect the foundation.
- Repoint all deteriorated mortar joints and apply sealant to soft joints on the exterior to maintain the historic façade and prevent water intrusion.
- Maintain and repair the exterior stone retaining wall as needed to ensure both safety and aesthetics.

- Replace aging oil furnaces with cleaner, more efficient propane furnaces and upgrade to a modern HVAC system to improve sustainability and comfort.

*Resources:*

- Collaborate with the Towns of Warrensburg and Thurman, Warren County Planning, and New York State agencies, including the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (SHPO) to secure funding.
- Advocate for financial support through the offices of our locally elected NYS Assemblyperson and Senator.
- Seek additional support through historic preservation grants and community fundraising if applicable. This may include subcontracting with a grant writer and/or fundraiser to assist in obtaining and managing grants.

*Measurement and Evaluation:* Progress will be evaluated based on the successful funding, initiation, and completion of the listed renovation and preservation projects. Long-term success includes both the continued usability of the building and the preservation of its historic character.

## **Goal 5: Increase Exhibits Within the Library**

*Objective:* Enhance the Library's daily offerings and broaden its appeal by increasing the number and variety of exhibits. These rotating displays—ranging from historical to artistic, musical, and craft-based—will create dynamic experiences for visitors and help attract community members who may not otherwise engage with Library services. Local collaborations will be prioritized to strengthen ties between the Library and the greater Warrensburg and Thurman communities.

*Plan of Action:*

- The Library Director will engage with local artists, makers, the Warrensburg Central School District (WCSD), and other regional partners to coordinate multiple exhibits throughout the year.
- Focus on securing a diverse array of exhibit types to appeal to different interests and age groups.

*Resources:*

- Utilize existing gallery rails on the Library's main level, including in the Young Adult Room, to display visual art and other two-dimensional exhibits.
- Host larger or interactive exhibits and programs in the Jeffrey M. Levine Community Room to allow for flexibility and community engagement.
- Make full use of the Library's display infrastructure, including two portable display cases and one wall-mounted case, to feature materials from the Richards Sisters collection and other local contributors.
- Refurbish the display case currently stored in Utility Room B to increase exhibit capacity.



*Measurement and Evaluation:* Track the number of exhibits hosted annually and record patron engagement through attendance figures, feedback forms, and anecdotal responses. Success will be marked by increased community participation, diversity of exhibits, and partnerships formed.

## **6. Conclusion:**

The Richards Library Board of Trustees has formulated a viable and attainable set of goals for the Library to serve the communities of Warrensburg and Thurman. These goals will not only raise the profile of The Richards Library but also enhance the communities the Library serves. The Board also recognizes that barriers to Library access exist, such as transportation, housing, employment, mental health and childcare. While we cannot tackle any of these on our own, we will continue to work with all applicable and available organizations possible to address these barriers in a comprehensive and equitable fashion. The Board will review the strategic plan each calendar year to check in with the progress and completion of each stated goal.