

# Stoneham Public Library

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## Long Range Plan 2010 – 2014

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*Approved by the Stoneham Public Library Board of  
Trustees at their regularly scheduled meeting  
Monday, January 12, 2009*

# *Acknowledgments*

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## Library Board of Trustees:

Susan Fixman, Chair  
Rocco Ciccarello  
Cathy DiDonato  
Susan Doucette  
Jane Francis  
Mike Rora

## Long Range Planning Committee Members:

Mary Doyle (Friend of the Library)  
Susan Fixman (Trustee)  
Carolyn Lassiter (Local Business Representative)  
Judith Pagle (Friend of the Library)  
May Forkin (Assistant Director)  
Maureen Saltzman (Reference Librarian)  
Mary Todd (Director)

## NMRLS Consultants

Mary Behrle  
Scott Kehoe

## *Planning Process*

The Long Range Planning Committee for the Stoneham Public Library began its first meetings to update the Long Range Plan in February 2007. Efforts to update that plan have been undermined by the necessity to pursue funding on the municipal level. The Town of Stoneham has been particularly hard hit by the state's financial woes. Stoneham has been consistently underfunded due to disparities in the Chapter 70 formula and has, therefore, been hard pressed to meet its needs as a community. Further, the townspeople have been reluctant to pass a Proposition 2½ override. Library funding has, therefore, been rather precarious.

At that first meeting attended by committee members and Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System consultants Mary Behrle and Scott Kehoe, the group performed an exercise establishing the S.W.O.T.s effecting the Library. These are the Library's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

A community survey was developed and made available at the Library, at Town Meeting and at the NMRLS website and library website. The responses were tabulated and then used to develop a long term response to those suggestions and concerns. The financial struggles of the last four years also caused the committee to develop a long-range goal to develop other sources of income to help meet the library's needs.

# *Community Profile*

Stoneham, like many of its sister communities in greater Boston, was principally an agricultural center throughout the 18th century until the advent of the industrial age. When cottage industries turned into factory industries in the 1850's, Stoneham became a center for shoe manufacturing. This continued throughout the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, Stoneham, bordered by US Route 93 on the west, US Route 1 on the east and Route 128 (95) on the north is clearly a commuter town. Although some light industry exists within the town, the labor force is primarily focused on the professions, service occupations, and sales and administrative support.

Statistics for 1999 indicate that 4.1% of the population falls below the poverty line. With unemployment in April 2008 3.4% and a per capita income in 1999 in excess of \$35,000 (nearly double that of ten years before) and a median family income of \$64,611, Stoneham, although not affluent, is not an inexpensive place to live. As of May 19, 2008 the median price of a single-family home was \$369,900. Stoneham's population has a higher percentage of college graduates than the national average, although less than that of the contiguous communities surveyed.

Stoneham has over 9,000 households of which more than 31% include persons over the age of 65. This level has remained steady for the last five years. About 28% of the households include a person under the age of 18, up 3% in the last five years. The non-white population, while diverse, represents a small overall percentage of the population. According to Massachusetts Municipal Profiles of the 22,219 citizens in the 2000 US census 1,109 were non-white. In this group were roughly 560 Asian-Americans and 400 Hispanic-Americans. The Asian-American population jumped approximately 75% between 1990 and 2000.

Stoneham is currently facing some very difficult fiscal times as are all communities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Boston Regional Medical Center project has been stalled for years due to litigation with no end in sight. A proposed Home Depot project has fallen through and many storefronts in the downtown area are now vacant, including the loss of

Highland Printing and, more recently, Hank's Bakery, a Stoneham fixture for over 80 years. Governor Patrick is looking toward legalized gambling to save the state's finances, but that, too, looks to be in the distant future.

The last few months have brought an economic freefall to our state and our country. It remains to be seen how this will affect the Town of Stoneham and the Stoneham Public Library, but it seems clear that there will be rough times ahead for the next few years.

On the positive side, since the last Long Range Plan the former Love's Furniture Building was redeveloped into condominiums by local developer, Joseph Cunningham. The Redstone Shopping Center has a projected health and fitness center in development and one of the largest CVS stores in New England. The Stoneham Theatre is thriving.

# *Library Profile*

## **GOVERNANCE**

The Library is an agency of the municipal government of the Town of Stoneham. The six-member Board of Library Trustees, elected by the voters, sets policy for the Library and is authorized by the Town Charter to appoint all Library personnel.

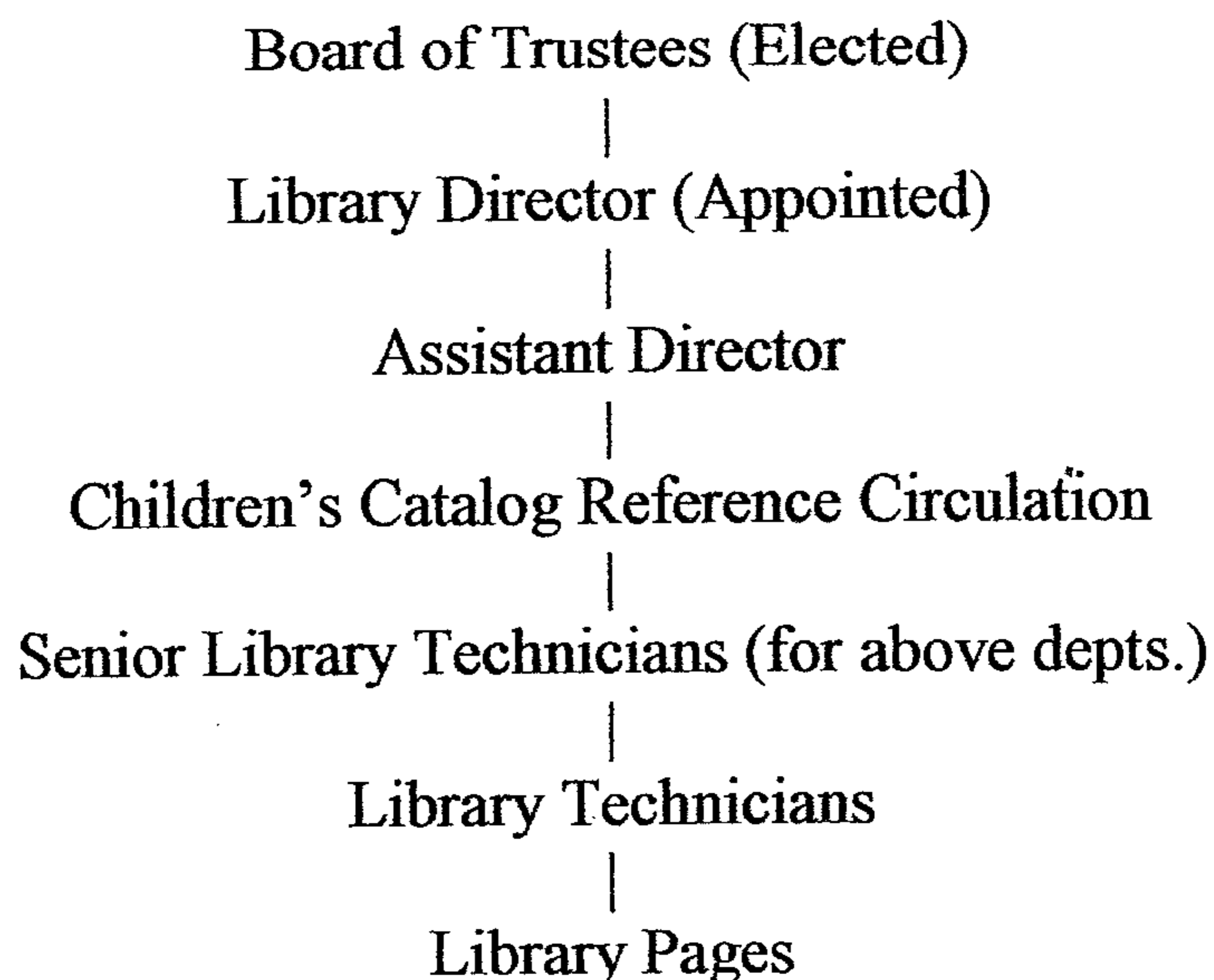
## **HISTORY**

Stoneham's Library was established in 1859 by vote of the Town Meeting. Its antecedents were several private libraries scattered throughout the town. Between 1859 and 1904 the Library was located in several venues, first in an area provided by one of the Library's co-founders; later in the still-existing Dow and Chase buildings. A gift by the Carnegie Foundation in 1903 established the Library at its present Main Street address. A further gift in 1931 by local philanthropist, Annie H. Brown, provided a children's division that was to constitute the Library's physical plant for the next fifty years.

In 1980/81, the town meeting authorized the expenditure of nearly two million dollars for land acquisition, construction and furnishing of the present plant. An anonymous gift of forty thousand dollars in 1985 enabled Stoneham to join the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE) an automated library network. Membership could not have come at a better time in light of the severe financial cutbacks, especially in the book budget, that the Library was to experience from the late 1980's through the early 1990's. While the Library continues to be a source of recreational and serious reading for youths and adults alike, the advent of on-line information and rapidly changing information caused the Library to divert some of its limited resources to in-house technology and reference. As of this writing, (November 2008), the town again faces a budget crisis not seen since the early 1990's.

## ***STAFFING***

The Library Director, Assistant Director, Reference, Children's and Catalog librarians have Master of Librarian-ship degrees. The staffing structure is:



## ***LIBRARY OPERATING HOURS***

### ***Adult Services***

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	10-9
Wednesday & Friday	10-5
Saturday	10-2
Sunday	Closed

### ***Junior Library***

Monday	1-9
Tuesday & Thursday	10-6
Wednesday & Friday	10-5
Saturday	10-2
Sunday	Closed

Due to budget cuts the library has lost 10 hours of operation since the last Long Range Plan. Sundays were completely lost, half of Saturday and Wednesday evenings were also sacrificed. Winter hours now total fifty-one and summer hours total forty-seven per week. The entire Library is closed on Saturdays and Sundays from June 15 to Labor Day.

## ***COLLECTION***

As of June 30, 2007 the combined book collections totaled 73,493. The availability of the EBSCO Periodical Online Database has allowed the library to reduce the number of print subscriptions to 119. Videocassettes, audiocassettes, computer software, compact discs, films and museum passes totaled 4,946.

Careful selection of books and materials is one step toward accomplishment of the Library's mission statement. All materials are selected by the library staff; recommendations from members of the Board of Library Trustees and the general public are welcomed. However, the Library resists at all times efforts of any individuals, organizations or pressure groups to dictate purchases or to remove so-called "objectionable" books from the shelves. Guided by standards of purpose and quality, collections are built to meet the needs and interests of the people of Stoneham.

The collections contain materials of permanent or timely value, of authoritativeness, of high standards of quality in content, format and binding, as well as materials addressing all sides of controversial issues. Because circumstances limit the total number of titles purchased yearly, the Library staff makes use of standard review vehicles, such as ALA Booklist, used by librarians across the United States. The book selection policy of the Stoneham Public Library has as its cornerstone the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom To Read statement of the American Library Association. (Copies of these documents are available at the Library.)

Several trends in collection use in Stoneham have become apparent in recent years. Although the "best seller" reader remains the model consumer of popular titles, actual circulation of these works has declined while a noticeable demand for non-book materials is on the increase.

Our children's collection, although good, can always be improved with a future infusion of capital. Praise is to be given for programming in that department that promotes reading among youth as well as computer literacy.

## ***CIRCULATION***

Over the last few years the library's circulation of materials has declined somewhat. The loss of 10 hours of operation has had a great impact on the use of the library and access to the building by the public. It has definitely had an effect on circulation numbers.

These years have been fiscally challenging for the library and the collection has been sorely neglected. A concerted effort must be made to build the collection back up and expand the types of materials we circulate. With the advent of downloadable books, ipods and mp3 players, the library will have to rethink how we do business in the near future.

Out of the town population of slightly over 21,471 people, and 14,257 registered as library borrowers as of December 2008. Our computers are used by the public at a rate of 24,000+ logins per year, and our online databases are also heavily used.

## ***FUNDING***

The MBLC compares libraries across the state according to population groupings assessed on a per capita basis. The following table (based on Massachusetts Public Library Data for January 2008) relates Stoneham to the group average and regional average. (Entries are dollar values, except for percentage figures)

	STONEHAM	GROUP	REGION
Total operating income	36.81	39.71	41.37
Municipal appropriation	34.87	35.52	37.50
Salary expenditures	21.40	25.66	26.33
Salary (% of total budget)	61%	67%	66%
Material expenditures	4.75	6.08	6.96
Materials (% of total budget)	13%	16%	17%

library's total budget, excluding health insurance costs, on library materials. This MUST be maintained to ensure future cherry sheet monies for the library.

Thanks to the efforts of dedicated library trustees, patrons, friends, and employees, the Stoneham Public Library has maintained its state certification for the last few years. FY09's funding was particularly challenging. The future does not look any easier.

### ***LIBRARY ISSUES***

While the Library enjoys high praise for its genial staff, modern building, state of the art technology and ever improving collections, the Committee members have identified several on-going issues facing the Library over the next five years.

### ***PHYSICAL PLANT***

The building has sustained serious water damage due to problems with the foundation. Some form of repair must be undertaken before the end of the next Long Range Plan. Specific problem areas include:

- a. South Wall Foundation
- b. East Wall Foundation and window
- c. Warren Street Door

All of the windows in the addition have wooden sashes that are now buckled and warped. This causes the HVAC system to lose efficiency and waste both heating oil and electricity. They also tend to leak during heavy rainstorms. They must be replaced.

The 75 year-old boiler is in dire need of replacement. It has been nursed along for the last year, but has reached its limit. This will come at great cost because it necessitates the removal of asbestos from both the boiler and the pipes.

Carpeting MUST be replaced, particularly in the lower level. It has suffered extensive water damage and is most likely full of mold and other allergens.

Exterior trim on the building must be painted.

Thermal glazing that with age has become translucent must be replaced.

Trees on the property need to be pruned yearly.

Non-tax funding sources must be pursued.

Acoustic and air quality consultants' studies should be implemented.

There are mold issues in the lower level that must be addressed. The wall between the Assistant Director's Office and the Ladies' Room appears to be the worst location. It may take some major work to clear this problem up.

Recognizing that at the conclusion of this plan the Library's future space needs will not have been discussed in a generation, the Long Range Planning Committee urges the Trustees, in conjunction with the Selectmen, to establish a committee to address the Library's space needs for the next twenty-five years.

## ***COLLECTIONS***

Knowing that the use of non-book materials is increasing at a rate faster than books, direct more funds toward that collection.

Direct additional funds toward multiple copies of best sellers to reduce the waiting time patrons must endure.

Direct additional funds to preservation of local documents.

Encourage use of e-mail reference inquiries.

Maintain an on-going weeding program and identify subject areas to be especially targeted.

Contingent upon funding, develop a literacy program.

## *PERSONNEL*

There is an urgent need for a part-time young adult librarian. This segment of Stoneham's reading population (age 12-16) is completely unserved.

There is insufficient custodial staff at the Library.

Reference service should be available at all times during the Library's operating hours.

Due to recent budget cuts the library has lost several employees and remains very understaffed. It is strongly recommended that there be an infusion of funds into the library's budget to alleviate this problem..

The Committee strongly recommends that the Library Board of Trustees reengineer the pay structure of the general library staff to have parity with other professional employees within the town, particularly the School Department. In light of the current inadequate salaries at the Library, the Committee is concerned that the future recruitment of qualified professional and support staff will be in jeopardy.

## *Vision Statement*

The people of Stoneham will view the Library as the principal information provider for all of our citizens.

The people of Stoneham will view the Library as a welcoming institution that promotes recreational reading and provides unbiased research resources.

The people of Stoneham will view the Library as the principal instructor in state of the art information.

The people of Stoneham will view the Library as a nurturing component of a Town that supports the moral, ethical and successful future of our youth.

The people of Stoneham will view the Library as a nurturing environment that welcomes debate, discussion of new ideas, and offers a neighborhood touch in an impersonal wider world of 24/7 information.

