



Community Conversation Report

As part of its strategic planning process, The Phoenixville Public Library hosted Community Conversations at three venues. The Community Conversations were designed to generate ideas and solicit input. The questions were designed to elicit responses about how the Library should be serving individuals, the community and focus its services as well as the Library's role in the community. During the course of the Community Conversations over 380 comments, ideas and suggestions were received.

Between January 18, 2011 and February 15, 2011, at the Phoenixville Branch of the YMCA (one night – 6-9 PM), on the Library's Facebook Page and in the Phoenixville Public Library itself, a set of ten questions was asked of participants. At each venue, there were stations (on Facebook a question was posted daily). Participants were encouraged to provide their input via Post-it notes and Library staff members were available to answer questions and talk with participants.

This report presents common themes that emerged from the Community Conversation and sample comments by question.

COMMON THEMES

- Overall participants favored community focused programs. However, when it came to Library as Place, they were more focused on individual space, wanting quiet rooms in which to study.
- Participants want to eat in the Library. They want the ambiance of a book store/coffeehouse.
- Participants want more evening and weekend hours.
- Participants want improved content, more programming, and more technology.
- Participants want the Library to be an open, comfortable and welcoming place.

QUESTION 1: The Phoenixville Public Library Today and in 2015.

The first question asked participants to describe the Phoenixville Public Library today and the Library of 2015 in one word or phrase. Responses were widely varied, but were generally positive. However, ideas around space use/need (need more spaced) and technology (more of it) captured the most responses.

The Phoenixville Public Library Today

- Well stocked
- Cramped
- Need more activities
- Practical
- Analog
- Necessary

The Phoenixville Public Library in 2015

- More interactive
- More spacious
- Good source of activities
- Practically virtual
- Digital
- Fulfilling



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QUESTION 2: What services would you like Phoenixville Public Library to provide?

- **Library as Place.** The participants want to be able to eat in the Library. Not only do they want to be able to eat, but they want to be able to purchase food and beverages in the library. They stated it in many ways: a café, vending machines, snacks, tea/coffee, coffeehouse atmosphere, wireless café... Food, in one form or another was third only to “programs” and “books” for number of responses for all questions combined.
- **Programs.** The majority of the participants indicated a preference for community-focused programs such as classes, storytimes, book discussions, while fewer indicated a preference for individually oriented one-to-one services such as tutoring.
- **Content.** Participants want “more” and “better” and they were specific as to what they want “more” of – language courses, local history, lighter in fiction, decorative arts, magazines, movies, CDs. Participants also want more online resources – online magazines, and eBooks.
- **Technology** – Participants want more laptops and PCs.

QUESTION 3: How would you like Phoenixville Public Library to support personal learning/recreation?

Reading and literacy-related programming. Examples of programs included author appearances, reading programs for kids, book clubs, pajama storytime, and poetry nights.

Classes. Examples of class topics included yoga for all ages, iPads, smart phones, apps, and classes for parents about safe social networking practices for children.

Library as Place. Teen area with rooms so that they can gather and meet.

QUESTION 4: How would you like Phoenixville Public Library to support school readiness for young children and their families? How would you like the Library to help students succeed?

Programs. The majority of responses to this question suggested a number of programs that extended beyond the current storytimes. Participants suggested programs for children older than 4/5, programs for children with two working parents, test-taking strategy classes, study groups and ESL programs.

Library as Place. Participants again suggested individual rooms where groups could meet for collaborative work without disturbing others. They also want quiet areas.

Textbooks. Some participants suggested that the Library could provide school text books in its collection.



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QUESTION 5: How would you like Phoenixville Public Library to work with schools to support education?

Programs to support students. Again, the majority of responses to this question suggested a number of programs that extended beyond the current storytimes. Participants suggested programs for kids in grades 6-12, test-taking strategy classes, computers skills classes, homework help, tours for children in grades K-6.

Library as Place. Participants again suggested more evening and weekend hours. To paraphrase one participant's response, students are in school during the weekdays and need the library in the evening and on the weekends.

School Partnerships. Reaching out and educating teachers about library resources, tie in with school projects/assignments and provide curriculum support.

QUESTION 6: How would you like Phoenixville Public Library to support job seekers?

Programs. Programs and events were most frequently cited as ways to support job seekers. Examples included: job fairs, resume writing classes, computer and Internet classes, meet and greet employers, interviewing skills coaching, and online job searching.

Technology. More PCs

QUESTION 7: How can Phoenixville Public Library best strengthen the community?

There was a wide variety of comments to this question. Comments touched on several areas of importance: more financial resources in order for the library to grow and help strengthen the community; more information resources to better serve the community. Other comments were more programs such as after school activities, teen programs, civility classes, town hall meetings and being a community center, and more library support and exposure at other community events.

QUESTION 8: What store, restaurant, or organization provides the best customer service? What is it you find most valuable about their customer service?

The Phoenixville Public Library received the most mentions for the best customer service. Wegmans was cited several times for its knowledgeable and friendly staff and for the overall customer experience.

Cleanliness of the building was mentioned several times as an important factor for a good customer experience. Other frequently cited attributes of customer service included: ease of help, attitude of staff, staff care about you, and willing to help, even when busy.



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QUESTION 9: What do you look for from Phoenixville Public Library that you can't get anywhere else?

A major theme to responses was that the Library provides access to materials, particularly books. This may indicate that participants currently experience the library as a place for books, not shared technology or the Library as Place or a place for programming. Yet based on responses to previous questions, they want the library to provide learning opportunities about technology, they want more technology, they want programming, and they want to experience the Library as Place.

QUESTION 10: What would motivate you to use the Library more?

Library as Place. Many suggestions were made as to how the Library space could be improved. Common attributes and sample responses included:

- *An open place* – longer hours, especially evening and weekends.
- *A comfortable place* – more comfortable chairs for reading and PCs at tables with chairs
- *A welcoming place* – more kid friendly, more input on collection
- *A quiet place* – more quiet reading areas and study rooms.

Improved Content. Better selection of eBooks, better selection of audiobooks, better selection of new music and online journals.

More Programming. There were also additional programming suggestions including: activities for children ages 6-12, a game room, more game days, more diversity in programs, and craft classes for adults.

More Technology – more PCs was mentioned by several participants.

There were several responses relating to parking.

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