The Community

Every community is unique

Greenwich, New York

- **Service population:** 4,942
- **Location:** Between the Adirondack Mountains and the Green Mountain Range of Vermont
- The community is a blend of farmers, small business people, and commuters

Courtesy of Greenwich Free Library

Meeting the Community Where They Are

After learning from kindergarten teachers that kids were not prepared academically or socially when they entered school, the library connected with early literacy training opportunities for their staff and increased the attendance at their storytime programming, "especially by low income families, dads and other groups not previously seen at the library."

"We know that we've got the potential to do great things for and with our community. The Smart Spaces project comes along at a perfect time to help us achieve that goal." *Annie Miller, Library Director*

"There is good cooperation among local agencies and nonprofits to provide services that engage the whole community."

Annie Miller, Library Director

Before the Changes

Small libraries can create smart spaces

"We are due to update our plan of service just as we make underused space fully available."

A Space with Potential

A space currently used as a book sale area for the Friends of the Greenwich Free Library served as both inspiration and potential for GFL's Smart Space transformation.

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

The library used three approaches in their community discovery process: community survey, dot board, and a library "walkthrough."

Community Survey

While the survey yielded suggestions for improvement, many responses simply said "I love the library" – sweet but not so helpful. "We had to do some interpolating of the responses." The library has been doing a ton of programming for kids; many respondents said "that's great but could there be more adult programs?"

Library Walk-Through

The staff tried this innovative approach to discovering community impressions, which ended up being very useful. Six librarians from the region volunteered to walk through the Greenwich Library with a list of questions and report their observations about the GFL library from their external perspectives.

Conversations with Community Members

"There's a difference between taking a survey and participating in a conversation. I am often inspired by others' ideas and think more deeply about something when in conversation." (Annie Miller)
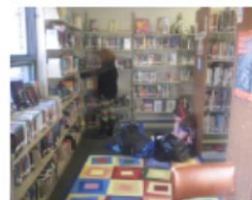
Dot Board Voting

A dot board featured images of different ways to use library space and asked people to choose their preference: space for computer classes, tween/teen space, local history events, and programs for adults.

"The dot board was placed at the school when they did the school budget vote so about 300 people attended and about 30 interacted with the board."

The dot board was displayed at other venues, including village Board meetings and the local YMCA

Space for Computer Classes

Tween/Teen space

Local History Events

Programs for Adults

To provide participants of all ages an opportunity to improve and/or learn computer skills that will assist them in accomplishing their goals in school, employment and everyday life.

Brainstorming the purpose statement

Miller and Library Trustee Teri Pendergrass thought the space should be as flexible as possible, so they brainstormed possibilities for other activities that could take place when computers were not in use.

- Larger Groups - Classes for Adults and Kids
    - Basics of word processing all the way to computer-aided design
    - Coding clubs
    - Research projects (school)
    - Using tech for arts projects from script writing to graphic design
    - etc.
- Smaller groups - Seniors to Kids
    - Tutoring in pairs or small groups
    - Small group projects (school?)
    - Higher level communities of interest - super geeks
    - Web design
    - etc. (open-ended)

Annie Miller and Teri Pendergrass

Prototype

Turning ideas into tangible models

It started with a shoebox.

Making a simple tangible model of the ideas for transformation

"My partner Teri is such a whiz at this!" says Miller of her project partner Teri Pendergrass.

"It is helpful to see the layout, even in the small scale of a shoebox. The process is simpler for us because I do have an empty room; if we were trying to fit into an existing space, it would be all the more important to do it to scale."

A computer classroom in cardboard

"Cardboard Artist" Teri also did mockups with different sizes and numbers of tables to get an idea of how it all would fit.

"We're doing a full-size prototype to test out a rolling desk that I found online for only $70 each. We also want to test our idea of having power and data cords drop from the ceiling for flexible energy supply."

Prototype update: after purchasing one rolling desk and trying it out in the space, they realized it wasn't going to work as anticipated. This test saved them from ordering 12 desks and *then* being disappointed.

Prepare for Change

Making way for transformation

WebJunction®

OCLC

A Bump in the Road – Bad News, Good News

Just as Greenwich Free Library was about to get to work on their smart space, they hit a few speedbumps:

- The **bad** news: The space the library was planning to use for the project had been declared unusable by the city's architect. Among the issues: Not up to fire code.
- The **good** news: That issue was revealed as part of a walk through for a New York State construction grant application. This is a grant with a 3:1 match.
- More **good** news: If the library could find a way to use the Smart Spaces $5,000 as part of the New York State construction match, it will magically increase by $15,000.
- More **bad** news: The New York State project would not begin before spring of 2018, and the space wouldn't be ready until the fall of 2018.
- More **good** news: The library temporarily set up a Smart Space in the current community room and can move the furniture and other smart space supplies when the new space is ready!

"I think we've worked through the problem and found a way to leverage the Smart Spaces money. It will work out especially well because the State grant pays for the construction and the Smart Spaces money can be used to buy furniture and other necessities."

Annie Miller, Library Director

Construction Delays – Making it Work

The state-funded construction project was not scheduled to begin until December of 2018. In the interim, the library selected and purchased furniture for their Smart Space and put it to immediate use. They are loving the community response to the colors and activities.

Flexible Furniture for Multiple Purposes

Tables flipped vertically provide surface for children's activities.

An interactive writing workshop takes advantage of a unique table setup.

Tables are spread out for Minecraft Club.

Finally – Action on the Real Smart Space

December 2018 – Construction begins on the two lower-level rooms

Transform

Make it happen!

The New Space Takes Shape

August 2019 - Transformation is complete at Greenwich Free Library

There are two new "meeting rooms," which are super versatile.

The smaller room has already been claimed by the in-house book repairer and the adult literacy program director, with space and time left for individuals and small groups to use it.

Smaller of the two new Smart Space rooms

The larger room can be completely cleared or set up with the rolling, folding tables and stacking chairs. Cabinetry is fit into some otherwise awkward spaces, so there is lots of space for materials and equipment. There are plenty of electric outlets and the wifi signal is good.

The adjacent, larger Smart Space room

Unexpected Spaces

There was room to create a cleanup station near the new bathroom, which will be very handy for the messier active learning projects.

The project also created some unanticipated space in the lobby and formerly overcrowded hallway, which provides excellent wall space for exhibits.

Learn

Activate the space with people and programming

A Versatile Space for a Variety of Programming

Fall Crafts in full swing!

Minecraft mania!

Hour of Code workshop

A Versatile Space for a Variety of Programming

Continuing education for adults

Tutoring and peer learning

Preparations for a pre-k music program are underway! Taking full advantage of the large counterspace.

"The project came out better than we could possibly have anticipated!"

– Annie Miller

For more information on how Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces and more case studies please visit **oc.lc/SmartSpaces.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS