# The Rye Free Reading Room
# Strategic Plan 2013-2018
### Approved by the Board of Trustees June 25, 2013

## Introduction from the President of the Board and
## The Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee

"The information revolution raises profound questions about the future of books, reading and libraries."[1] Dr. Anthony Marx, who runs the New York Library, fourth largest Library in the U.S., surely has considerable insight into the future of libraries. Ironically, in the same May 1st edition of the Times, where Dr. Marx wrote the above, Thomas Friedman wrote an editorial entitled "It's a 401k world"[2] in which he stated "Something really big happened in the world's wiring in the last decade, but it was obscured by the financial crisis and post-9/11. We went from a connected world to a hyperconnected world." His thesis essentially is that people in the hyperconnected world have to do much more for themselves. As Mr. Friedman put it, "There will be fewer limits, but also fewer guarantees. Your specific contribution will define your specific benefits much more. Just showing up will not cut it."

For creative self-starters, the 401k world will be one of boundless opportunities. Countless others will face a daunting array of challenges to learn new skills and adapt to a rapidly changing landscape; without a guide to show the way. Perhaps therein lays one of the great future opportunities for Libraries. Can you imagine an institution better suited to help citizens of all ages navigate these uncertain waters?

"Libraries remain essential repositories of books, periodicals and research collections, but they are also places to check e-mail and browse the Web — a third of New Yorkers lack home broadband — and to learn computer skills, seek jobs and get information about government benefits," according to Dr. Marx.

Our Strategic Planning Committee has attempted to synthesize some of today's trends into a coherent plan for our Library. The Rye Library is widely used and loved by our community. Our task is to build on what has always made our library a success – a great location in the center of our community, a caring staff, terrific customer service, a dynamic collection, and great programs for people of all ages. This plan focuses on seven key strategic initiatives: Community, The Library as a Destination, Collections, Programs, Technology, Lifelong Learning, and Financial Sustainability. The plan is dynamic and a guide that will surely need careful adjustments over time.

Fran Rodilosso, President of the Board          Mark Zwerger, Chair of the Planning Committee

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[1] Antony Marx, President of the New York Public Library, New York Times Op Ed May 1, 2013.

[2] Friedman, Thomas L. New York Times Editorial May 1, 2013.

## The Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Committee began its work in May, 2012.  Members reviewed the strategic plans of a number of forward thinking libraries, visited libraries, and examined statistical data for Westchester libraries to provide a baseline for benchmarking.

The Committee solicited public input from a wide range of stakeholders. Community residents responded to a Library survey that was available both in print and online.  The Committee retained consultant Alan Gray who collected comments and recommendations at three public forums he conducted.  Six focus groups, including one of library staff members, addressed matters of common interest, and community residents including City officials provided their thoughts and recommendations in a sustained discussion with the consultant.

The Committee met on numerous occasions to determine the planning process, review the community comments, evaluate alternative action items, and determine the elements of the Plan.  A subcommittee worked closely with the consultant to write a plan that incorporates the strategic goals expressed by all those who participated in the process. The plan is organized into seven strategic initiatives and forty-one separate implementation projects. This is a dynamic plan that we expect will evolve as the Board and staff evaluate the feasibility of each of these projects over the next five years.

The Plan was reviewed in final draft by the Committee and Library staff, was approved by the Library Board of Trustees in June 2013 and was released to the public on our website shortly thereafter.  This Strategic Plan will guide Rye Free Reading Room actions for the period 2013 to 2018.

Members of the Committee:

Mark Zwerger, Chairman

| 2013 | 2012 |
|------|------|
| Chris Shoemaker, Director | Holly Kennedy |
| Sarah Wise Miller | Barbara Ormerod-Glynn |
| Werner Tietjen | Fran Rodilosso |
| Mary Sykes | Mary Sykes |
| Barbara Ormerod-Glynn | Werner Tietjen |
| Fran Rodilosso | Bernie Althoff |
| Bernie Althoff | Kitty Little |

With thanks to the many contributions from our members from the recent past:
Debra Julian, Anthony Mason

# Building Community Connections

## A Central Role in the Community

The Rye Free Reading Room has played a central role in the Rye community for more than 125 years. It began in 1884 as an effort to keep restive youths out of the local saloons and offered them instead a place to socialize, read and enrich their minds.  From the outset, the library has been a gathering place that has promoted lifelong learning and the cultural health of our community.

Now celebrating its 100th anniversary in the current building, residents recognize the Library for both its physical and symbolic place at the heart of a special community that prides itself on a small town feel for sophisticated residents.  Rye's children enjoy the many programs and materials the Library offers that nurture early childhood literacy.  Teens have a dedicated room with collections that support the school curriculums and provide ready access to technology that can help them create content.  Rye's adults and senior residents have renovated spaces for reading, computer use, technology training, book groups, author talks and meetings.  The Library operates a branch at The Osborn where the 400 senior residents take full advantage of the convenience and where the county's biggest collection of large print books is housed. It is a hub that nurtures lifelong learning for all.

## The Library and the Future

A fresh vision of the role of the Library over the next five years points to a dynamic future for the Rye Free Reading Room that will continue our tradition of excellence in serving the community. The digital revolution has accelerated change in libraries as never before.  Computer literacy has become as critical a life skill as reading literacy.  The advent of eBooks, digital magazines, streaming video and streaming music is changing the Library's mix of print and non-print materials and requires a reassessment of space.

The Rye Library's website has become a virtual branch, allowing patrons to access materials without stepping foot in the building.  The Library will continue to transform its collections, services and spaces to remain central to the intellectual life of the community.  It will build partnerships with local groups, non-profit organizations, schools and other institutions to create services collaboratively that each would be unable to deliver individually.

The Rye Library will likewise work to strengthen its financial position, extend service hours, preserve the integrity of the historic structure and adopt technology to advance patron services and operating effectiveness in order to meet the needs of the Rye community for the generations to come.

# Mission Statement

**To serve as a dynamic gathering place and center for lifelong learning for Rye residents of all ages and interests.**

To achieve this mission, the Rye Free Reading Room will build on the Library's strengths and focus on seven Strategic Initiatives:

I.     COMMUNITY
Foster collaborative partnerships with Rye organizations and community groups to share resources and expertise.

II.     THE LIBRARY AS A DESTINATION
Ensure that the Library is an inviting and hospitable center for community connections.

III.     COLLECTIONS
Curate collections of print and digital content with impact.

IV.     PROGRAMS
Broaden and deepen the range of programming particularly for teens and adults.

V.     TECHNOLOGY
Continually implement new technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of patron services and back office operations.

VI.     LIFELONG LEARNING
Foster lifelong learning, a love of reading and digital literacy.

VII.     FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Take steps to assure financial stability and growth.

# Rye Free Reading Room
# Goals and Implementation Projects 2013-2018

## I. Community

Goal:  Form collaborative partnerships with Rye organizations and community groups to share resources and expertise.  The Library is perfectly positioned to be a hub for the community's many service organizations and clubs.  In becoming a hub, the Library's visibility will grow and it will become even more of the "center of the community".

## Implementation Projects:
1. Establish alliances with local groups and not-for-profit organizations with common interests to identify programming opportunities that share experience and resources.
2. Identify opportunities to partner with local public and private schools in the Rye City and Rye Neck school districts.
3. Form relationships with local business groups and individual businesses to support their activities and to provide resources for Library users.
4. Expand the Library's presence at community events and activities.
5. Implement a public access catalog.

## II. The Library as a Destination

Goal:  Create hospitable, welcoming spaces that provide a positive experience for all who visit the Library.  Preserve the beauty and historic significance of the original structure yet adapt it to twenty-first century uses.

## Implementation Projects:

1. Be open seven days a week for sufficient hours to meet the community's needs.
2. Offer extended hours to create a sense of community around such events as citywide celebrations and student exam periods.
3. Provide comfortable, flexible and portable study areas and seating for individuals and small groups throughout the Library.
4. Provide more food and refreshment options throughout the day.
5. Make the entrances to the Library especially inviting and welcoming.

## III. Programs

Goal: Broaden and deepen the range of programming available to the community, with particular emphasis on the teen and adult sectors.

## Implementation Projects:

1. Identify opportunities for collaborative programming with those Rye not-for-profit organizations that have a special expertise.
2. Connect with local colleges, universities, or organizations to offer academic level lectures or seminars.
3. Upgrade the display and sound technology in the Community Room to provide an opportunity for additional programming options.
4. Provide after-school programs for all students, possibly including test preparation.
5. Establish teen internship programs and consider providing a scholarship for Rye and Rye Neck Students to encourage volunteerism.
6. Continue to showcase local authors.
7. Encourage the spawning of special interest clubs that will draw patrons to the Library as a meeting place.

## IV. Collections

Goal:  Build collections with impact.  Ensure that the Library's collections reflect the current interests of the community and are available when needed.

Implementation Projects:

1. Obtain sufficient quantities of current and popular print and digital materials to meet patron demand.
2. Keep the collection available to all readers with emerging digital and other new and tested formats.
3. Work to digitize unique local historic content and make it available.
4. Continuously curate the collection.  Create mobile shelving that will permit alternative uses for the space.
5. Explore new ways to supply materials to those who are unable to get to the Library.
6. Actively promote the library through the use of digital and physical displays of materials.
7. Continue to rely on the collections of the Westchester Library System (WLS) to satisfy the needs of Library users whose interests are more unique or specialized.

## V. Technology

Goal: Continually implement new technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of patron services and back office operations.

Implementation Projects:

1. Sustain a technology infrastructure that supports back office efficiencies, patron self-service technologies and digital products.
2. Work with WLS to ensure sufficient bandwidth for streaming content. Ensure ample wired and wireless access is available.
3. Collaborate with WLS to upgrade the public access catalog software to significantly enhance display and discoverability.
4. Invest in technology that provides staff members with more efficient means of carrying out their responsibilities.
5. Implement patron self-help technologies that will free up staff to assist patrons in new ways.
6. Expand the library's virtual presence in the community: maintain a state-of-the-art website; design an electronic version of Cover-to-Cover; create "eNewsletters" to market Library services to targeted interest groups.
7. Record author talks and other programs and broadcast them on the website or on RCTV.
8. Expand the use of social media to communicate with patrons.
9. Introduce a Media Lab. Provide a wider range of technology tools for patrons to trial and use to create new digital content.
10. Create opportunities for Rye readers to share reviews and lists of materials.

## VI. Lifelong Learning

Goal: Foster lifelong learning, a love of reading, and transmedia literacy for all staff and patrons.

Implementation Projects:

1. Continue supporting early childhood literacy with Children's Room programming, collections and services.
2. Develop a digital learning lab to serve patrons of all ages. Sponsor a program of reverse mentoring, with digital natives offering training to adults.
3. Support the community's love of reading with community reads, book sales, book groups, author talks and other literary events for all ages.

## VII. Financial Sustainability

Goal:  Take steps to ensure financial stability and growth.

## Implementation Projects:

1. Secure adequate, stable funding from the public.
2. Assess the Library's fundraising profile and activities and take steps to broaden fundraising initiatives and enhance their outcomes.
3. Review all non-public potential sources of funding for the Library, such as sponsorships, grants and private donations, and paid advertising opportunities.
4. Raise our public profile.