



Strategic Plan

FY2024 - FY2028

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2028

Approved by the Abington Public Library Board of Trustees

Henry DiCarlo, Chair

09/12/2022

600 Gliniewicz Way

Abington, Massachusetts 02351

A Note to the Community from the Library Director

At their core, Public Libraries exist to meet the needs of all of the residents of a community. What do YOU need? We asked you, Abington's families, to tell us what you want from the Library, what you think about the services we currently provide, and what we can do better. Your answers to our survey and focus group questions informed this new *Strategic Plan* for the Abington Public Library.

To begin, thank you. The time spent by you, our residents, completing the survey and sharing your wants and needs for library services is at the heart of this new *Strategic Plan*. The sheer volume of responses was a real testament to our community's commitment to library services. 592 responses far exceeded the expected survey return for a town of Abington's size. As we read and analyzed your survey answers, we gained insight into your needs.

Thank you to the members of the Community Planning Committee for their time and dedication. The honest conversations during these meetings highlighted key words including "community", "connections", "collaboration", and "respect" which have been included in the Priorities for the Library identified in this plan.

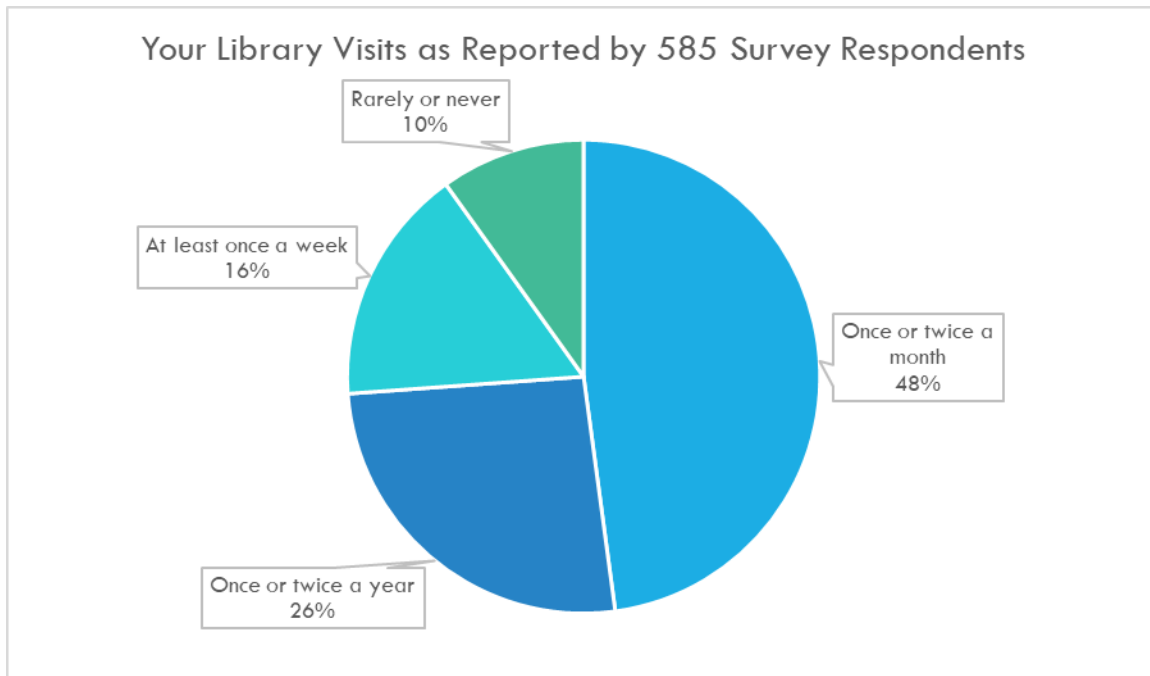
Thank you to the members of the Board of Library Trustees, Friends of the Library, and to all of the elected and appointed officials from other Town Boards, Committees and Departments for their input into this plan. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners requires a vote from the Board of Library Trustees endorsing this *Strategic Plan* before submission to ensure that the plan meets the needs of the community. The Trustees have spent many hours over the last few months reading and discussing the plan as it has grown.

Thank you to the Library Staff for contributing to this plan by submitting and analyzing survey questions, serving on the Community Committee, and for reading drafts many times along the way. Our Library Staff provides direct services to you and meeting your needs is the core of our customer service policy.

As the expressions of gratitude above tell us, the success of the Abington Public Library is dependent on community support. When I was hired as the Children's Librarian in February 1986, I was asked to make a three year commitment to the children of Abington. Thirty-six years later, those children have grown up and many have little ones of their own. The reason that I am still honoring that commitment, all these years later is because of you. As the Library Director for the last fourteen years, I am proud of the services the APL provides, impressed by the ingenuity and response shown by our staff to challenges such as the pandemic, and humbled by the community's response to those services.

One survey respondent said, "The library is the foundation of the town. It connects the community and creates a love of reading and lifelong learning." This praise creates its own challenge - to be certain that all of you feel that public library services meet your needs. I am honored to present our new *Strategic Plan*, a map to providing you the Library services you consider essential.

Deborah Grimmett, MSLIS
Abington Public Library Director
September 2022.



Board of Trustees

As established by the Abington Home Rule Charter, "the Board of Library Trustees shall have general charge of the care and management of the town library, and of all property of the town relating thereto, in consultation with the Town Manager." The primary responsibility of the Board of Library Trustees is to ensure that residents' information needs are met. The Board of Library Trustees sets policy and supervises the Library Director.

Friends of the Abington Public Library

The Friends of the Library are a non-profit, 501c3 organization whose purpose is to enhance public library services for the residents of Abington. The Friends provide funding for children's, teen and adult programming, sponsor attraction and museum passes, and contribute funding for materials for the APL collection, such as Abington High School Yearbooks. The Friends typically meet during the academic year, September through May. The group conducts book and bake sales, and sells boutique items to provide funding for library programs and services.



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Town of Abington

The Town of Abington is located in Plymouth County, halfway between Boston and Plymouth. Abington earned its title from Governor Joseph Dudley of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1706, and was incorporated in 1712. Abington was an agricultural community until the mid-nineteenth century when it became an industrial center for the manufacture of shoes. With the decline of the shoe industry, the town's population stabilized until shortly after World War II.

The town experienced two periods of rapid residential growth, the first from 1950 to 1970, and the second beginning in the late 1990's and continuing through the mid-2000's. The most recent boom was a result of the restoration of the Old Colony Line commuter rail, which led to great growth in condominium and apartment development. The population was 17,062 at the time of the 2020 Federal census. The Town is governed by The Abington Home Rule Charter Plan (<https://ecode360.com/12064945>) with an Open Town Meeting form of government, Select Board and Town Manager.

"Always thought the tax dollars used to support the library are the most effective used anywhere. They foster learning and expanding all of our worlds."

Mission Statement

The Abington Public Library strengthens the community by providing resources and programs which enhance learning and cultural connections for all residents.

LIBRARY PRIORITIES

Literacy and Lifelong Learning: The APL reasserts its commitment to its core value of supporting and celebrating reading literacy, as well as cultural, digital, information, and art literacy as a mechanism for fostering learning, personal growth, community understanding and discovery.

Provide residents of all ages, starting with children, the resources they need to support formal and informal learning goals, explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Provide residents of all ages with materials and programs which enhance leisure time activities and encourage intellectual pursuits and imagination.

Celebrate and promote reading for all, nurturing readers and library users of all ages and backgrounds.



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Community Connections: The Library strives to be at the heart of Abington, supporting and strengthening the community by fostering social cohesion and cultivating opportunities for Abington residents to come together through shared spaces, resources, programs, and events that inform, educate, and entertain.

Facilitate community conversations to support informed civic engagement and nurture civility.

Actively represent the library beyond its physical space. Encourage staff to foster relationships in the community and to utilize their extensive knowledge and resources for its continued development.

Sustain and increase collaboration with the Abington Public Schools to expand Library services to the school community.

Celebrate Abington's cultural and intellectual life through events and services that support reading, personal growth, education, and entertainment.

Seek out new partnerships in the community to promote mutual programs supporting library and community priorities.

Access for All: The APL will seek opportunities, on its own and through collaborative ventures, to engage all Abington residents in the use of its informational and recreational resources.

Ensure that library services are delivered with sensitivity and care to people of all ages, abilities, education levels, interests and social and cultural backgrounds.

Find creative ways to connect with underserved populations and identify and mitigate barriers to access.

Facilitate people expanding their relationship with the library to use new resources and technologies.

Engage non-users to find ways to accommodate their particular needs and interests.



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Focus on the Future: The APL will continue to expand and enhance its ability to provide a wide range of evolving services that meet the needs of the community.

Actively seek financial support from the Town of Abington and other sources to provide responsive Library services – including support for personnel, building repair and maintenance, collections and programs.

Continue to serve as sound stewards of available financial resources.

Maintain awareness of changes and trends in the community and in library service delivery in order to provide new services pro-actively.

Ensure that library collections evolve to meet community needs and interests, and continue to sustain the library as a “trusted information resource”.

Recruit and train service-oriented, skilled, and knowledgeable staff to ensure high quality public service through staff planning and engagement in service delivery.

Explore opportunities for efficient and convenient ways to deliver library services.



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Project Process Description

On February 10, 2022, Library Director Deb Grimmert met with consultant Ruth Kowal via Zoom to consider approaches to, and a timeline for, the creation of a new strategic plan for the Abington Public Library. The approach selected focused on community engagement. Project activities would involve a variety of tactics for seeking broad input across the community.

At the heart of this “looking outward” process would be input from individuals identifying their personal hopes and aspirations for the community, the obstacles to be overcome to achieve those hopes and aspirations, and ultimately, ways in which the library could support the achievement of those hopes and aspirations through its community-focused strategic priorities.

In March 2022 community-wide input was sought through a survey soliciting current user information, priorities, a needs assessment, and validation of key themes identified through the focus group process. Almost 600 people responded to the survey.

Community conversations in May 2022 brought together people who, through the focus group process, identified their hopes and aspirations for Abington, the challenges they saw as barriers to meeting those hopes and aspirations, and their ideas for how the library could provide meaningful and strong support to achieving the community participants’ wishes and hopes.

Through these project activities, looking outwards and bringing in the broader community, the library identified key priorities focused on supporting wider and deeper community impact over the next 5 years.

Key themes emerging from the community input included:

Community	Collaboration	Cooperation
Communication	Culture	Intergenerational
Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion	Connections-ages, neighborhoods, broader community	Welcoming
Respect	Leadership	

These themes provided the foundation for the Library’s Strategic Priorities and for the revised Mission Statement.

The new strategic plan is flexible and dynamic, while at the same time realistic about the library’s capacity, giving steady direction to the library’s future endeavors as it positions itself to meet the evolving library service needs of the community.



Abington Public Library Strategic Planning Timeline

January 2022	Initial project overview
January 2022	Decision made to hire an outside consultant
February 10, 2022	Initial project planning
February 2022	Drafting of community survey
March 2 – April 29, 2022	Community survey available via library website, Facebook, user email
March 11 – April 29, 2022	Teen survey available through school and Teen Advisory Board email
April 2022	Preparation for community focus groups
May 3, 2022	Community Focus Group session #1
May 17, 2022	Community Focus Group session #2
May-June 2022	Preparation of Strategic Plan Draft and review of current Mission statement
July 25, 2022	Presentation of Strategic Plan Draft to Library Board of Trustees
July – August 2022	Staff synthesis of Survey Results
September 12, 2022	Library Board of Trustees adopts new Abington Public Library Strategic Plan 2023-2028



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Community and Library Description

The Abington Public Library is located at 600 Gliniewicz Way, in the geographic center of Abington. The Library is a community center, providing needed services for residents of all ages. The APL shares a parking lot with the Abington Town Offices and is within easy walking distance of the town's co-located Middle/High School and Early Childhood program. The building was dedicated in January 1998 and has served the community for the last twenty-five years. The budget for Fiscal Year 2022 was \$550,049. The Abington Public Library is a member of the Old Colony Library Network, a consortium of twenty-eight libraries, sharing technology services and providing expanded resources for Abington borrowers.

The Library provides physical and digital collections, including books, audio materials and eBooks, eAudio and digital video streaming, to meet the informational and recreational reading, listening and viewing needs of the residents of Abington. Total circulation in 2019 was 111,963. Despite pandemic closures and restrictions 75,667 items were borrowed in 2020 and 91,287 in 2021. Digital circulation increased from 15% in 2019 to 24.3% of total borrowing in 2021, and digital offerings were increased to meet patron demand.

The APL serves all ages from babies, with Toddler Time being the first organized early literacy program experienced by many young residents, to Senior Citizens, who enjoy cultural and literary programs, as well as book delivery services for those who cannot visit the library building. Programs are important to Abington families; 304 programs for children and teens were offered in 2019, attended by 5,940 youth. Toddler and Preschool programs typically reach capacity, as do activities for school aged children and teens. There is a strong link between the Library and the Abington Public Schools; 98 class visits served 2,317 students. 90 adult programs, attended by 1,128 people were held. The APL has eight monthly book discussion groups, five for adults, two for children and one for teens, to encourage reading, conversation, and critical thinking skills.

The Copeland Meeting Room hosts library programs and is frequently used by community groups. Two Study Rooms meet the needs of people who want a quiet place for tutoring, small meetings in-person or via Zoom, and quiet learning and contemplation. The Study Rooms were used 1,163 times in 2019. Computers and iPads for use in the building bridge the digital divide for many residents, as do Chromebooks and hotspots which may be borrowed for use away from the Library.

Except where noted all statistics are from 2019 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on services in 2020 and 2021.



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Community Input

In January and February of 2022 the Board of Library Trustees and Library Director Deb Grimmert discussed the formation of a Community Planning Committee. Individuals representing a cross-section of the Town were selected and productive focus group meetings were held during May 2022, resulting in the identification of community needs and wants, and the selection of service priorities for the library. The Board of Library Trustees voted to adopt the recommended service priorities on July 25, 2022.

Community Planning Committee Members

Laura Brink, Library Trustee
Henry DiCarlo, Library Trustee
Patti Condon, President, Friends of the Library
Kristina Coull-Youch, Parent Representative
Chief Petty Officer Adam Gunn, USN Ret., Director of Veteran's Services, Town of Abington
Gerry Haas, Library Trustee
Amy Hindle, Children's Librarian – Abington Public Library
Pat Jackman, Council on Aging Representative
Tricia London, Abington Middle/High School Librarian
Jill Monti, Library Assistant – Abington Public Library
Lynne Nickley, Assistant Librarian for Adult Services – Abington Public Library
Kimberly Reid, Community Representative
Julia Riley, Teen Advisory Board Representative
Aimee Tyler, Community Representative

The meetings were facilitated by consultant Ruth Kowal and the process used for the Focus Groups is explained in detail above under the Project Process Description. The Board of Library Trustees and Library Director thank all of the members of the Community Planning Committee for their time and invaluable input into this *Strategic Plan*.

Survey

The Survey was shared from March 2 through April 29, 2022 on the Library website and in the *All Around the APL* newsletter, as well as through a direct user email campaign. Paper copies were available at the Library. Requests for participation were also featured on the Town website and social media, at the Senior Center and on Abington Cable Access Media Television. The Abington Public Schools sent an email with a link to parents, faculty and staff. 592 surveys were completed. 559 respondents have an active Abington Library Card.



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Needs Assessment

The Survey identified important existing services which residents need.

Most Important Current Library Services as ranked by 591 Survey Respondents.

1. Books, audio, video & magazines for adults.	70.57%
2. Passes for museums & attractions.	55.88%
3. Borrowing books, audio, video & magazines for children.	51.32%
4. Help from staff with finding information or choosing something to read.	50.17%
5. Electronic/downloadable books, audiobooks, magazines & streaming video.	49.91%
6. Books, audio, video and magazines for teens.	37.16%
7. Library programs such as Story Hour, authors/speakers, discussion groups.	36.92%
8. Public computers, printers & WiFi.	35.25%
9. Time spent reading & relaxing in the Library.	29.90%
10. Large print books.	26.26%

“It’s not a specific service recommendation, but I must take this opportunity to tell you how much I adore APL. It is small, but mighty. Each summer my family embarks on what we call our ‘Great Library Adventure’, where we make it a point to visit all our local libraries and any libraries where we vacation. We’ve been to many over the years, and APL even before we moved to Abington, consistently was one of our favorites. Thank you for being such a wonderful little haven for us.”

The Survey also pinpointed new/additional services which residents need.

Most Important New/Additional Library Services as ranked by 462 Survey Respondents.

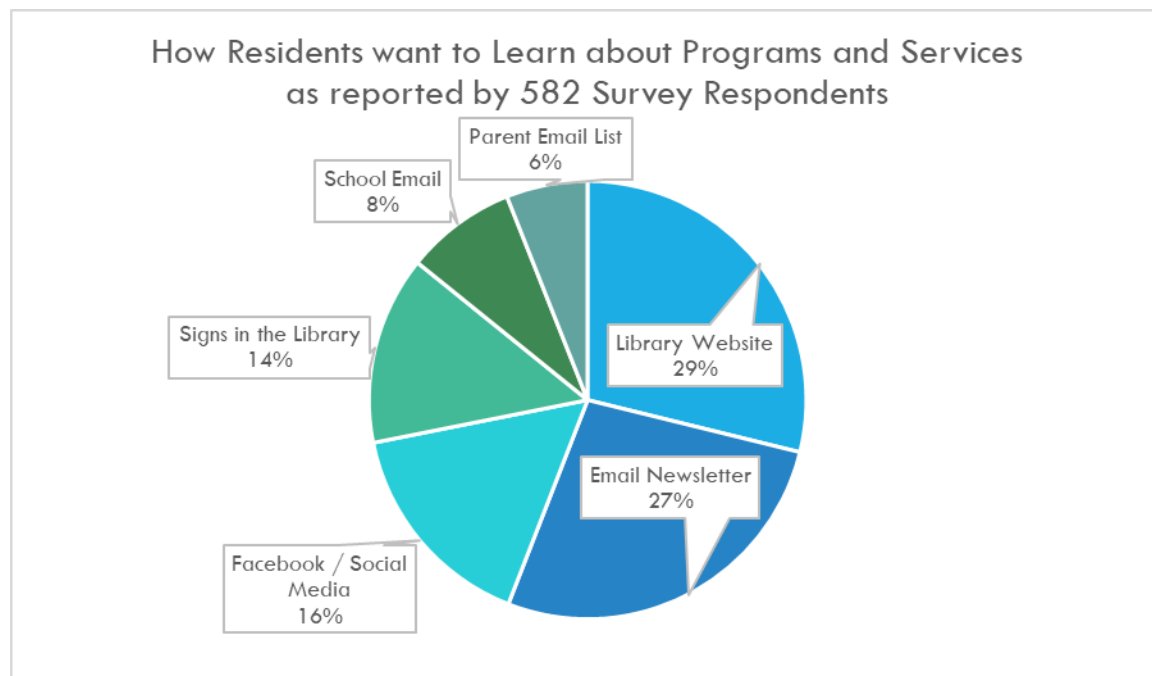
1. More evening & Saturday events for adults.	33.33%
2. More digital/online materials to borrow.	32.03%
3. More physical materials to borrow.	28.35%
4. More evening & Saturday events for children.	27.27%
5. More weekday events for adults.	24.68%
6. More virtual events.	15.15%
7. More evening/Saturday events for teens.	14.94%
8. More or different hours.	10.39%
9. Expanded services for neurodiverse people.	5.19%
10. Support & resources for people who speak languages other than English.	4.55%

“The library is a very important resource for families and to teach children about books! I would love to see the library offer more adult classes as well.” Topics mentioned included calligraphy, using Excel, flower arranging and activities geared more toward Millennials.



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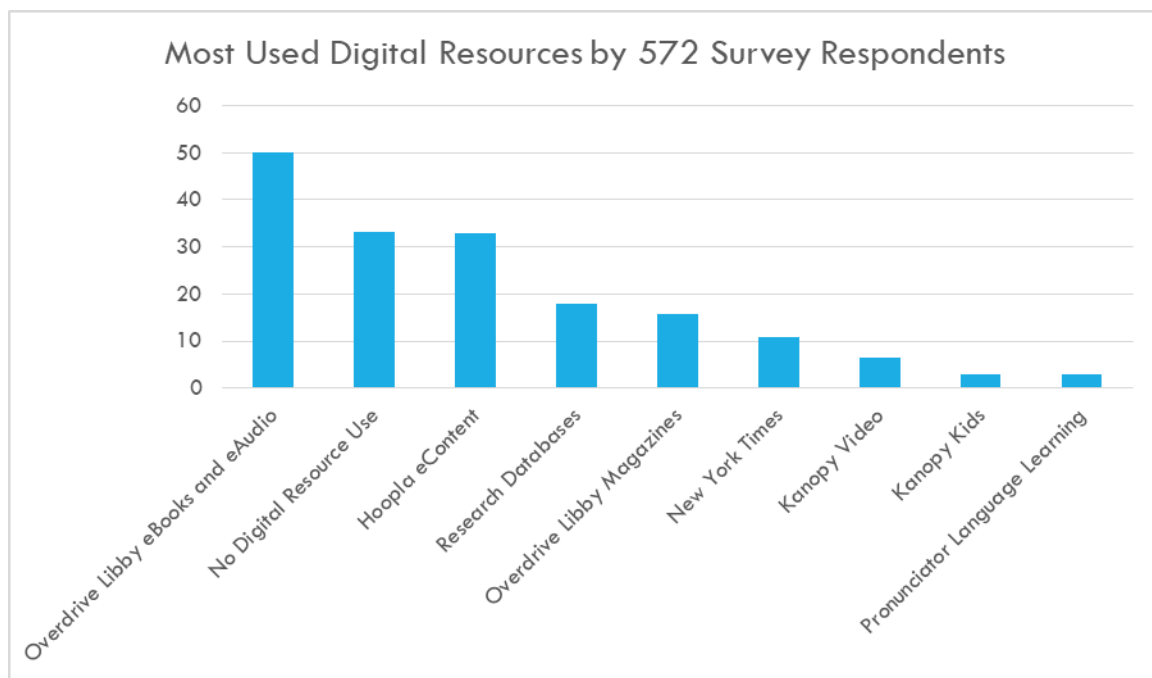
Current services are important to Abington residents. Survey respondents also want more of everything – physical and digital items to borrow, programs for all ages at varying times, more open hours and expanded services for underserved populations. The Library Priorities identified in this plan encompass these needs and the yearly Action Plans will target specific programs, collections and services to meet these needs.



The website “is helpful and gets the job done, but I feel like it could use a little update style-wise.” We need “a much more intuitive and mobile-focused website.”

Communication, digital and traditional, is a need identified by both the Survey and the Community Committee. The most pressing example is that the COVID Pandemic has caused clear confusion about APL hours – there were several survey respondents who were unaware that the Library is open four evenings per week until 8:30 PM. The need for an updated and mobile-friendly APL website was also requested by many. The Library Priorities identified in this plan encompass these needs and the yearly Action Plans will target specific programs, collections and services to meet these needs.





“I LOVE being able to choose from all the offered choices via the Libby app.”

“I am very grateful for these resources and I use them daily.”

Clearer communication about digital resource offerings is a need identified through Survey responses. It is concerning that some survey respondents were unaware of specific digital offerings such as access to the archives for *The Enterprise* and *The Ledger*. Even more concerning, some survey respondents were unaware of basic digital collections such as Overdrive/Libby and hoopla. The Library Priorities identified in this plan encompass these needs and the yearly Action Plans will target specific programs, collections and services to meet these needs.



Abington Public Library Board of Trustees

Henry DiCarlo, Chair

Betty Henderson, Vice-Chair

Laura Nuttall, Secretary (term ended April 2022)

Carrie Murray, Secretary (beginning May 2022)

Gail Bergin

Laura Brink (term began May 2022)

Mary Gillis

Gerry Haas

Barbara McLaughlin

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Library Administration

Deborah Grimmett, Director

Ruth Kowal, Library Consultant



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