



SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF NEW JERSEY
 One Vogt Drive, P.O. Box 6700, Bridgewater, NJ 08807
 T: 908.458.8400 F: 908.707.8324
 Visit SCLSNJ.org

SCLSNJ Strategic Plan Update: January through March 2022

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Here are the initiatives worked on over the last several months that specifically support our strategic priorities.

Promoting the Library as an impartial platform for creating MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

On January 1, 2022, SCLSNJ joined major library systems across the country in permanently ending the practice of charging late fees. Because of pandemic-related restrictions, the library system had been fines-free since March 2020. That experience enabled SCLSNJ to evaluate what effect fines had on borrowing and on the timely return of materials. That recent experience confirmed what the studies show: while having late fees has minimal effect on the return of books, it has a profound effect on borrowing, especially for children and for economically challenged households. SCLSNJ was happy to eliminate this barrier to borrowing for all library users.

Exploring new ways to SHAPE OUR SPACES to meet community needs

Together, with our partners at coLAB Arts, SCLSNJ welcomed two expert artists and educators into the branches. Libraries are incredibly important spaces for intergenerational and intercultural community collection and connections and SCLSNJ has embraced their role to document and share the stories of the Somerset County community. coLAB Arts was grateful to be able to play a small part in this work, through introducing art as an avenue for community development and storytelling. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded coLAB Arts and SCLSNJ a \$75,000 Our Town, creative placemaking grant for this exciting venture. Through this grant award, two artists-in-residence will begin work throughout 2022 at the Manville and Somerville branch locations.

WELCOMING new residents

SCLSNJ continues to look for new ways to welcome new residents through our programming, collections, and public service offerings.

Addressing the needs of SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

The Somerville branch received an anonymous donation of a Merlin Ultra Full HD Video Magnifier. This device is a reading aid to assist customers with visual impairments. The easy-to-use instrument allows the individual to increase or decrease magnification, select contrast levels, and alter color bandwidths to a variety of options including full-color, black and white intensities, blue and yellow, and more. The device is available for use anytime the branch is open and it does not require a library card for use. The donor wished to remain anonymous, and SCLSNJ was delighted to receive this amazing piece of equipment for use by the public.



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CORE SERVICES:

Core service activities are a part of normal SCLSNJ business. Here are a few recent highlights and examples.

Making PERSONALIZED CONNECTIONS between patrons and materials

In addition to all the great consumer magazines SCLSNJ offers via [Flipster](#), the library system also features some of the top library journals available to the public. Patrons can access “Library Journal,” “Publishers Weekly,” and “School Library Journal.” All three journals can be found in either the Academic or Literary categories. “Library Journal” is ideal if you are looking for coverage of current library topics, plus reviews. “School Library Journal” is a go-to resource for reviews and recommendations for kids and teens. “Publishers Weekly” delves into trends and multiple book reviews across all genres. For customers that wish to learn more about the library profession, these are helpful journals to explore.

Presenting programs that help community members CONNECT, EXPLORE, SHARE AND DISCOVER

SCLSNJ welcomed award-winning Graphic Novelist Jerry Craft in February. His special program for students in grades 2-7, was a virtual discussion that centered on his journey to becoming a bestselling, published author and illustrator. Craft also discussed the creative process behind his graphic novels as well as provided a drawing demonstration during a Q&A session. Craft has won numerous awards for his works including the Kirkus Prize, the Coretta Scott King Award, and the John Newbery Medal for the most outstanding contribution to children’s literature. “New Kid” was the first graphic novel in Newbery’s history to receive the honor.

Serving as a community GATHERING SPACE

Work on the library’s newest community gathering space, by way of the new Montgomery branch, continued its construction work. SCLSNJ wanted to keep the public fully informed during the exciting building project. The very first Montgomery branch construction walkthrough video with County Library Administrator Brian Auger and Montgomery Township Mayor Devra Keenan may also be viewed at: [SCLSNJ's Montgomery Groundbreaking Series Episode #1](#)
 You may watch the latest walkthrough videos that explore the technology plans for our new Montgomery branch location at: [SCLSNJ's Montgomery Groundbreaking Series Episode #2](#)

Promoting and supporting LIFELONG LEARNING

SCLSNJ hosted Somerset County’s 6th Annual Spelling Bee Spectacular on March 5 from 1-5 p.m. The event, at the Hillsborough branch, was an exciting and fun way to celebrate the community’s commitment to education and literacy, and to showcase the talents of students. Nineteen local schools participated in the event, with one student champion representing each school. The winner will be sent to the National Bee in Washington, D.C. in late spring 2022.



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Providing TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND EXPERTISE that meet the needs of the community

Starting in late May, SCLSNJ will be offering a service that allows patrons to print from their own devices, including mobile devices. This service will also allow patrons to print from the library's in-house only use Chromebooks. The library system is committed to having this service up and running for all 10 branches by the time the new Montgomery branch opens.

Creating opportunities that build Somerset County's ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Manville branch installed a charging station in the lobby to help customers charge their portable devices. The self-sanitizing station allows customers to securely leave their phones or tablets connected to a charging cord utilizing a digital locking function. With the installation of this charging station, customers can keep connected to their loved ones and other sources for help in the aftermath of an emergency or storm. Many customers, especially families with young children or tweens and teens looking for a place to gather after school, can easily spend an hour or more at the branch each time they visit. The same holds true for patrons using the library for work and job-seeking efforts. Having a place to charge up a phone securely while leisurely engaging with library resources or personal academic work is another value-added service that SCLSNJ provides.