

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE: October 9, 2006
FROM: Deb Futa
RE: Main Library Expansion Plans

The Main Library Planning team recently finished their fifth meeting. The focus of this team, as with all the building teams, is to shepherd the building program to completion and recommend schematic design to the Library Board.

Throughout the process, we've been guided by Dan and Sharon Wiseman's facilitation and we've had the opportunity to work with the architect, Charles Engberg, and the building program consultant, Bob Rohlf. We've been using the results of the staff questionnaires and interviews, the focus groups and the public surveys in our meetings to get a sense of how to go about changing Main Library. We have been very conscious that we're planning how our services will work for the next 20 years.

At the last meeting, we were able to make several decisions in order to move the building program forward. These decisions will have large implications both during and after the construction and renovation process because, as it turns out, we're not only redesigning our Main Library building, we're redesigning our services in a way that we hope will better serve both the staff and our patrons.

The information in this memo represents our best thinking up to this point, although many things can and will change. It's too early in the process to have worked out all the details. Those will come later. What we hope to accomplish now is to begin the process of communicating our plans.

Here are some of the basics that have guided the process so far:

- *Create a building that works for the staff and the public using a maximum of 154,000 square feet
- *Make the building more intuitive for users
- *Improve traffic flow for both patrons and vehicles
- *Make the collection more accessible
- *Make the building more welcoming
- *Separate noisy areas from quieter areas
- *Create adequate and appropriate workspaces for staff
- *Ensure functions that need to be near each other are situated that way
- *Use all the same staff but in different ways to accomplish these principles

Here's what we see:

New Parking

Main Library patrons as well as staff will park in a multi-level garage adjacent to the library building. We intend for this structure to be as self-service as possible and hope to be able to manage it without staffing. It's still too early to decide how people will enter and exit or whether they'll be able to walk from the parking garage into the library. Those decisions will be made in conjunction with our architect.

1st Floor

As patrons enter the first floor, they see the busy hub of a popular materials library which functions as its own department. Here, patrons get the feel of a large bookstore with plenty of attractive displays and new materials. The café occupies space near the entrance for patrons to gather, meet friends and have a snack. Adjacent to the café may be a small retail space for some of our used materials and perhaps some gift items. On this floor, patrons will find our most popular items. Audio-visual materials, fiction, new magazines and hot non-fiction will all be part of this new department, along with seating to curl up and read.

Children's Services also occupies a spot on the first floor and for safety, they have a more controlled entrance instead of being open to the entire floor. Their space is also scaled for children's use.

Special Services remains on the first floor and still has garage access for the Readmobile and access for Homebound volunteers. This department also needs additional office space and collection storage for Readmobile items as well.

OPACs will be attached to the ends of shelving ranges and will always be within sight as patrons move around ranges

Almost three quarters of our circulation comes from these collections, all of which will now be on the first floor. Circulation will be primarily self-service via RFID tagging and the Circulation staff will monitor and help patrons and issue library cards from a customer service desk. Returns will be handled automatically behind the scenes.

Most likely, the 1st floor will also have some type of information/greeting station that functions as a clearinghouse to answer basic directional and circulation questions.

2nd Floor

As patrons move up the stairs, things get a little quieter. On second floor, you'll find the Local History folks with a much larger department that contains display space for exhibits and artifacts. Local History also inherits the microfilm collection.

Second floor contains a quiet reading room with lots of comfortable furniture, tables and perhaps a fireplace. People are welcome to bring their laptops, read, or do quiet study.

Second floor may also have exhibit space for traveling exhibits as well as Library sponsored displays like the bookmark and photo contests.

As an anomaly to the quiet space, the teens will have their own full-fledged department on second floor with plenty of squashy seating and computers and possibly space for open gaming. Sound will need to be controlled through the building design.

Administration also moves to second floor. Publicity is reunited as a department with some adjacency to the Administrative offices.

3rd Floor

Third floor is where serious information service happens. Nonfiction, reference books and back issues of periodicals all move up to the third floor and will be managed by the Reference Department. Groups who need to work collaboratively can utilize small study rooms or alcoves within sight of the reference staff.

Reference also has the distinction of managing virtually all the public computers in the building, except for the OPACs and laptops. These computer stations will be staffed by a combination of Reference and technical staff who also handle the printing functions. Along with the open computer stations, it's likely the Rockne computers will move upstairs to a computer lab that can be open to the public between classes.

Lower Level

We don't envision many changes on the lower level except to try and gain some space for the Acquisitions staff and storage space for IT services. We're also conscious of the need for the loading dock to be close to these spaces via the freight elevator.

Miscellaneous

Central supplies will be moved closer to the shipping and receiving area.

The architect will try to place restrooms on all floors, as centrally located as possible and with visual control.

Next Steps

We know this is a lot to take in.

This is the time to ask questions and provide more feedback. Although we certainly haven't worked through all the details on how these new areas would function, we do need input from you.

Talk to the staff in your department. Talk to your manager. Talk to the team members. Ask questions via the suggestion box.

Linda Conyers will be meeting with each Public Service Department to listen and answer questions but please don't hesitate to contact us in between. You've heard our best thinking – now is the time for us to hear yours.