

**Responses to Public Comments and Questions at the
LIBRARY BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING**

Of September 25, 2002

Portsmouth City Hall - Conference Room A

Present: John O'Leary, John Grossman, Todd Hanson, Peter Bresciano, Suzanne Ford, Paul McEachern, John Bohenko, Carvel Tefft, Sherm Pridham

Not Present: Cary Rothenburger, Lenore Bronson, Claudia Morner, Kate Leith, Rai Bowles

- I. Chairman O'Leary welcomed attendees and noted that the purpose of the meeting is to get public input on the interior design of the new library. Subsequent meetings will seek input on the site, parking and traffic. O'Leary noted that the library design fits entirely on the JFK building lot.
- II. Library Director Pridham gave an overview of the architectural designs, noting that:
- The architects and staff have worked closely together as the pre-schematic design was developed.
 - The architects, New Library Building Committee and staff invite and welcome input.
 - The current model is a study model, a work in progress.
 - Every effort is being made to preserve the mature trees at the site. The study model that has been presented shows that all but two immature trees are preserved.
 - The building is designed
 - To be efficient for both the public and the staff.
 - With an atmosphere of a community living room.
 - With the busy side of the library facing the Middle School and the other public buildings along Parrott Avenue.
 - With the quiet side facing the Richards Avenue neighborhood.
 - To optimize the use of staff. On both the first and second floors there is good visual control from staff public desks.
 - To provide the more active services on the first floor.
 - The large meeting room can be used when the library is closed.
 - Tutoring and small meeting rooms are provided.
 - An attractive fence or wall will enclose the Children's Room courtyard.
 - The library courtyard will provide open air quiet study and will be enclosed by an attractive fence or wall.

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III. Questions, comments and ideas from public input

Children's Room

- If the Children's Room desk is moved away from the Children's Room entrance there is a wide entryway to the rest of the library for small children to leave the Children's Room unobserved.

We are very concerned with the security of the entire library, and, most assuredly, in the children's room. It would be our intent to place the desk at a controlling point in the children's room.

Some of the newer libraries that we have visited have chosen to separate the children's room from the lobby area by means of a glass wall with a door entrance. Based on the security concerns that have been raised, we will be considering such a possibility.

- Concern that children are able to leave through the entry into the children's courtyard. The children's courtyard should be secure from children leaving by themselves. Can the children's wing be flipped to the other side of the building away from the street?

The courtyard space is envisioned as an extension of the children's indoor program space and will be used under staff guidance. The courtyard will be completely surrounded by a fence/wall that will be at least 5' high. The gate will be controlled access and will not normally be used as an entrance and exit.

The design locations and adjacencies of the various spaces are integral to the building program. Swapping one area as large as the children's area with another area would necessitate a redesign of the library. We believe that there are better options (such as those depicted above) to address security concerns.

Reference/Information Services

- I am concerned about reference being on the second floor for the infrequent reference user.

The locations of library services and resources is a function of both the need for the library to be a two story building and determination, through the library's building program what library functions need to be adjacent to each other.

The first floor is designed as a more active, come and go area, the second floor more for extended use.

Also, please note the comment below.

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- I use reference a lot and the second floor is great since it will be quieter and there will be more privacy.

Thank you

Special/Local Collections

- How did you determine the size of the Special Collections area?

The materials housed in the current Special Collections space & those housed in various other parts of the current library were measured. The space needed for these collections, with room for modest expansion was then calculated.

- Have you looked at moving the historical materials owned by other city departments into Special Collections?

Yes. The new library will not be large enough to have a city records and archives department. Adding these functions to the library would greatly increase the need for additional space, staff, and funds for operation, equipment, and materials. We are certainly willing; however, to explore the inclusion of city owned historical materials that are presently not being housed in an appropriate setting.

- How accessible will Special Collections space be? Will the reading room space be open all the time the library is open?

The Special Collections space will be as accessible in the new library as it is now. The Special Collections reading room will be open when the library is open. Materials kept in protected areas will be available with the help of a librarian.

- I like historical materials on the second floor and the computer terminals.

Thank you

- Where are the copy machines near the Special Collections Room?

The copy machines will be located between Special Collections and Reference.

- Concern about glass front cases for historic materials and the issue of light damage to historic materials.

Any glass used will have ultra violet filters.

Audiovisual/Media Collections

- There is a lot of emphasis on audiovisual materials to the detriment of books. The AV space is the same size as fiction.

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The new library will have increased space for both fiction, and for the much used and requested AV collection. The space for fiction is almost double the space available in the current library. To serve its customers, the library both adds new formats and continues to provide a large array of books. Spaces in the new library are designed to be very flexible and will be changed over time, as the need arises.

- My daughter commutes and listens to many books on tape. Many people use the library for audio materials.

There will be increased space for audiovisual materials and increased ease of access to the audiovisual collections.

Library services

- What are the new services that a new library will allow?

In the new library we will be able to once again provide special programs of interest for our users. There will be meeting spaces for community organizations and study/meeting areas for small groups. The present library facility does not allow for an appropriate Young Adult area. Plans call for such an area to be developed. We will be able to provide more public computers. There will be a place to provide computer and internet instruction. A café, and greatly expanded comfortable seating will provide a community living room atmosphere. There will be display areas for community art and library artwork and artifacts. Online catalogs will be distributed throughout the building, on both the first and second floors. The building will be completely handicapped accessible. The children's room will be much larger than our current one and will have spaces for crafts, story times and special activities.

Café and Store

- The store and café is a bad idea.
- I don't think that a café and store are necessary.
- A library store would provide a focus for and be staffed by a Library Friends organization.

If a library store is included in the final plans, it will be a low-key store; selling library related items and will also provide space for library book sales. It will be set up in such a way that the space can be used for other purposes, if eventually desired.

Other libraries that we have visited have found the inclusion of a small café very popular and did not create an inconvenience. The space can be

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reassigned for other purposes, such as a reading area, if a café isn't found to be well received.

The intent would be to have the Friends of the Library and volunteers staff the store and café.

- A library store could sell library utility items such as computer disks, pencils, pens, and paper, in addition to library related small gift items.

Excellent suggestion

- I like the idea of a café in the library. It is quite a long distance to coffee shops in town.

That's the way we see it too.

Courtyard

- I worry about snow in the courtyards and cleaning up the litter.

We will have custodial service for the entire new building. The courtyard is a physical extension of the library and will be kept clean and maintained, as are all parts of the library. To make the courtyard available to patrons in good weather, the courtyard will be secured by a decorative fence or wall. Any access to the courtyard from the exterior is for maintenance purposes only.

Meeting Rooms

- It is important that the large public meeting room can be used after library hours.

Yes, it will be possible to use the meeting room after the library is closed. The meeting room has a separate entrance/lobby and access to public toilets is included in the design.

- Who has access to meeting rooms?

They are intended for use of Portsmouth residents and community organizations. The procedures for use will be developed in conjunction with city policies.

- The large meeting space shouldn't be an auditorium with fixed seats.

The seats will not be fixed seats.

- Are meeting spaces big enough for storage closets for equipment, chairs, etc.

Yes, storage closets will be part of the meeting room design.

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- The large meeting room looks like it will be the principal presentation to the public from the curb. This could present a large blank wall with no interesting features from the curbside view.

The meeting room is the largest space in the library and as an important space will be sculpted into an anchor of the library and made visually interesting from the outside. There are many possibilities we are exploring. The library design, as presented to date, deals with general layout and distribution of library functions/spaces. The exterior walls have not been developed and windows have not been shown yet.

- Make the second floor meeting rooms accessible after hours.

This would require additional separate access, which isn't within the new library's budget.

- The large meeting room should be dividable.

The present plans do not call for the possible partitioning off of the large meeting room into multiple smaller rooms. This is an option that can be explored if such a need arises and the funds to effect such a change are made available. The library will have other smaller rooms available for smaller meetings.

This and That

- I like the terrific/excellent ratio of books to space.

Thank you.

- The library has an intimate feel. I think it is great.

Thank you.

- More restrooms are needed on the second floor and they should be closer to meeting rooms.

This will be studied and increased, if feasible.

- How close is the library to the street?

The library is fairly close to the curb on Parrott Ave. , as is often true and desired in an urban setting such as Portsmouth. The children's courtyard, although close to the street, will be enclosed and have controlled access and will be used as an extension of the indoor children's programming space under the guidance of a library staff member.

- Is the architect familiar with fire lane requirements for municipal buildings?

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The architectural team is required to design the library according to applicable codes, and is subject to the plan's approval by the Portsmouth Fire Chief.

- What is the wheelchair accessibility?

The new library will be fully wheelchair and handicap accessible.

- Will there be a basement?

There will be a small basement for utility connections and mechanical equipment.

- Will further expansion be possible with this design?

Limited expansion will be possible.