

LIBRARY 21 COMMITTEE

5th Meeting

July 11, 1996
Collins Branch Library

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Nancy B. Woods at 6:37 P.M. in the Children's Room of the Daniel P. Collins (Mount Auburn) Branch Library at 64 Aberdeen Avenue

Members in attendance:

Nancy B. Woods, Co-Chair
William Barry
Ruth Butler
Karen Carmaen
Ed DeAngelo
John Gintell
David Szlag
Robert Winters
Richard Rossi, Co-Chair
Lois Casassa (for Patrick Murphy)
Susan Clippinger
Susan Flannery
Charles Sullivan

Co-Chair Woods briefly reviewed the items on the evening's agenda and asked the committee members to introduce themselves for the benefit of the audience.

The minutes of the June 27th meeting were approved, with the directive that the Mid-Cambridge Park Chronology presented by Joan Lorentz be read into the minutes.

Co-Chair Woods informed the committee that the Library Board of Trustees would be meeting on evening of July 18th if any members wished to attend.

The committee agreed that a form letter should be drafted to acknowledge the letters of comment received from the public. Karen Carmaen volunteered to draft a letter and work with Lisa Peterson to put it into final form.

PRESENTATION: "A Vision for the City Library System"

Geneva Malenfant urged the committee to think in terms of the library needs of the entire city population, not just those persons currently using library services. Focus should be placed not on the number of residents who have library cards but upon those who do not. A library system supported financially by the entire city should serve the entire city. The committee should look at the non-cardholders and why they don't use the library. The committee should look to the Andrew Carnegie library vision. Services to new immigrants are particularly important. The library should be an

access point for adult self education, especially for immigrants and foreign language speakers.

In the discussion following the presentation, a point was made that a large portion of the city's population consists of university students who may not get public library cards if their needs are met by the university libraries. Another speaker felt that at some periods in their lives people find themselves too busy to use libraries, while at other periods they may use them extensively. It was also pointed out that while some university people may not use the public library, their families may be heavy users. Some students use the university libraries for their educational and research needs, but also use the public library for recreational resources.

STUDY GROUP REPORTS:

Library Systems in the U.S. Study Group:

Bill Barry and Ruth Butler reported that the group had begun visiting new libraries in the area, including Newton, Arlington, Plymouth, and Everett. All of these have become active centers of their communities. The group will be continuing with other visits before putting together their report.

The group would like to profit from the hindsight of others. Among other things, they are asking the libraries visited about what they now realize was done wrong or what they now would do differently. Answers have frequently included inadequate children's and computer spaces. The Everett library, in particular, lamented the lack of adequate computer resources.

Discussion included the need to identify what communities with similar ethnic populations are including in their new libraries. Other cities for investigation were discussed. New Haven, San Antonio, Quincy, Worcester, and Springfield were suggested because they are involved in new projects. Lowell, Wareham, Somerville, and Lenox were suggested in terms of their ethnic population mix. Arlington, VA was recommended as very similar to Cambridge. Also Berkley and San Francisco (the latter being of a much greater size). It was noted that the presence of an immigrant population was only one factor for consideration.

Joan Krizack, who will be in that area on an upcoming trip, volunteered to visit the Berkley and San Francisco libraries and collect information.

The group will work at putting together a brief standard questionnaire which can also be mailed to libraries not accessible for visits. The Committee encourages anyone traveling to visit the local libraries and report back.

Daryl Mark, Associate Librarian for Children's Services, said that the Children's librarians had visited 5 newer libraries, studying their new Children's Rooms, and could provide the committee with pictures and notes from those visits.

Public Process Study Group:

The group presented the committee with copies of a "Library 21 Process Framework" draft outline. Ted Burton guided the committee through the various process elements illustrated on the chart which provides a framework both for gaining input to the committee and also for feeding information back into the community.

Fran Wirta, who has volunteered to work on the Neighborhood Work Groups element, reported that Neighborhood Work Groups are presently being organized in Neighborhood 4, Cambridgeport/Riverside, North Cambridge, and East Cambridge.

All of the process elements are fluid and at this point only in draft form.

General discussion included:

The need to complete a final mission/opportunity statement.

Concern that the process should not so large and open ended that it becomes unwieldy.

The need to plug the process into a time-frame.

A need for press releases and a public relations program to encourage participation if the process is to be successful.

Looking into hiring a consultant to do a city-wide library survey as opposed to the more limited Cohen Main Library Survey. Others felt that it was too early to hire a consultant and that the committee needs to work through an extensive public process first.

A possible need to hire a consultant/assistant to facilitate the input process.

A year not being sufficient time for neighborhood work/study groups to be organized and go into the issues in sufficient depth. Others felt that the committee's work should be completed in no more than one year.

The need to start identifying target dates for various elements of the process, possibly beginning at the next meeting.

Computer Role Study Group:

John Gintel reported that the Library 21 website has been established and is accessible via WWW.CI.Cambridge.MA.US, the city's home page; getting on the home page, click on libraries, then Cambridge Public Library. It includes agendas, minutes, and a comment book. As more information gets placed on the site, we should get more reaction and responsive input.

Information technology (computers and networking) can provide a way

of going to the library from office or home without physically going to the library. From the library it can provide a way of going out into the world to other libraries and information resources. The library can be a place for equalizing access to computer technology, meeting the needs of those who can not afford home services.

The group will look at what other libraries are planning in terms of information technology, establish links for identifying what is happening in this field, and try to envision future trends as far as is possible. More volunteers for the groups work will be needed.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLINS BRANCH LIBRARY:

Kathy Fitzgerald, the Collins Branch Librarian, describing the branch services, said that most of its users also use the Main Library. The branch is used for quick visits and browsing, and is most heavily used by children and seniors. As a small scale operation, the branch has a homey feel and can provide a personal touch in relations with users that would be impossible on a larger scale. The branch patrons use the Main Library for their more sophisticated needs and also support Main Library expansion.

OTHER BRANCH LIBRARIANS:

Library Director Flannery introduced 3 Branch Librarians from other branches who were present and each spoke briefly regarding their own branch.

Linda Haines, Boudreau Branch/Observatory Hill Librarian, said that the most frequent complaint expressed by the patrons of the Boudreau Branch was the lack of parking, both at the branch and at the Main Library. The Boudreau Branch is the smallest in the system as well having the newest facility, occupying on a condominium basis about 1800 square feet in a Harvard condominium complex which replaced the building where the branch had previously rented space. Services are geared to the extremely small amount of space, but the branch circulation is the third highest in the system. It is a neighborhood branch serving a very sophisticated reading population which also uses the Main Library heavily. Among the branch expectations from an expanded Main Library are an improved book delivery system and system for faxing of information from the Main Library Reference Department to meet neighborhood information requests.

Judy Swarden, Cardinal O'Connell Branch/East Cambridge Librarian, said that a stronger main library could only help, not hurt, her branch and its services. She identified the greatest needs of her branch as expressed by its users as being expanded hours and handicapped access. Branch patrons were described as a mix between non-automobile owners who use only the O'Connell Branch and deliveries there from the Main Library and others who are heavy cross-users, frequenting both this branch and the main library or other branch libraries.

Jessie Rabban, O'Neill/North Cambridge Branch, described her branch, connected to the Fitzgerald School, as having a great deal of neighborhood community involvement and programming. The circulation at her branch has tripled in 7 years and she said that the greatest need of her users now is of a space in the branch for quiet reading.

In response to a question concerning children's requests for foreign language materials, it was reported that children's materials in foreign languages were variously distributed among the 7 library buildings reflecting local circumstances (for instance, a large collection of children's books in Portuguese at the Valente Branch) and that long-term deposit collections in various languages were borrowed as needed from the Boston Public Library under a state funded program.

RESOURCES FOR THE COMMITTEE:

Co-Chair Wood reported that Margaret Bush of the Simmons College School of Library Science was enthusiastic about helping the committee.

Anne Wolpert, Head Librarian, M.I.T. can provide meeting space, assistance in developing focus groups and surveys to find out what constituents want, and is very willing to help.

Malcolm Hamilton, at the JFK School, Harvard University, is willing to be a resource, especially for e-mail issues.

The next meeting will be July 25 in the Lewis Room of the Central Square Branch Library at 45 Pearl Street.

Patience Jackson, the library building expert of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners office will be invited to speak at the next meeting and/or possibly someone from the M.I.T. Media Lab.

Co-Chair Woods brought the meeting to a close at 8:50 P.M.