

LIBRARY 21 COMMITTEE

6th Meeting

July 25, 1996
Central Square Branch Library

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Nancy B. Woods at 6:48 P.M. in the Jerome T. Lewis Room of the Central Square Branch Library at 45 Pearl Street.

Members in attendance:

Nancy B. Woods, Co-Chair
Ruth Butler
Karen Carmean
Ed DeAngelo
John Gintell
Karen Kosko
David Szlag
Richard Rossi, Co-Chair
Roger Boothe
Susan Clippinger
Susan Flannery
Susan Maycock (for Charles Sullivan)

Co-Chair Woods asked committee members to introduce themselves for the benefit of the audience. Following this, she briefly reviewed the items on the agenda for the evening.

A draft of minutes of the July 11th meeting was distributed, with a request that members submit comments to Co-chair Woods in sufficient time for a revised version to be distributed prior to the next meeting.

Co-Chair Rossi told the committee that the City Council feels that a good process is in place, one that is working. Councillors are hearing approving comments from people who feel that their issues are being aired. He also expressed the City Manager's pleasure with the committee and conveyed Mr Healy's thanks to the members for their initiative and hard work.

Co-Chair Woods distributed the draft of a progress report summarizing the committee's accomplishments from May 16th to July 25th. She will finalize the report for submission to the City Manager and City Council.

STATUS OF WORK GROUPS

Public Process Work Group: (John Gintell, David Szlag, Karen Carmean, Robert Winters, Ted Burton) John Gintell reported that several documents are in process. He distributed the draft of a

suggested brochure describing the process and summarizing ways for the public to communicate with the committee. A final version can be put on the web site.

Discussion of the brochure draft included:

- need to clarify the wording of the 4th paragraph on the right hand side of the interior
- need for larger print
- distribution - will it be mailed? handed out at meetings? placed in public spaces for pick up?
- not sufficiently self-explanatory for persons who have not been previously involved, needs expansion, elimination of acronyms
- adding the address to paragraph concerning contacting the committee, even though it is listed elsewhere

Other Libraries Work Group: (Bill Barry, Ruth Butler, Rita Richmond) Ruth reported that in five visits to selected local libraries they had viewed 3 building additions and 2 completely new buildings, the oldest project being done in 1991. The librarians of the sites were interviewed and a report is being drafted of what was learned. Three of the sites visited were especially relevant: Everett is a smaller city but the library doubled its size and is architecturally very successful. Waltham is probably the most parallel to Cambridge. Newton, a smaller city, projected the same library space needs as Cambridge. All three are considered very successful by their communities, a subject of community pride, and have experienced a considerable increase in library business.

The group would like to arrange a bus trip to these three sites for the committee, city councillors, and others as space allows. The bus could swing back through Cambridge between sites to drop off or pick up those whose schedules couldn't accommodate all three visits. October 19th is the suggested tour date.

Co-chair Woods reminded the committee and audience of the opportunity for those traveling during their vacations to visit the local libraries of their travel destinations if these are appropriate for comparison purposes. A list of standard questions will be provided for those wishing to make such visits. An audience member suggested that the group visit the Lincoln Public Library which has a recent addition designed by Graham Gund. Ruth reported that Lincoln Librarian at the time of planning and building the addition is now the Director of the Newton Public Library, with whom the group had discussion.

Neighborhood Study Groups Group: (Fran Wirta) Fran Wirta reported that the establishment of the neighborhood groups is in process. The group is interested in getting participants and contacting and involving institutions and agencies. Questions are being developed to raise with the groups. Meetings will be starting about the third week in September. They are looking for input.

A suggestion was made that the city Cable Department produce a program to create public interest. This raised a further suggestion of a program featuring a video tour of the libraries to be visited

on the bus trip, also photo exhibits of same to be placed in branch libraries, etc. Co-Chair Rossi said that he will talk with the Cable Department.

Computers and Networking Group: (John Gintell, Pat ??, Lisa Peterson, Bill Barry) John said that the group had room for more people. He reported that he had met with Elizabeth Dickinson, Head of reference Services for the Cambridge library system, to get new views of how the internet fits into the program of her department. He also met with Valerie Roman of the city's M.I.S. () Department.

He has been looking for library/computer information on the internet and has identified up-coming conferences on the topic in Ann Arbor and Pittsburgh. He would like to propose sending a group member and a librarian to each, but this depends upon funding availability. The cost would be about \$1,000/person/conference.

The funding question initiated general discussion which included:

- A belief was expressed that such funds were better saved to expend on library improvements and the need to avoid unnecessary expenditures
- The regret stressed by the libraries visited over inadequate computer planning may make this an area justifying some costs.
- The library and MIS have small conference budgets but these are already committed for specific conferences
- Co-Chair Rossi indicated that this would be a valid request to make to the City Manager.
- The library is in the process of filling a new position for a library computer manager.
- The library is prepared to send someone to the second conference, but not the first due to scheduling difficulties.
- Perhaps Harvard or MIT have someone going to the conference who could report back to the committee.

- If the administrations of the two universities could be persuaded to make an official endorsement of assistance to the committee as an "in-kind" service to the community, it might encourage individual professors to volunteer their services.
- Are there proceedings available of the spring conference at Harvard on libraries & computers?

The Co-chairs met last week with the staff of the Community Learning Center, the Youth Center and the Senior Center for the purpose of establishing a dialogue with people in contact with the non-users of the library. This was a first step toward engaging non-users in the process and exploring ways of encouraging them in library use. Another meeting is being scheduled with the housing authority. A good start has been made.

Ed DeAngelo at the last meeting proposed establishing a group to focus on how to engage teenage kids in the process, to identify library services wanted by these kids, and/or what would bring them

into the libraries. He would like volunteers to be part of this group.

Co-chair Woods identified the need of also dealing with children of the kindergarten through 8th grade age range. Susan Twarog and Karen Kosko have begun organizing for this.

CENTRAL SQUARE BRANCH

Mark Scott, Branch Librarian, introduced the branch saying the most challenging aspect of its work was dealing with the wide diversity of backgrounds and needs of its use who range from published authors to people seeking information on becoming citizens. The top circulating books are those on computers and those addressing everyday "How To..." questions. There is a broad range of interests and needs for both children and adults.

The branch's twentieth anniversary celebration last month drew many people, as does the annual Martin Luther king commemoration. A series of "Making A Living" programs this year, involving displays, books, and a 5 part discussion series led by historian Robert Hayden was very successful and fitted well with area interests.. The Jerome T. Lewis meeting room is the only public meeting room in the library system and is widely used by both the library and the community.

There is some use by high schoolers but much more by elementary school children. A number of children have adopted the branch as an after school home. The children's room is filled every afternoon. There is much participation in afternoon activities and some children have formed their own discussion groups based on special interests.

The branch is the site of the library's literacy program which accommodates 25 pairs of students and tutors meeting usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the academic year. The program is complimentary to that of the Community learning center and very successful; people come seeking it out without advertisement.

Following his introduction, Mark conducted committee members and audience on a tour of the branch.

On reassembling after the tour, the audience was divided into 5 groups, each including members of the committee as facilitators, to address the same set of 5 questions. Coming together again, a spokesperson for each group presented various answers as follows:

Question 1: Do you have a favorite memory of using the library - what is it?

- story hour as a child
- =bringing children to the main library
- a scary memory - going to the branch located in police station to return overdue books (fearing arrest)
- growing up in an area with segregated libraries
- research in 5th & 6th grades, realizing there could be more

- than one side to an issue
- being reprimanded in the library
- getting a special book at the Main library
- taking kids to the local branch library
- gathering with community members
- volunteering at library as a kid
- movies, Boston Public library
- saturday morning programs
- an oasis of cool green

Question 2: How do you or people you know use the library now?
Which branch do you go to?

- research
- reading magazines
- borrowing books
- writing (a quiet, air conditioned spot)
- bringing children
- reference
- taking out books for kids, 2-3/week
- checking out books
- large print books (go to B.P.L. for these)
- personal reference
- events, meetings
- avid reader, 7-10/week
- new books
- requests
- 1 hour/day on internet
- children's room

- reference to solve problems
- books on tape
- =reference room, periodicals
- requesting books from other libraries
- historical collection - genealogy
- light reading as well as serious
- puppet shows

- =Main Library (18)
- Widner Library at Harvard (1)
- Central Square Branch (2)
- Collins Branch (1)

Question 3: How would your life be different if there was no library?

- loss of information
- too expensive to buy books, esp children's books
- wouldn't have entre into info world
- less culturally rich
- would be busy starting a library
- networking, scanning, down-loading

- =do more with what have, incremental
- privatize
- =do a lot more traveling
- property values would fall

Question 4: If you could ask the library to have or do more things for you, what would they be?

- more copies of new fiction
- more programs
- more music programs
- an auditorium
- provide a quiet space
- more comfortable furniture
- handicapped
- better research material, up to date
- better bathroom
- public meeting space
- quiet, comfortable space
- new civic center Central Square
- expanded computer center
- lots of small meeting spaces
- new ideas/information
- computer access
- help democracy
- computer access/introduction to what available/internet
- proper public reading space, not crowded
- be serious resource, better than what it is
- =good books
- access
- electronic access, but people may not know how
- better place to read and study
- help elders finding info they need on needed services
- working with business
- larger selection of books

Question 5: Think about the physical setting for a library -- what would you like it to be?

- have a civic presence
- family center (different from research/study)
- within walking distance
- a quiet area
- close to all neighborhoods
- green space
- aesthetic, pleasing, clean space
- transportation access
- a monument with beautiful aspects

SYMPOSIUM: A televised symposium, Joan Krizak chairperson, is planned for October 23 as part of the city's 150th anniversary celebration. The theme will be the multiple ways of looking at planning a public library.

FALL MEETINGS: Fall meetings will be on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM. The first two will be on September 11th and 25th.

Co-chair Woods adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.