

LIBRARY 21 COMMITTEE

8th Meeting
September 18, 1996

Children's Room
Main Library

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Nancy B. Woods at 6:45 P.M. in the Children's Room of the Main Library at 449 Broadway.

Members in attendance:

Nancy B. Woods, Co-Chair
Karen Carmean
Ed DeAngelo
John Gintell
Karen Kosko
David Szlag
Emily West
Robert Winters
Richard Rossi, Co-Chair
Roger Boothe
Susan Clippinger
Susan Flannery
Andre Meyer
Pat Murphy
Charles Sullivan

Co-Chair Woods thanked committee members and observers for coming out in such poor weather and asked the committee members to introduce themselves for the benefit of the audience. She then briefly reviewed the items to be covered in the evening's agenda.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Minutes: To save time for other items on the agenda, Co-Chair Woods asked the committee members to relay any corrections and additions to the Minutes of the September 4th meeting to Don York.

Upcoming Meetings Schedule: Co-Chair Woods asked Ted Burton and Karen Carmaen to run briefly through the schedule as illustrated on a flip-chart easel. The tentative October and November meeting schedule of dates, locations, and topics is as follows:

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

October 2: New Senior Center
-Ann Wolpert, Director of MIT Libraries
.Gathering data from constituencies
.Relationship between MIT and CPL

-Format for final report, David Szlag

October 16 Haggerty School Library
-Focus on Cambridge Public Schools,
Tech. 2000, and relationship to library

November 6: Area Four Youth Center
-Listen to Teens - What do they want?
-TBD: Human Services/Nonprofit focus
Disabled Needs
Business Needs

November 20: TBD
-Inventory of city owned space, including the
schools
-Technology

Area Four Fair: Co-Chair Woods announced that she had volunteered to man a table at the fair, Saturday, September 21, along with the Valente Branch Librarian. People will be able to sign-up for library cards and she will ask them about the library. A suggestion was made that this could also be done at the Family Day at Danehy Park,

SYMPOSIUM: Joan Krizack reported that the planning is well advanced for the symposium on October 23, which is entitled The Public Library in the 21st Century: An Exploration of Possibilities.

The keynote speaker will be Patricia Smith, columnist for the Boston Globe. There will be two panels: "The Public Library - Mission and Services" and "The Public Library - Planning the Future".

BUS TOUR OF THREE NEW LIBRARIES: The bus has been chartered for the October 19th tour. It will depart from the Main Library at 10:00 A.M. for Everett. Returning to the Main Library around noon, where there will be a box lunch provided by the city, the bus will depart again for afternoon visits to Waltham and Newton. Because space is limited to 44 persons, those wishing to attend should call Emily West at 497-5431 to secure seats. If there is significant additional demand, a later, second trip will be scheduled.

WORKGROUP UP-DATES:

Neighborhood Study Groups: Fran Wirta reported that two meetings have taken place - Riverside/Cambridgeport and East Cambridge. Many good points were made. In October there will be a West Cambridge meeting at the Collins branch and a North Cambridge meeting at the O'Neill Branch. There has also been discussion regarding the Agassiz Neighborhood. A second set of meetings to take place in November will focus on prioritizing the recommendations.

Technology Workgroup: John Gintell reported that he and Elizabeth Dickinson of the Library's Reference Department will be attending a conference on library technology in Pittsburgh. A pre-conference session will be devoted to "Technology proofing your library for the next 25 years".

The group will be meeting on Tuesday, October 3, at City Hall. The topic for consideration will be: If the city has a responsibility for equalized access to information technology, how many public access terminals are needed and where should they be located. Also to be considered is how to develop reliable estimates. Any one interested is invited to attend and participate. An audience member urged the need to learn to live with an acceptable level of obsolescence, using older but still usable and less expensive or free equipment.

Teenage Readers Workgroup: Ed DeAngelo asked all interested in assisting in the work of getting input from teenagers to attend the groups meetings.

Other Libraries Workgroup: The planned bus trip having already been reported, Co-Chair Woods reported for Bill Barry that the group had reviewed the lists of comparable libraries and narrowed them down to a single master list of relevant libraries to contact. She suggested that each committee member "adopt" one of the libraries on the list and follow up the standard inquiry letter being sent with phone calls, etc. to generate further information. Volunteers would also be welcomed.

Kindergarten - Eighth Grade Children Workgroup: Karen Kosko and Susan Twarog reported on the progress of their questionnaire development and the results of the sample trial of a draft questionnaire with children participating in the library's summer reading program. The survey is being revised and the new version should be ready next week. Input was requested on how to most effectively proceed with the survey, reach classroom children, etc. and a general discussion resulted with many suggestions and recommendations.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES - GUEST SPEAKERS:

Rob Riordan, Language Arts Coordinator, K-12th Grade, for the Cambridge School System. Mr. Riordan spoke of the importance of access to information as an issue for both schools and libraries. He felt that librarians have to become network creators as well as guides. Discussing the value of shared programs between the library and the schools, he referred to the opportunity given to high school students to meet with author Gwendolyn Brooks as an example of successful school/library cooperation benefiting the students. On a personal level he described the value to his son of participating in the library's Chess Club and of participating in chess games with international opponents through the library's Internet program.

Bob Goodwin, speaking for the city's Youth Program, said that as a father of three he is very appreciative of the value of the library in the lives of his children. Addressing service needs from the perspective of the Area 4 Youth Center which serves about 1,000 youths age 9 to 19, he felt that computers are key. In the future he would like to see some of the Youth Center curriculum taking place at the library. He mentioned present effective inter-agency involvement with Philicia Harris of the library doing "Nightstop" at the high school and the library's participation in the Area IV Fair.

Andrew Spooner, also with the Area IV Youth Center, spoke from the audience to address the importance of visits to the library as part of the center's work with youths. For children who have no background or experience in relating to institutions, visits to the library can provide such experience in dealing with institutions in a non-hostile or threatening setting. In his experience there are two factors necessary to make this work. The library and librarians must be seen as welcoming and the library must have sufficient space for use by a group of teens who are not used to being in libraries and whose behavior could overwhelm a small space and create problem situations with other users. Given these two factors, the experience can be invaluable, developing self confidence and experience in institutional use as well as leading to possible later individual use of libraries by these visitors.

Judy Bibbins from the Community Schools program spoke of the value of library space for performances and workshops growing out of the Community Schools programs and the Cambridge Performance Project..

Another audience member advised examining the experiences of local libraries in children's space planning, looking into the successes and failures of planning in this area as experienced with such new libraries as Waltham and Newton.

TOUR OF CHILDREN'S ROOM:

Daryl Mark, Coordinator of Children's Services for the Cambridge Public Library, was introduced and asked to say a few words about the library's children's services before commencing the tour. Ms. Mark described the just finished Summer Reading Program which drew more children than ever before. 1,533 children read 18,487 books. This summer included a separate full reading program for Young Adults in the 7th to 12th grades. These participants earned credits for books read and at the end of the program were able to expend the credits in an auction for items donated by the Cambridge Merchants Association.

She described the many children's room activities and programs which although successful are limited by the restricted space available. The children's circulation from this space is approximately 17,500 volumes per month. The library averages 55 children's programs a month for an audience averaging about 2,000.

MS. Mark stressed during the tour that a separate Young Adults space is needed as is a Young Adult's librarian.

Ms. Mark read briefly from a letter received from Children's Room users Phoebe Wells and Tadek Gaj, reflecting their use of the room with their children and thoughts they wished to convey to the committee. Copies of the letter will be made available.

Following the committee's tour of the room, the meeting adjourned at 8:30.