

## **Creating a Year-Long, City-Wide, Library Celebration:**

Using the Opening of the New Building as a Platform for Increasing Public Awareness,  
Appreciation, and Use of the City's Library System

*Summary of Discussion at a Joint Meeting  
of the Cambridge Library's Trustees and "Friends"*  
1/22/07

### **I) Attending:**

Trustees: Janet Axelrod, William Barry, Andre Mayer, Nancy Woods

Friends: Alice Chen, Patsy Baudoin, Judy Elstein, Luise Erdmann, Karen Kosko, Joan Krizack,  
Karen Lewis, Debra Mandel, Nancy Nyhan, Frances Srulowitz, Frances Tenenbaum, Susan  
Twarog, Winnie Williams

Staff: Susan Flannery, Library Director; Bertha Chandler, Assistant Director for Human  
Resources

Facilitator and Summary Writer: Steve Miller

### **II) Process:**

A series of small group brainstorming sessions and full-group reports and evaluations led to the following ideas, which are intended as a starting point for additional discussions among all the participants and their organizations. The goal is to be ready to roll out the chosen programs, actions, etc. when the new library building opens – probably in 2008.

### **III) How the New Building will be Different:**

- A) Better, more comfortable, more flexible space.
- B) New resources that will improve old programs and facilitate new ones.
- C) New resources for use by community groups.
- D) More welcoming and useful to a broad range of populations.

- Full disability access
- Indoor access directly from garage
- Increased energy efficiency
- Elevators
- Air conditioning
- Glassed-in spaces looking out into the park
- Outdoor reading spaces
- Gracious and spacious seating areas suitable for conversation
- Quiet seating areas
- Silent study room
- Café
- Self-checkout
- Young adult room
- Separate program rooms for children's services
- Over 50 public access computers
- Computer instruction space
- Wireless access throughout building
- Cambridge Historical Room and collection
- Public meeting rooms of varying capacities: 4, 8, 12, 20, 100, 200 (large room have kitchen access and can be set-up for performances)
- More storage space.
- Ellen Driscoll and Liam Gillick artwork.

### **IV) Possible Goals:**

- Make people aware of the new building's positive attributes.

- Make people aware of new resources available at the library.
- Help people understand what they can get by actually going to the library, even in this technological, on-line age.
- Promote the library as a “destination” – the place to go (and be seen!)
- Increase awareness of, and interaction with, the library by city’s schoolteachers.
- Increase awareness and use of the library by broader segments of city population.
- Find “snazzy” ways to connect with kids.
- Celebrate the branches as well as the main.
- Increase public awareness of expertise and assistance available from library staff.
- Highlight the rich history and legacy of the library (and it’s collection of Cambridge-related historical and literary materials).

## **V) Possible Activities to Accomplish the Goals**

→ *Items marked with an arrow were selected as highest priority by subgroups.* ←

### Special Events & Activities

- A full weekend of (“Deval Patrick-esque”) inaugural activities, including a fabulous Gala, and have some of them outside the library at places that people already go – churches, clubs, restaurants, stores, etc.
- Golden Book hunt
- Have a “march of the books” back to the new building from Longfellow
- Have a parade
- Conduct tours before the official opening to create anticipation among neighborhood “opinion leaders.
- After it opens, conduct tours to introduce the public to how the library works (“behind the stacks – the secret places (and history) of our library”)
- Have a laser/light show that connects all the branches.
- Pony rides on the park in front of the library.

### PR & Outreach

- Article in City Manager’s newsletter
- Mention on City Website
- Get signs in front of city hall
- Banners over city streets
- Podcast all events so those who can’t come can be involved.
- Invite CCTV to cover events,
- Create a video archive (stored at the library!) of people’s comments about what a library means to them
- Send Bamboo on the road, with goodies (such as cards or fortune cookies with “meet me at the library” messages)
- Get ads in MBTA subways and busses (the space is free, but we’d have to pay for the printing)
- Use a PR firm to secure media placement (NYTimes, TV, etc)
- Create a “portable” presentation about the library system.
- Create a “card deck” with library themes, or containing facts about the library.

### Connecting To Children & Schools

- Create Youth-oriented podcasts & blogs
- Invite school field trips to visit library before & after the opening.
- Have a famous (local?) children’s author(s) cut the ribbon on new children’s room(s), perhaps involve Candlewick Publishers and local bookstores.

- Have a series of teacher in-service training sessions about new (and old) library facilities and services.
- Host a series of “family sleepovers” or “pajama parties” with films, book readings, dramatic performances (perhaps with the local Underground Theater group), “flashlight tours”, and book hunts.

#### Outreach to Specific Groups

- Invite community groups to hold one of their events, or just hold one of their regular meetings, in the new library to experience the facilities.
- Work with groups to co-sponsor thematic events of special interest to their members (e.g. access issues, cultural events)
- Work with groups to co-sponsor film series of interest to their members (e.g. sports groups, music groups, ethnic culture)
- Work with groups to co-sponsor author series of interest to their members
- Work with a variety groups to host different kinds of “festivals” in front of and inside the library, with relevant displays of library materials.
- Translate materials into other languages.

#### Involving the public

- Create methods for citizens to talk about what a library means to them, their impressions of the new building (or of the branches) – using slips of paper, wall posters, video and audio recordings.
- Have a series of “pot luck dinners” at the library around special events (“a book in every pot”)
- Have a “progressive dinner” going to each of the branches (perhaps with each “course” focused on some theme of relevance to the branch or its neighborhood).
- Sponsor events that focus on specific parts of the overall collection.
- Ask volunteers in different neighborhoods to act as “community liaisons” to spread news about library events to their friends.
- Organize library nights at local restaurants at which an author (or someone) would speak about a book/topic and someone from the library would talk about the library’s resources; perhaps do this as a fundraiser.

#### Other

- Distribute “fortune cookies” with “meet me at the library” messages (via local restaurants or schools?)
- Create an anthology, with material written by Cambridge authors, about what a library means to them – sell this as a fundraiser.
- Display of Cambridge memorabilia and materials
- Display of “before” and “after” of library facilities & conditions
- Raise money for special opening days/times beyond the normal hours.
- Use the occasion of the new building to connect to large, institutional donors
- Do something to recognize and honor “key” people

Priorities agreed upon by the group:

1. Develop a PR program: banners, media blitz, bus ads, Bamboo on the road, golden books, special gifts, deck of cards
2. Splashy inclusive inaugural program with multi-media (laser lights)

3. Schedule tours, visits for teachers and students
4. Special programs to target different groups: festivals, food, music (progressive dinner, potlucks, library events at local restaurants)
5. Feature Cambridge memorabilia in library
6. Pajama party
7. Recording history
  - Interview authors, users, workers for personal thoughts about library
  - Anthology of Cambridge writers