

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES & FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY
JOINT MEETING: OUTREACH PLANS
TO LEVERAGE OPENING OF MAIN LIBRARY

2/7/08

Notes Prepared by Steven E. Miller

1) Presentations

After self-introductions, including stories about how each of us came to love reading and books, we received an illustrated update on the status of the new Main Library Building by the city's Project Director, Alan Burne. His slides portrayed the both complexity of the job and the beauty of the overlapping layers of pipes, concrete, and other materials. The actual construction is still on-time and budget and should be finished in late spring, 2008.

Susan Flannery then led a collective review of some of the exciting features of the new building. She pointed out that it will take several months after construction ends to prepare the building for actual use. There may be a gradual "soft" opening starting in late summer, but the "official" opening is not likely to occur until the fall.

2) Brainstorming

We all then broke into small groups to discuss ways to leverage the opening to increase public awareness of the library system's resources and value – both the Main Library and the branches. The ideas that emerged during the "report-back" discussion turned out to fit together into a coherent package.

A) Set Up a Steering Committee

- Including representatives of the Trustees, Friends, Cambridge Reads, the Library Staff, other groups, and interested individuals.
- The Steering Committee will "own" the effort; not actually doing everything, but making sure that it gets done.
- **People need to step forward, or get invited, to join this Committee VERY SOON.**

B) Theme & Logo

- Build on the "Cambridge Voices" campaign; use "What's The Story?" or "Three Floors; So Many Stories"
- Umbrella for talking about, "What's the hole in the ground?", "What's with the rocks in the basement wall?", "Where did the pink granite come from?", "What's Your Story?", and more.
- Logo: bright sun, with the "rays" listing various library services, programs, & resources

C) Funding

- Friends can put up the seed money. Contributions will have to be solicited if costs go beyond this.

D) Collaterals

- short video or slide show (show on CCTV, bring to community meetings); maybe ask high school class to produce? Maybe ask CCTV group to produce?
- posters, postcards, counter-top displays; maybe use Local First business network for display and distribution.
- Deck(s) of Cards & “new card game” to play with them: illustrated with pictures & info about various Cambridge-related groups (women, scientists, writers, African-Americans, youth, civic leaders, etc.) with information about the city library system integrated into the back design.

F) Other ideas

- Give out coupons (maybe via the Local First business network) redeemable for little prizes or to get stamped at a local branch.
- invite High School students to a party in the library to thank them for putting up with construction noise & disruption.
- set up special pages and material on the library web site
- run a silent auction, getting donations from Local First businesses and then putting posters or counter-top displays at those businesses.
- sponsor an art exhibit, drawing material from different neighborhood and community groups, that would travel among the branches and Main building.
- sponsor a music series, reflecting the city’s diversity, that would take place in the new auditorium and elsewhere.

NOTES FROM 2007 JOINT MEETING ABOUT PUBLIC OUTREACH

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.