



REVISED BUILDING PROGRAM

Main Library Expansion Project Cambridge, Massachusetts

August 6, 2002

**LIBRARY PLANNING ASSOCIATES, Inc.
Madison, Wisconsin**

**In association with
WILLIAM RAWN ASSOCIATES, Architects, Inc., and
ANN BEHA ARCHITECTS
Boston, Massachusetts**

Anticipating a major capital project to expand its facility, the City of Cambridge engaged Library Planning Associates, Inc., in association with William Rawn Associates, to revisit, review and update as necessary planning parameters that had been developed six years earlier.

In the mid-1990s, expecting to undertake an expansion of its present building, Cambridge Public Library had developed a library building program statement with Aaron Cohen and Associates. A building program statement is a narrative report prepared by a library (or any other institution contemplating a building project) prior to development of architectural plans. The program is a key planning document, describing the library's service goals and how those goals should be expressed in a building. It defines the departments and areas to be created in an expanded building, how large each area needs to be in support of the library's goals, and what the optimum arrangement of those internal areas should be. The planning parameters expressed in a building program statement serve to guide the project architect through the design process.

For a variety of reasons, the timetable for the library's expansion project lapsed, but six years later, momentum once again began to favor the library's expansion project. William Rawn Associates and Ann Beha were retained as the architects for the project. The library board and staff, together with the project architects, determined that the passage of those six years warranted a re-examination of the original program to ascertain whether changes in library service patterns would in any way alter the goals outlined in the original program.

Library Planning Associates, Inc. was engaged to assist with that review. Consulting librarian Anders C. Dahlgren was named to LPA's study team. Initially, Dahlgren examined a variety of existing documentation to become familiar with the library's current setting and services as well as recent trends in use and collection growth. A thorough review of the original Cohen program was part of that examination, in addition to the library's last ten years' annual reports to the state library, the library's projected collection growth forecasts, the library's technology plan, and other documentation.

On June 10-11, 2002, Dahlgren made an initial site visit to Cambridge. The purpose of this visit was to tour the current library facility to become better acquainted with the library's current services, operations and routines and to meet with library staff, trustees, and the project architects to begin to explore how in the six years since the original program had been prepared service goals had changed and how those changes needed to be reflected in revisions to the original program. On the basis of observations made and discussions held during that site visit, Dahlgren prepared an initial draft of space needs worksheets designed to quantify current and projected library resource inventories and calculate the corresponding space needs. These worksheets identified variations from the original program .

A second site visit by Dahlgren followed, on June 21, 2002. The purpose of this visit was to meet with the library staff, the project architects, and others to review the initial space needs worksheets and identify changes or corrections that might be warranted. Following that second site visit, additional iterations of the space needs worksheets were produced, based on comments received from the library staff and the project architects. These iterations were shared with library staff and the project architects for subsequent review and comments.

A list of the individuals who participated in the meetings during Dahlgren's two site visits is appended at the end of this introduction.

A complete set of the final space needs worksheets are attached here. In practical terms, one must acknowledge that planning is a series of approximations to a moving target and that as architectural implementation of this plan proceeds, new findings will likely further adapt and redirect the goals outlined here.

Nevertheless, there is broad consensus that these space needs worksheets substantially identify and define the current and future collection resources and library services that should be provided to meet the community's library needs, as they are known at this point in time.

These worksheets are meant to modestly redirect the original program by Aaron Cohen. A great many of the fundamental recommendations of the Cohen program are useful and valid today. Some of the differences apparent between the Cohen program and these worksheets are a matter of presentation. Where the Cohen program tended to define large departmental blocks of internal space (grouping together *all* of the adult collection, for instance), these worksheets define a larger number of internal departments and areas. In part, this is necessary because of the challenges anticipated in developing an expanded facility at the present site. With fewer, larger departments and internal components, there are only a limited number of ways those departments can be combined and assembled. If the program update presents more internal components of smaller scale, it creates more opportunities to explore different ways to combine those components which in turn will allow the architect greater flexibility to achieve a workable solution on the present site.

Other variations from the Cohen program reflect the fact that the library service landscape has changed since that program was produced.

A re-examination of basic collection development goals found that the original projection for the library's essential print collection remained valid. Allocations among some segments of the overall book collections were adjusted, but the overall forecast for collection growth was little changed. Projections for the library's periodical holdings were actually reduced. As periodical literature – back issues in particular – migrates into electronic formats, there is decreasing public demand for larger and larger paper-copy resources.

More than balancing that change, however, is a strong increase in the projections for nonprint holdings. The last six years have seen a tremendous increase in public demand for a growing variety of media formats, including audiobooks on cassette and disc, DVDs, and more. This update to the original program forecasts a larger audiovisual collection.

This program revision also provides for more computer network stations for public use than did the original program. Demands for expanded public access to computing technology has a variety of sources: the Internet increasingly is a part of daily life; computing equipment is becoming more widely available throughout the community; patrons come to the library today with a higher level of sophistication (and expectations) regarding digital resources. As a result, today a greater need is perceived to provide more access through the installation of more equipment.

The program revision more consciously reflects the library's efforts and intents to market and promote its collections and resources. There is a greater appreciation in libraries today for the benefit of marketing and display, and the worksheets describe environments for the collection that offer increased opportunities to display the collections to encourage use.

Another important aspect of this marketing emphasis is the installation of library shelving with a wider, 42" aisle rather than the regulatory minimum 36" aisle. A wider aisle creates a more inviting setting, and the worksheets typically specify a 42" aisle. In some areas, an even wider aisle is specified.

Shelving lower than full-height, 84" or 90" tall ranges are less imposing and easier for a wider range of the library's public to use. While it is not practical to employ low shelving throughout the entire library (to do so would require many more shelving units, spreading out over too large an area), these worksheets judiciously employ lower shelves in selected parts of the collection, to create a setting more conducive to patrons' use of the library.

The update also explicitly provides other features that had been listed as “optional” in the original program. The most notable of these is an allocation of space to support a public lounge or café.

The space needs worksheets are organized in four parts.

Summary sheets (pp. 7-13) provide a simple list of the departments to be created within the expanded library. Within each department is another listing of the individual areas, rooms, and offices to be created in each of those departments. A space allocation for each area is detailed, based on the specific inventory of resources and furnishings assigned to each area in the following detail sheets.

Collection sheets (pp. 14-25) summarize the proposed distribution of the library’s projected print, periodical, and nonprint collection. These sheets forecast growth patterns for the different segments of the library’s collection, and recommend specific shelving environments for each, leading to an estimate of the number of shelving or storage units that will be needed to house each segment of the collection and the corresponding space allocation per shelving unit.

Seating sheets (pp. 26-29) summarize the distribution of reader seats and computer network stations for public use throughout the public areas of the library, according to the type of seating and computer stations provided.

Finally, detail worksheets (pp. 30-70) link selected data from the collection and seating sheets and add other aspects of the library’s physical inventory to create a listing of the resources and furnishings to be found in each area, room, and office in the expanded library. Unit space allocations have been applied to each item to determine the space needs for each area. This data is reflected in the summary sheets, where a projection of the gross area of each department and the entire building is calculated.

In large measure, these worksheets confirm the adequacy of the original program. While the estimate of space need has grown slightly (by less than 5%), at this stage in the library’s planning, that variation is well within any typical margin of error. With the endorsement of the library board – and others, as needed – these worksheets can guide the architect in the development of a specific plan for the expansion of the Cambridge Public Library, a plan that will see the library through the first part of the 21st century.

The following individuals participated in the revision of the library's program, providing commentary and support (those with "*" attended more than one meeting, those with "**" attended all related meetings):

Library Staff:

Susan Flannery**
Allen Kesten
Ardemis Benlian
Barbara Burgos
Betty Sposato
Bill Courier
Bill Salem
Bob Patacchiola
Daryl Mark*
Dave Shaw*
Dawn Cardoso
Donald York*
Elizabeth Dickinson
Emerita Yanes
Frank Gages*
Hugh Crane
Jackie Miller
Jule O'Donnell*
Kevin Grant
Mathew Berube
Mitchell Zweibel
Nick Pentikis
Pam Colt
Pricilla Beck
Ricardo Ricard
Rob Kowalczyk
Ruth Dillon
Sarah Sugden
Toni Brooks
Victoria Solomon
Cathleen Collins
Marilyn Gagalis

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Andre Meyer
James Roosevelt
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Nancy Woods
Patricia Payne
William Barry

City of Cambridge
Alan Burne**

Design Team Staff:

Anders Dahlgren**
William Rawn*
Cliff Gayley*
Philip Gray**
Pam Hawkes*
Scott Aquilina*