

LIBRARY 21 COMMITTEE

Sixteenth Meeting

April 15, 1996
Sakey Lecture Hall
Main Library

449 Broadway

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Nancy B. Woods at 6:35 P.M. in the Joseph G. Sakey Lecture Hall of the Main Library.

Members in attendance:

Nancy B. Woods, Co-Chair
William Barry
Ruth Butler
Karen Carmean
Ed DeAngelo
John Gintell
Karen Kosko
Emily West
Robert Winters
Richard Rossi, Co-Chair
Roger Boothe
Susan Flannery
Andre Meyer
Charles Sullivan

Co-Chair Woods briefly reviewed the agenda items for the evening, reminding members that the committee is now in Phase III of its process. Following some administrative matters, the evening will be focused on the components of a Phase III Report. Audience comments are welcomed at the end of the meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Minutes: The minutes of the March meeting will be mailed to members prior to the May meeting.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 22. Senior Center, Central Square. Lisa Peterson will clear space booking with the Senior Center.

Process Committee Meetings: Tuesday, April 29, and Wednesday, May 14, at 8:00 A.M., in the Ackerman Room, City Hall.

Letter from Friends of Mid-Cambridge Park: The letter will be acknowledged and scheduled for discussion during Phase IV.

Mailing List: Co-Chair Woods and Lisa Peterson will work out a comprehensive mailing list covering meeting attendees, letter writers, etc.

Report to City Council: Co-chair Woods will work on a draft report for the end of May.

COMPONENTS OF PHASE III REPORT:

"Refining the Opportunities - The Program":

Co-chair Woods stated the goal of the evening as trying to reach consensus on five position statements to be presented. Where the committee can not agree, it should identify the part of the statement which is the problem and this will be looked at by the Process Committee. When there is agreement with a statement it should be recorded and that agreed upon need not revert to the Process Committee. The five draft statements will be presented by the drafters after which there will be discussion of all five statements.

PRESENTATION OF DRAFT POSITION STATEMENTS:

VISION: presented by Ruth Butler

A Vision for the New Main Library

After months of meetings and the expression of a considerable diversity in points of view on the part of the committee members and citizens, we have nevertheless, found some consensus in the process of our deliberations. We look forward to our work leading to a new public library in Cambridge that is singularly outstanding. It should be in harmony with the unusual nature of this exceptionally diverse community, distinguished by age, history, institutions, individuals, and events which have given it a world renowned reputation.

The new building should be the "civic heart" of our city, a fact that will become manifest through the commissioning of a distinguished work of architecture, by enlarging the collections, and by enriching the programs able to serve and attract an even greater number of citizens than they do now. This last should be accomplished especially by helping those who have not yet recognized the library as a resource that can enrich their lives to do so.

Further, when visitors come to Cambridge, we want the library to be on their short list of what absolutely must be seen in our city, and when politicians retire, the library should be on their lists of changes to which they have contributed and of which they are most proud.

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There was a general consensus that this statement had the breadth and tone the committee is looking for. Comments included:

- there may be some duplication with the "Audience" statement, but that was OK;
- "love it";
- the CPL current vision statement should be incorporated;
- should include a statement about the need for flexibility to adjust to changing audiences;

-the final paragraph might be considered on a lower level than those proceeding it;

-several people in the audience spoke -- Fran Wirta felt the statement should include the concept that the library functions as a community center; another person said that the library is the intellectual heart of the city

AUDIENCES: presented by Richard Rossi and Karen Carmean

In order to reach as wide a user-community as possible, the City must encourage all groups in our city to use our library system and must be able to accommodate them. The Committee's discussion of the system's configuration (consisting of a main library and six branches) has been based on the system's ability to provide services for all ethnic groups, linguistic minority communities, genders, age groups, persons with disabilities, business and academic groups, research groups, visitors, etc. The system must be able to evolve as the demographics of the community change.

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There was general consensus that this statement captured the committee's intent.

-There was a suggestion that the CPL provide "outreach" as a means of encouraging people to use the library system.

-On a related topic, Richard Rossi will draft a letter to the School Department's Superintendent search committee indicating that they should look for someone who will collaborate with the public library

-Possibly the "flexibility" segment belongs in the vision statement instead of here

COOPERATION WITH OTHER CITY AGENCIES: presented by Roger Booth and Susan Flannery

The Cambridge Public Library:
Cooperation with Other City Agencies

The Cambridge Public Library has a unique role in the life of the community. In order to fulfill this important mission, it is essential that there be meaningful interactions with other city agencies providing services that are complementary to the work of the library. Currently, there are ongoing cooperative efforts between the library and certain agencies, such as the Department of Human Services, the Cambridge Chinese Cultural Association, The Salvation Army, St. Paul A.M.E. Family Shelter, the YWCA, and the Cambridge Historical Commission. These interactions should be

strengthened and improved as the library proceeds into the future, and new relationships should be sought to help make the library as accessible as possible to all Cantabrigians.

The library can only cooperate with agencies which have the desire to see such collaborations succeed. Most notably the School Department needs to identify a key staff member who will commit to a long-term working relationship with library staff, since this is widely seen by the community as one of the most potentially important and very much needed links that is, unfortunately a missing one. In working out the details of these interactions, it is important to keep in mind that the goal for the library is to provide library functions in ways that support the roles and missions of the other agencies; on the other hand, it is neither appropriate nor intended that the library should in any sense duplicate these efforts. The library will provide supportive resources, and perhaps space, for these activities, but it will not have the lead role in making these things happen.

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There was a general consensus that this had the right idea, but there was considerable discussion, indicating that this statement probably needs additional revision.

-The title should be amended to be "cooperation with other city agencies and community organizations.

-The committee felt that there should especially be linkages with other agencies and organizations that have educational purposes.

-Several people felt that there should be more of a connection with the Community Learning Center and possibly the Police Department, for example.

-Another member suggested that real estate agencies could give new residents a library card.

SYSTEM STRUCTURE: presented by Andre Meyer and Susan Flannery

The Library System in the Strategic Plan

Under the Cambridge public Library's Strategic Plan, adopted in December 1995, the Library "is designed to work as a unified system with a strong main library and six branch libraries each tailored to the unique constituencies and needs of its immediate neighborhood." The Plan also calls for all locations to be "attractive, user-friendly, and handicapped accessible." The same general mission and standards apply system wide, as doe the established process for program and services development. The principal roles of the system include support of both independent learning and formal education, children's services, reference service, and provision of popular materials. In addition, library facilities may serve secondary roles as community centers for

information and activities.

Under the plan, the main library fulfills various roles; it is the only site where substantial reference services are available. As the center of the system, it also backs up and supports the services offered through the branches.

The branches are intended as gateways from various parts of the city to the resources of the entire system and of the broader regional library network. All branches have as primary roles children's services and provision of popular materials, which are both particularly important to the population segments most dependent on resources within the neighborhoods. Some branches may have additional secondary roles. The Central Square branch has a third primary role, independent learning support, as well as a significant function as a community activities center.

Library 21 Findings -

Library system structure - Based on Library 21's survey of other library systems, the "main and branches" structure is standard and indeed universal in American cities. We found no example of an urban library organized as a system of self-contained libraries, though this model exists in some suburban county systems (as it does, in effect, in suburban and rural areas of Massachusetts). The current structure permits efficiency in the use of limited staff and materials; and it is especially well suited to Cambridge because we are a geographically compact city (every resident within three miles of the main library) with good public transportation.

Certain materials and services that are unique within the system may be maintained by branches if they are thereby accessible to users and if their effectiveness does not depend on adjacency to central services and staff. Examples in Cambridge include ethnic collections in certain branches and some of the community activities in Central Square. Business support centers in several cities, and the tool library in Berkeley, California, are branch based successes that Cambridge might emulate if space and staffing permit.

Information Technologies -

The primary impact of new information technologies on library services is expected to fall in the reference field. reference functions now possible only at the main library will become available at the branches; this will allow increased use of the branches both individually and as system "gateways". The most significant issues raised by the development concern staffing levels and staff skills.

Capital versus Operating Issues -

The major determinant of the effectiveness of branches is evidently the adequacy of the system operating budget. which controls staffing. Among "bricks and mortar" issues, the appropriate location of branches seems to be more important than their size or

number. In Berkeley, California, and Ann Arbor, Michigan, cities in many respects similar to Cambridge, the branches are extremely vigorous though fewer in number and no larger than ours; the operations of these library systems are, however, at considerably higher levels than those of the Cambridge Public Library.

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Again, there was general consensus that the structure that we will have in Cambridge is the single Main and six branches.

-However, several members felt that not everything had to be centralized. Some services and resources could be placed in branches.

-Those decisions would be driven by a variety of considerations: space, constituencies, etc.

-Also driven by considerations of efficiency, staffing, etc

-Various functions can shift locations, but space doesn't exist in branches to house some operations

LIBRARY ROLES:

The roles discussion was based on text developed in the March 18, 1997 meeting, as follows:

ROLE	LEVEL OF EFFORT
COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER	Moderate
-Other resources provide this function	
COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER	Moderate
- Need a centralized resource center, but the library should be the vehicle for it, not the driver; requires an enormous effort for full implementation	
- branches may provide this service more so than main	
- there is much publicized information and the reference desk has access to all of it	
- library can provide space for information, but not staff support; should be culled, organized by others	
- can provide copies of city planning studies, reports, etc. and other public documents	

- for Internet web sites, library can manage the hardware but not the updating of sites

FORMAL EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER

Low/Moderate

- elementary, high school and college curricula are supported elsewhere
- there may, however, be an overlap between the general collections and the needs of students who are attending educational institutions

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

High

- the public will need a wide range of knowledge in future
- this area provides an opportunity for volunteer tutors for one-on-one assistance to help individuals locate appropriate materials
- includes help for people who are taking examinations for work-related requirements
- need to be aware of changing needs and demands
- supports community based literacy for adults where the library is the institution of higher learning
- local collections supplemented by interlibrary loan

POPULAR MATERIALS LENDING

High

- no other agency or institution provides this service
- collections are built based on a focus on literary goals (rather than competing with video stores) and will carry, for example, videos of "important" films
- should include a young adult focus
- draws in readers in the first place; especially programs like "speed read" for popular titles
- need flexibility to adjust to changing needs
- over 1/2 of the circulation is provided under this role
- makes use of latest merchandising techniques

CHILD'S DOOR TO LEARNING

High-critical

- includes all children, regardless of where and how they are

schooled

-provides materials for parents to help them develop children's skills

GATEWAY TO LEARNING

It was decided that this role was distributed across the other roles and audiences and that it should not be establish it as separate role

RESEARCH CENTER FOR CAMBRIDGE HISTORY

High

- the only in-depth research role the library will play will be for Cambridge materials
- the library can provide access to city and library archives, but these archives must be catalogued and stored properly; this is a separately funded, 2 to 3 year task that should be carried out prior to the library taking on this research role
- there will be overlap between City documents and library documents
- library should have space for displays of historical materials
- genealogical research opportunities could be included
- if this role is taken on, the use of the resources will increase

REFERENCE CENTER

High

- reference materials are increasing as more information comes on line and is available electronically
- library should provide increase phone and E-mail access

THE MAIN LIBRARY AS "CIVIC HEART"

High

This is a someone intangible role, but it generated a spirited discussion. When asked what 'civic heart' meant, the following concepts were raised:

- the building is open to everyone and provides equal access and knowledge for every single person
- it becomes a destination for tourists and residents alike
- provides a range of recreation, learning and teaching for wide range of audiences and interests: ethnic, multi-generational, etc.

- seems safe (but we are aware that that is an illusion)
- neutral territory; not owned by any neighborhood or group
- could and should be owned by everyone
- We felt that today, there is no single building or place in Cambridge that offers the concept of "heart" - with the possible exception of the Charles River and the annual river festival

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The Process Committee will work on refining this statement. In general, each role should start with the ALA definition (assuming it applies to Cambridge) in order to help the public understand what it means; followed by a brief justification as to whether this is a primary, secondary or tertiary role for Cambridge; and include several examples. It was felt that primary, secondary, tertiary are better descriptive terms than high, medium, low levels of effort.

The "civic heart" role, since it is not an official ALA role, should precede the other roles because it represents the synergy of all the other roles together.

Discussion of individual roles:

Community Activity Center:

- the main function of this role is to draw people into the library
- if the sponsoring agency of an activity is NOT the library, then the activity becomes a 'community activity'.
- this may have a higher priority in a branch library than at main
- Secondary/Tertiary role

Community Information Center:

- a data base for system
- Secondary role
- merges somewhat with reference, but really means collection and distribution of current, changing information.

Formal Education Support: for elementary and secondary educational levels

- Andre Meyer will work on refining this

-Primary/Secondary role.

Independent Learning

-Primary role

-in this case, the whole library is the 'institution of higher learning'

Popular Materials Lending

-YA materials should be a "component" of this, not a "focus"

-Primary role

Child's door to learning

-Karen Kosko will work on refining this

-Primary role

Research center for Cambridge history

-Primary role

-Charles Sullivan acknowledged that he needs to complete the Work Group report for this function. He will work on refining the role

Reference Center

-add something indicating breadth of service

-Primary role

-Andre Meyer and John Gintell will work on this

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Some audience comments were cited earlier in the discussion of the Vision Statement.

-Fran Wirta will send Co-chair Woods a fuller written statement on the community center aspect of the library for possible incorporation into either the vision statement or the civic heart role

-Another suggestion was that the vision statement should be more general in nature and less detailed.

-Another audience member felt that the library should be viewed more as an "intellectual center" as opposed to an "activity center".

-An audience member expressed the wish to complement the committee and commend its efforts.

Co-Chair Woods adjourned the meeting.