

# LIBRARY FACILITY STUDY July 2008

## Executive Summary

The people of the Appleton area demonstrate the importance they place on high quality library services in many ways. First and foremost is the vote they cast with their feet. The steady increase in the number of people who pass through the Appleton Public Library's (APL) doors and the number of items that are checked out each day provide strong evidence of the public support. Public input gained through the surveys, focus groups and interviews that were conducted as a part of this study underscore the value that people associate with their library and offer insight into the deficiencies of the existing library facility and the need for additional space.

Based on the heavy demand for library service and clearly demonstrated community needs, we therefore recommend the following short- and long-term actions. The short-term actions are designed to help APL deal with existing customer, facility and staff efficiency issues within the existing building; however, several of these actions would require major changes to the floor plan layout and may not be cost effective as standalone items. They are essentially "band-aids" that may alleviate some critical situations without truly addressing the core issues related to the inadequacy of the space available in the existing facility. Other recommendations are steps that will serve APL in both the short and long term. In summary, the short-term actions alone will not meet all of the facility and efficiency requirements identified in the study.

Long-term actions focus on major strategic initiatives that should be pursued in creating the APL of the future. They are offered to inform the decision-making process that must take place if APL is to retain its place as one of the Appleton area's most valuable assets. This study concludes that the best option to meet long-term needs is the construction of a totally new structure. A second option that would meet most of the long-term needs is the construction of a major addition coupled with extensive reprogramming of space and renovation to the existing building. Many of the needs identified in the study cannot be addressed effectively within the confines of the existing building footprint even if a modest "fill-in" second floor addition is erected.

### Short-Term Actions

- Begin the process of tagging the collection with radio frequency identification (RFID) targets to facilitate the implementation of an automated material handling system (AMHS) and more efficient and effective system of self-service checkout.
- Begin planning for the acquisition and implementation of an automated material handling system that includes a conveyor and sorter to handle returned material.
- In concert with the RFID tagging and the implementation of AMHS, replace the existing self-service checkout units with newer, smaller, more functional units

- (compatible with RFID) to alleviate staff workload and to allow service staff to perform other duties and improve the level of customer service.
- Upgrade bandwidth and the technological infrastructure to accommodate heavier computer usage and increased throughput demands created by the media-rich content being accessed by library users.
  - Replace existing seating (both table seating and lounge seating) with new, more comfortable seating featuring integrated power and data and the power distribution system to support computer use (both library-owned and customer-owned) by those using the new seats.

## **Long-Term Actions**

- Consider the construction of a new facility approximately 138,000 square feet in size. The study concludes that this is the best option in terms of delivering maximum efficiency and the amenities most desired by the public. This new structure could be located in the central business district or elsewhere in the downtown area.
- Continue to maintain a service model that employs one centralized downtown library to meet the 20 year projected need for space, future expansion, and parking.
- Reject a service model that includes the construction of branch library facilities due to increased operational costs and the need to duplicate core services.
- Employ “green” building technology and strategies to create an energy efficient building and provide a healthy indoor environment. Use the construction of a new Library facility to illustrate the benefits of sustainable design to the community.
- Provide adequate interior public open space and expanded shelving areas to:
  1. Ensure full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
  2. Accommodate the expansion of collections
  3. Ensure accessible and attractive display of collections
  4. Optimize the effective and efficient use of limited staff resources
  5. Improve the public’s ability to find what they are looking for independently and maximize their enjoyment of this important civic space
- Consider the inclusion of a drive-up window for customer convenience.
- Increase the number and variety of types of technology workstations, e.g. workstations designed for multiple users, workstations featuring a broader array of software to facilitate the redevelopment of content, etc.
- Expand the quantity of public meeting spaces and design these spaces to accommodate extended hours.
- Develop a comprehensive security plan for collections and operation of the building for independent library and meeting room use.
- Provide exterior public open space for social gathering at or near the library.
- Implement all of the short-term actions.