THE DESIGN CHARETTES

In mid-August, 2002, the consultants assembled in Louisville to hold two design charette sessions.[1]   The first focused on branch libraries, the second on the Main Library.

THE BRANCH LIBRARY DESIGN CHARETTE

This session was led by Providence Architecture and assisted by Himmel & Wilson. The session was held in the Centennial Room of the Main Library Friday and Saturday, August 16-17. Approximately 60 persons -- public and staff -- attended the session.

Participants stressed the following concepts:

- In order to be a "community and neighborhood fit," a branch library should:

  - Be an integral part of the community
  - Be a programmatic part of the community
  - Be an environmental and aesthetic fit
  - Address whether or not to be a "standalone" building or part of a larger governmental complex or retail space.

- To achieve the desired ambiance and be user friendly, a library should:

  - Have as much natural light as possible
  - Have "good" lighting both inside and outside the building
  - Provide task lighting for the customers and staff
  - Have dependable climate control systems
  - Have operable windows
  - Not be "chopped up."

---

[1]   A design charette is an intensive, hands-on technique that many architects and others use to accelerate a design process. The consultants for this project used the charette technique to obtain as much input as possible with different points of view with regard to the LFPL's branch libraries and Main Library. The charette was a requirement of the Library's RFP for this project.

If the above are achieved, the participants believe a library can have a "living room" atmosphere.

- There should be special areas in the libraries for children and teens that should include:
-
  - Special theme areas for both age groups
  - Defined entrance (to the children's area)
  - Teens space that is separate and unique
  - An exciting and colorful storytime area for children.

- A library should be a place for books and the bookstacks should include:

  - Slanted lower shelves
  - Shelves with "backstops" (to prevent items from slipping beneath the shelving uprights)
  - Wide aisles, at least 48" clear between each bookstack range
  - Display shelving
  - Special shelving for media.

- Seating for library customers is very important. Good library design should provide:
-
  - Quiet study areas
  - Listening stations for audio formats
  - Comfortable seating
  - Outdoor seating areas
  - Group study rooms
  - Adjustable height computer stations
  - "Congregating" spaces.

- Technology is viewed as being an increasingly important component of public libraries, and the facilities should reflect:

  - Places to plug in laptops
  - Color printers and photocopy machines
  - Photocopy machines that have enlargement capabilities
  - Self-checkout stations
  - An easy-to-use website.

- Technology for the staff of the LFPL should include:

  - Personal digital assistants (PDAs)
  - Cordless telephones (for reference staff).

- Finding tools, such as signage, were also discussed:

  - Buildings should be visible
  - Exterior signage should be adequate

- Interior signage should be standardized
- Floor coverings that help customers find their way.

A related issue regarding finding tools was the expression that new libraries should be located near public transportation.

- Specialty areas discussed were:

  - Computer labs
  - Multimedia areas
  - Galleries for art shows and displays
  - Electronic public notice/bulleting boards and kiosks.

- Public meeting space comments included:

  - Large and small auditoriums
  - Spaces that can be divided into two or more smaller spaces
  - Spaces that are fully "wired"
  - Risers and/or stages for improved attendee sightlines
  - Spaces that are accessible at times when the rest of the building may be closed.

- Staff spaces in the library facilities were not ignored, and ideas put forth included:

  - Adequate work space
  - Offices for library managers.

A somewhat related staff issue was the need for staff to be available to assist customers who are using the Library's computers.

- Finally, there were a host of miscellaneous issues voiced by the participants. These included:

  - Adult and child size water fountains
  - Family assist restrooms
  - Drive through library materials return and checkout
  - Closed circuit security cameras
  - Public pay telephones
  - Fire protection systems
  - Automatic, bi-parting entrance doors
  - Accessibility for all customers.

- There were also four other points raised that were indirectly related to library facilities:
-
  - More books
  - More media
  - Training sessions for customers seeking to improve computer skills
  - Standardized hours of service.