Preliminary Space Study Report for Carmel Clay Public Library: 2017

History

The Carmel Clay Public Library opened the doors of the current facility on May 2, 1999. The library is therefore nearing completion of its eighteenth year of operation. Throughout this time, the library has been dependably and heavily used by the community. The library today consistently receives over half a million visits a year and circulates over 2 million items.

Also during the nearly two decades of operation of the current facility, technology and patron usage patterns have changed significantly. In response to this, the library made some renovations and interior adjustments in 2008. In 2010, the library converted to RFID technology and transitioned to a self-check environment. In recent years, the library took steps to better meet demand in other parts of the community by adding little free library locations, setting up a book return drop-off in the west side of town, and by creating a Mobile Library. All of these steps significantly helped the library keep pace with community needs, yet demand is still up and usage patterns continue to change.

In order to best meet the needs of the community, the Carmel Clay Public Library will undergo a space study in 2017. The goal of this study is to address the community needs outlined in the library's strategic plan by determining how the library can best meet these needs by reconceiving the current space usage in the facility.

Issues identified by the library staff

- Seating capacity. At any given day, there may well not be a place to sit in the library, particularly during the hours of 3:00 to 6:00. Currently the library offers 408 places to sit, not counting seats in the computer areas and other designated seating with a specific purpose. We must find a way to increase seating capacity in a way that is in keeping with the high standards and aesthetic of the library. This is also an opportunity to modernize some of our furniture and layouts. Students are looking for modular seating and tables with convenient electrical outlets to plug in their own laptops and work collaboratively. More space generally is needed for patrons to study/work individually and in groups.
- Study Room demand. The high demand of study rooms requires a significant amount of human resources to manage them. We need to look for ways to ease the management burden of staff and increase the number of rooms available. A particular need is to add a room or rooms that have a seating capacity greater than six, 10-15 would be a desirable target. More work and study space in general is desirable.
- Flexible space. Our spaces need to have multi-functionality to them. Movable panels, shelving and furniture may be part of the solution.
    - Table and furniture surfaces in the children's area are particularly worn and in need of either replacement or resurfacing.

- o End panels of shelving could be fitted with slat walls to add display capacity.
- Program Room capacity: currently our program room can handle a maximum of 200 people in attendance. The library needs a space that would allow for closer to 500 in attendance. This limitation seriously inhibits the library's capacity to grow summer reading and other programs and audiences. A new refrigerator and other equipment is needed in the kitchen off of the program room.
- Additional program rooms/space is also needed, including meeting space for community organizations.
- Front Lobby: currently contains a large assortment of catalog stations, a map of the facility and a lot of empty space. Pre-RFID, this space would frequently be used by long lines at the Circulation Desk. Most feel we could reduce the number of catalog stations and effectively have even more space to address.
- Book Club Room: this room has been generally underutilized. It's a good and effective space for book clubs and has been used for some other programs, but it sits empty too much, especially considering that more meeting space is in demand.
- Flex Room: a space with potential but is still under-utilized. A potential problem with the Flex Room space is that it is not in a publically accessible area.
- Periodical Room: this is a fairly large space with seating for 30. The room is rarely at full capacity except for times when seating is scarce. Circulation is also declining for periodicals, as well as the collection size. Moving the periodical collection and repurposing the space could be an option.
- Teen Space: while the library does have a dedicated teen department and area, the space is generally too small, both in collection size and for teen programming. YA publishing has exploded since the YA department was designed. Shelving space in the YA department has been completely maxed out for several years. Ideally, interfiling paperbacks with processed YA fiction and nonfiction would provide greater convenience for patrons. Due to space limitations, YA CDs are currently shelved an entire floor away in AV, mixed with adult audiobooks.
- Computer Lab, Training Lab and CYS Computer Room: usage is declining and technology needs are different. These spaces may be re-conceptualized to be utilized with greater efficiency.
- Café area: would be useful to have greater seating capacity, currently at 38 and frequently not enough during the after-school rush.
- Integrated technology: the library may be able to employ integrated technology to much greater effect, such as rooms with LED screens capable of easily connecting to devices, digital signage throughout the building, etc. Digital signage may afford the opportunity to capture the interest of the average patron more effectively while reducing sign clutter throughout the building. Also, audio/visual equipment needs to be evaluated and upgraded.
- Early Literacy area needs to be re-conceptualized.

- A permanent space for the Digital Media Lab is needed.
- A parking garage/covered parking for the Mobile Library is needed.
- Collections and collection space needs to be evaluated.
- More public art/gallery space is needed.
- Adequate space is needed to host traveling exhibits.
- Recycling options for patrons is needed.
- Provide additional keycard access for staff into secure zones to allow for increased security and mobility.

Additional Opportunities: exterior grounds

- A parking garage facility may be a viable possibility. A public/private partnership may also be possible. Such a structure may afford the library the following:
    o Additional parking spaces for the staff and public
    o Additional storage
    o Parking for the Mobile Library
    o Additional program space
- Bike rentals and additional bike racks could be available from the front walk of the library.
- Library Garden concept could be realized.
    o From a garden concept proposal: "…a library garden has the potential to create a sensory and emotional link between the library and our community, building memories rich with the sights and smells of a creative, well-tended, and ever-changing outdoor space. It's clear that many people hold our library dear to their hearts; this emotional bond could grow even stronger with such a unique extension of our space. A library garden may well change the hearts of many passersby who are now indifferent to or unaware of the indoor library's charms."
- Develop outdoor space for programs, reflection and study.

Summary

The above list is not comprehensive and is currently a working document. Library services are changing. At present time, the library has spaces not being utilized as well as they could be and other spaces that are maxed out and struggle to meet high demand. Some services may be currently out of reach due to space limitations. Spaces may potentially be better organized by noise level. This space study is an attempt to ultimately recalibrate the library to better reflect community needs and prepare the library to provide even better and more relevant service in the years to come. Carmel Clay Public Library is one of the finest libraries in the country and will remain so by continuing to adapt to reflect changing technologies, community needs, and best practices in librarianship. Future steps may involve surveying patrons before or while working with a consultant to develop ideas to maturity.