

LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Utilizing DPI data from 1999 - 2011

Since the library moved to the new facility in 1999, growth in library use has mirrored growth in the community and the library is rapidly using up space in the facility. Circulation of materials has experienced an almost 123% increase and over 80,000 more annual visits are made to the library. There are now 23,578 registered cardholders, up nearly 83% since the library's move. The library expects that circulation will have increased another 5% by the end of 2012.

The Sun Prairie Public Library's Plan of Service provides the blueprint for how we intend to move through and into the future. This document focuses on three areas: collections, services and programs, and physical space. Our Plan of Service was updated in 2010 and provides direction through 2015. Given the advent of digital materials, 2016-2020 promises to be very interesting.

Standards for public library service are tied to population. As the city continues to grow, so will use of the library. Basic public library standards require that collection size be determined by the size of Sun Prairie's population. Library collections are the main components of library service and have the greatest impact on use of space and size of the facility. We continually examine this rapidly shifting landscape.

Past challenges and solutions

Circulation

With 123% growth in circulation since 1999, dramatically improved tools were necessary to handle the over 100,000 items being checked in and out at the library every month. In 2011, we checked out 634,924 items and checked in 851,120 items. Since 2006, the library has implemented the following self-directed services to handle the circulation growth:

- Four self-checkout machines;
- Open holds, allowing patrons to retrieve their own items;
- RFID technology to allow faster checkout/checkin;
- Automated handling sorter that checks in and pre-sorts items.

These self-directed services have allowed us to meet our increasing patron demand with existing staffing levels. Now, we are able to circulate materials and return them to the shelf within hours, rather than days.

Growing Collections

Shelving in every collection area is fully utilized, even with approximately 30% of the collection checked out. Since 2007, we have made the following shelving changes to accommodate our growing demand:

- Relocated two shelving ranges used for large print to nonfiction;
- Reduced reference collection;
- Relocated large print to reference;
- Relocated paperbacks from spinners to regular shelving in adult wing to accommodate larger format paperbacks;
- Incorporated westerns and short stories into Adult Fiction;
- Separated children's nonfiction from adult nonfiction;
- Relocated children's DVDs to expand shelving for children's audiobooks;
- Relocated adult and children's nonfiction DVDs;
- Separated nonfiction adult audiobooks;
- Expanded teen shelving;
- Expanded audiobook shelving;
- Reduced retention of adult magazines;
- Separated teen nonfiction from adult nonfiction;
- Incorporated teen and children's paperbacks into hardcover collections;

- Added adult, teen and children's graphic novel collections;
- Added DVD shelving unit;
- Added 2 children's nonfiction shelving units;
- Added Buzz Books collection;
- Added BluRay collection;
- Added Playaways and Playaway Views;
- Added Wii games.

We continue to creatively use the space as formats continue to change; however, we have used all available floor space and there are no collection formats to retire. We are faced with many unknowns with regards to downloadable books and media. When, and more importantly, if they will replace traditional formats remains to be seen.

Inadequate Space for Children's Service

Young families continue to move to Sun Prairie and use the library. They especially like spending time in the facility encouraging their children to read, participating in the summer reading program and enjoying the many fun and educational programs the library offers for them. Even on mornings when we do not offer children's programs, it is not uncommon to find many children and their parents in the Children's Area.

The attraction of the library to these young families is reflected in program attendance, which has more than doubled since the building opened in 1999 (8,027 participants), and has grown 58% since 2006. 19,916 children, moms, dads and grandparents attended programs in 2011. We find we are over capacity in both the community room and the story hour room. As a result, we have started limiting the number who can attend programs. We have doubled up on summer family programs in order to meet demand; however, we still need to turn away children. This has resulted in an increased need for programming funds. Another option is to add more programming times, which will require additional staff.

Computer/Internet/Wireless demand

Since 1999, Internet use has grown dramatically. In fact, the library's Computer Lab was a hot spot for frequent turbulence among patrons. Since that time, information and resources have become solely available on the Internet, such as tax forms. Patron reliance on the Internet has grown due to the move of fundamental information from print to web. We have employed the following changes to promote a much more stable atmosphere of computer use at the library:

- Addition of 4 Teen Computers, specifically for 12-17 year-olds;
- Addition of 4 rental laptops that can be used anywhere in the library with no time limits;
- Addition of wireless access, which is the only public wireless hotspot in the city;
- Upgrade to Enterprise wireless, which allows better and more consistent coverage throughout the building, even in the towers and the Community Room.

Solutions through 2015

As mentioned above, our challenge is to keep up with shelving for the number of items which are required by Dane County Library Standards. These standards are based on population. Sun Prairie's population is almost 30,000, with a service population area of almost 40,000. Sun Prairie is the largest city in Dane County next to Madison. Mentioned previously was the shifting of formats as new technologies come into play. This makes future planning precarious. In addition, programming continues to grow in both Children's and Adult Services Departments. Some ideas to consider are:

Shelving

- Adding a range of shelving to adult nonfiction;
- Weeding/reduction of music CD collection;

- Downloadable music;
- Downloadable magazines;
- Downloadable TV series;
- Shrinking print reference and relocating it;
- Relocating nonfiction audiobooks near Large Print;
- Relocating audiobooks to paperback area.

Children's Area

- Utilizing the library grounds for more summer reading program activities;
- Adding a range of shelving to teen area;
- Investigating furniture/shelving for the Early Literacy Area;
- Enclosing the Children's porch;
- Adding more staffing to provide more storytimes in existing space.

Computer space

While many users access our wireless, it is apparent that the need and dependence upon Internet access will continue to grow. Many of our users do not have Internet access at home and they do not have smart devices. We see the need to be nimble with regards to computer resources. Also, our seating space is being greatly compromised. Some considerations for meeting our need include:

- Additional "group" workstations;
- Reduction in MS Office stations;
- Installation of laptops/notebooks into Discussion Rooms;
- Installation of laptops/notebooks into Renk Room.

Beyond 2015

The library has a replacement plan that requires at least \$30,000 in funding each year to keep up with the needs of an aging facility. Since 2007, budget for this line item has dwindled to \$10,000; however, the Library Board has committed carryover funds to the Facility Replacement Fund every year to sustain its health.

Planning for the future needs to begin now. There will be many things to consider beyond 2015, including:

- How fast the community continues to grow;
- What affect digital technologies and their use have on the market for physical materials;
- How new technologies may allow the library to automate certain collections and services;
- Adding library space to the existing building;
- Adding a location where library service might be implemented on a smaller scale, perhaps on the west side of the city.

A much more detailed study of the library will be needed by 2015 to give guidance on when the library will need more than the 33,000 square feet it now occupies.