



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
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To the Honorable, the City Council:

The Library 21 Committee is nearing the end of phase 2 of its process and we wanted to give you an interim report of what we've accomplished and where we are headed. We also wanted to incorporate by reference to this letter, all of our minutes and our reports. These materials are located in a notebook in the Council office.

Library 21 Mission

Our mission is to "provide a set of recommendations to the City Manager for a library system that includes the roles, services and physical requirements to equitably meet the needs of the people of Cambridge and enhance the quality of life in the City for the 21st century." To accomplish this, we set out on a strategy to include significant public education and outreach that will engage all sectors of the Cambridge community to solicit their input; we are also soliciting advice and assistance from a wide variety of experts. In other words, the Library 21 Committee has a "big tent."

We thought that it was critical to set up a variety of opportunities for people all over the City to get involved so that there will be a broad base of support. We hope that, when we submit our final report, there will be a shared agenda for what goes into a library system as well as what it looks like.

Overview of the process

We've identified five phases leading up to the final recommendations:

1. **May to July 1996, Getting organized:** defining our mission, identifying actions to carry out our strategy, including getting work groups started, talking with city staff, learning about libraries' roles in the communities.
2. **September to December 1996, Casting a wide net - envisioning:** holding neighborhood meetings across the City, talking with School Department staff, business community, Human Service Department staff; full implementation of Work Groups: K through 8th grade readers, Young Adult Readers, Other Libraries, Technology, City Archives, Elders;

bringing in experts for our symposium, "The Public Library in the 21st Century: An Exploration of Possibilities."

3. **January to February 1997, Refining the opportunities – system program:** taking the information from Phase 2 and with appropriate experts and the Cambridge Library Board of Trustees, develop a "master program" for library services, programs and collections; invite input from the public in several town meeting formats; refine again. Bring in all the related issues of transportation, parking, shared use with other City space, operations, etc.
4. **March to April 1997, Development of selected opportunities – physical planning:** using professional assistance, translate the final master program into square foot requirements; depending on the exact space available, there will have to be flexibility in the master program.
5. **May 1997, Preliminary planning and final report**

We wanted to have these separate phases so we could logically move from "needs and wants" to the physical requirements. We felt that there needed to be more time spent bringing a broad range of potential stakeholders, including the School Department, because the library can provide support to so many aspects of Cambridge life and commerce. Once we have an idea of what people would like to have in the public library and have learned from other library systems, then – and only then – will we have an idea of how much space this translates to.

Highlights so far

1. **Mid Cambridge City Park:** One of our tasks in the "getting organized" phase was to understand the chronology of this park. Given that Mid Cambridge has one of the lowest amounts of open space in the City and the general concern over keeping the open space contiguous, Co-Chair Rossi has reaffirmed the City's commitment to protecting the open space on the library site. At some point, we will need to be explicit as to how much square footage can be built as an addition to the Main building.
2. **The condition of the Main building:** It needs serious renovation to provide proper, secure conditions for the collections; staff offices need upgrading; the overall climate and fire systems need upgrading; seating is cramped; the children's area needs repairs to room dividers to provide separate spaces for activities.
3. **The symposium:** The speakers urged us to be creative in attracting new users to the library, they encouraged us to plan for more space rather than less space, to be flexible in the design of the space to allow for unanticipated future uses, to think of the library as the heart of the community, to plan for many more computers than we think we'll need, and to work hard at the planning process.

4. Ann Wolpert, Director, MIT Libraries, said that we should be wary of the seductiveness of technology storage systems. They need constant care and managing. She also said that the MIT library's niche is to support the MIT community and cannot supplement the public library's role.
5. Tour of libraries in Everett, Waltham and Newton: Each of these towns has something relevant to Cambridge. We learned that there are very successful solutions to providing comfortable reading areas, quiet study rooms, ample desks for computer work, separate but accessible young adult rooms, children's spaces for different age groups. In Everett, the library has not one parking space but has an addition that complements it's historical building; Waltham has a reading room with a fire place, an extensive AV collection and seating in the stacks for casual browsing; Newton, the largest building at 91,000 sq. ft, has a 4 story atrium to bring in light, a city archive accessible to residents, a small café for snacks and a well-used gallery space.
6. Discussion with Area 4 teens: Yes, teens do use the library, the Main and Central Square, primarily for school activities, but don't always feel comfortable: the resources are sometimes hard to find; there aren't places to spread out and work on projects in groups; the hours don't always coincide with their available time.

Conclusion

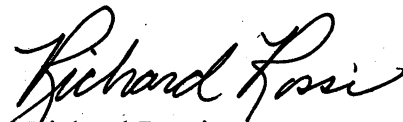
We are keeping to our schedule and trying to balance a process that is inclusionary, yet not so extensive it becomes burdensome. The public library is a unique city function that can actively make a positive difference in every person's life that lives or works in Cambridge, and we want to provide an opportunity for broad involvement.

If you have any questions, or would like more information of any type, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



Nancy Woods
Co-chair, Library 21 Committee



Richard Rossi
Co-chair, Library 21 Committee



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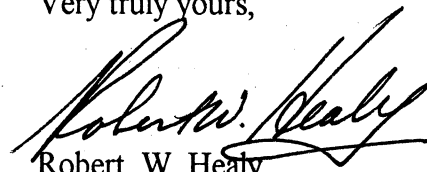
RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

November 13, 1996

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am pleased to submit to you a status report from the Library 21 Committee.

Very truly yours,


Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Attachment

Consent Agenda #11

S-574

Transmitting communication relative to
a status report from the Library 21
Committee.

In City Council November 18, 1996

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