



WASHINGTON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM COMMUNITY FORUM NOTES

June 4, 2015
Stillwater

The following suggestions and comments were expressed by the attendees of the Community Forum held on June 4, 2015 at the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater, MN. Attendees discussed the current services of the library and were asked to write down their wishes and desires for the future of the Washington County Library System. Their comments were recorded according to the following themes:

PROGRAMS (Adults, Teens, Children)

Seniors:

- Senior health programs (Tai Chi, etc.)
- More programs for seniors
- Better large print books, elderly classes for resource gathering
- Encourage seniors to volunteer to assist with literacy for you and for immigrants.

Children:

- Tap into seniors, parents, and teens for reading readiness activities: cross-generational stuff is great.
- Early childhood education such as 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten; summer reading for children in conjunction with school
- More storytimes like programs for 0-10 year old kids
- More programs for kids (preschool, elementary & teens):
- author reads,
- issue discussions (teens),
- how to do something (elementary age)

Teens:

- Book clubs for teens
- Be a champion of youth summer reading
- Teen space for homework and brainstorming (community service projects)

Adults:

- Programs for adults: authors, poets, musicians
- Local and national authors
- More author visits
- Love the White Bear Historical Society programs
- Partnership in sustainability with local businesses
- “How to use the library” classes, i.e. the special books room, what’s in the archives?

COLLECTIONS: Print, Media, Downloadable

Print Books:

- The Stafford library has a good print collection. I hope this will not be reduced by other proposed changes.
- Print books: for browsing, theme-based display of print books, research/STEM magazines
- Keep print copies. As virtual books increase, we need to retain some of the tradition
- Large print books
- Keep books. (I agree!)
- Keep print books: charge \$1 for extra copies of those on demand, charge 5 cents for each overdue book per day
- Update book club kits more frequently
- Have enough books in the collection for book clubs
- More equitable new materials for smaller libraries

Other Materials/Formats:

- I enjoy the magazines
- More movies available for checkout (not everyone affords cable or Netflix or streaming)
- Love being able to check out DVDs and CDs but the collection is pretty minimal and outdated

eBooks:

- Use public domain books to improve the ebook holdings
- More ebooks. Continue to not charge a late fee for overdue books. Checkout period of 3 weeks not 2 weeks. Continue to increase the paperback print collection of new books.

TECHNOLOGY

Access:

- Strong wi-fi is a must. Physical computers and keyboard needed for those who don’t have them.
- One week checkout for Kindles, ebook readers (with sample book checkout) to try out (once in 3 months)
- Advertise/publicize databases
- Offer access to new technology that people cannot afford yet – be ahead of the curve.
- Experimental technology pads/spaces
- Co-operative style spaces people reserve, pay for beyond # number of hours per month.
- MetroNet: County does not use, Ramsey and Hennepin do
- Tap into services of MetroNet

Operations:

- Automatic checkout burns the human relation
- Use fingerprint checkout technology – become cardless
- Checkout books with a cell phone
- Assigned library card numbers are too long and complicated – simplify!

TRAINING AND CLASSES

- Support for entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Training: continue computer classes for seniors
- Adult classes on technology and current interests
- Technical training: computers, ebooks, etc. that comes to us (Marine)
- Senior focus: basic technology introduction classes
- Classes on writing
Classes on writing ebooks
- Establish the OLLIE (Lifelong Learning classes) at Washington County libraries for nominal sum (as Florida and Arizona do) U of M costs too much.
- Serve as the “people’s university” (life skills, child development)
- Facilitate adult and children ESL tutoring or classes

COMMUNITY GATHERING

- Remote office: spaces, power sockets, robust and secure wi-fi, secure desks and coffee makers
- More = Better. Stillwater’s “terrace” is a good example and provides a potential revenue stream (weddings, etc.). In MN, indoor options are preferred as well (e.g. Stafford/Central Park)
- Have some school ceremonies at the libraries to get more people in them.
- Keep community meeting spaces
- Define “library”. Much of the 5 points in the slide presentation could be defined as jobs of the school districts or county social services.
- Small libraries can be vital gathering spaces
- Revitalize depressed downtowns

FUNDING/RESOURCES

- Increase per capita library support to position WCL at least at mid-point of metro libraries
- Raise the library levy!
- Higher taxes for better libraries that make our community more valuable
- We may be well season readers but we pay the taxes.
- Open library on nights and weekends – pay for this by eliminating expense of teens, technology, training and classes
- Volunteers are low cost and community building
- Charge \$1 per visit for adults
- Start charging overdue fines and 25 cents a day for new, popular releases (St. Paul does this I think.)

STAFFING

Open Hours:

- Keep libraries open on weekends
- Sundays please.
- Open Sundays for families with small children and teens and adults who work all weekdays and have family care issues
- Weekend and evening hours
- Keep library open on Sat/Sun please!
- I would like to see Sunday afternoon open time.
- Need evening hours at least once a week for working families
- Open when people can use the library – Sat. & Sun. or even Friday evenings
- Make sure there is someone in charge of each branch. Also don't rotate staff. Let them stay in one location to learn the people and collection.
- Keep Staff. 1) they link us to books, 2) they provide community for seniors and other patrons, 3) they introduce books to young and teen patrons who don't have parents who do this.
- Retraining of staff librarians; new title for "librarians"
- Get the staff away from the help desk and out into the library encouraging patrons
- Keep friendly and professional librarians on staff.
- Some of the staff at the Stafford Library are very knowledgeable about literature. That is extremely important to maintain.
- I visit the library weekly and don't have any interaction with the staff, other than when the checkout equipment doesn't work. What do all of those staff do? Can the library be open with fewer staff?
Use volunteers – they connect with the library patrons
- Give responsibility to volunteers – it will improve the library and could lower the staffing needs. Need people to reach teens.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

- Centralized web site so all branches are aware of all events, services and programs at all libraries in Washington County
- A library website has different needs than a county website. Beef up the library website!
- User-friendly web services and website needed
- Website that works for the average user. Currently it is challenging to use.
- County website is not user-friendly and needs to be redesigned. Google county library and first screen does not even have log-on capability.
- Libraries need to figure out how to reach those users who never come into the branch – the virtual users.

OUTREACH

- Door-to-door delivery of books to elderly/disabled adults or children or drop-off locations such as CUB food stores or other places
- Deliver books to seniors and shut-ins – senior population will grow and they need to be served
- Visiting/outreach to low-income housing – esp. seniors or young families
- Bookmobiles? New pods/lockers, services for "shut-ins" and disabled individuals
- Use volunteers! Needed, great help, and promote community and support

- Continued and enhanced collaboration with outlying community libraries – we share goals for access and experience of the library
- Continuing collaboration with outliers
- Establish/maintain community partnerships at county and local library level
- Faster response to book circulation. Keep people informed about programs.
- Have community library days like have community service days.

LOCATION/FACILITIES

Space Suggestions:

- I like the large meeting space and quiet study spaces
- Use local artists to display rotating artworks for 1-2 month periods. No cost! Community involvement!
- How about outdoor reading gardens?
- Revamp all facilities so they are compatible with 21st century technology. In some branches, need more outlets, so simple yet....
- Recharging stations!!
- I love Wildwood Library
- Provide a community room in each branch
- Have space for gathering with coffee, juices, etc. to bring people together
- As the U.S. moves toward small businesses and telecommuting, libraries should support that with space and technology.
- Offer services like video conferencing and interview rooms and small work rooms

Location:

- We need a library in all towns – not just Woodbury
- Co-location: there are so many options
- Most any “major” or big library with multiple functions/spaces are within 20 minutes from most residents, which seems reasonable. How does this distance ratio compare to other high-quality systems? What about “world class” systems?
- Need renovated increased space in lower St. Croix Valley
- Create specialty locations in the smaller branches, so the newest and best of everything is spread around.
Library can be the heart of a community – need them in small towns as well as big towns/cities such as Woodbury and Forest Lake
- The area north of Highway 36 makes up at least 35% of the geographical area but it is not served by the County in a proportion that is equitable.

OTHER

- The only way to improve communications is to make sure the person in charge of marketing/communication is part of the senior management team.
- New title for library: Learning Center?
- Maintain personal touch – readers suggest book purchases, librarian knows your name
- Make sure when customers walk into a library it looks like a library. I walked into one and all I saw was computers – I felt lost!
- Exploit 3M’s library knowledge
- Maintain library networks for mobile Washington County residents who use multiple libraries.