

## Library Survey – Summary of Comments & Quantitative Data

October 27, 2014

Overall, 316 people responded to the seven question library building survey, offered during the month of October 2014. For the first five questions, a summary of quantitative data and comments are included. For the last two open ended questions, a summary of comments is included. In an effort to make data easier to compare across questions and categories, data has been grouped into those responding **positive** (Excellent or Good, for example) versus those responding **negative** (Fair or Poor), with neutral responses removed and percentages recalculated.

<b>1. How would you rate the *amount* of space currently available for each of the following groups or purposes?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>% Excellent or Good</b>	<b>% Fair or Poor</b>
Quiet Study, Work or Reading	37.5%	62.5%
Children	45.5%	54.5%
Computing & Technology	47.2%	52.8%
Middlebury Community TV	54.0%	46.0%
Small Group Meetings	54.5%	45.5%
Large Group Meetings	54.8%	45.2%
Library Programs & Events	69.1%	30.9%
Adults	81.7%	18.3%

309 respondents

Three clear groups emerged based on their space assessment of fair or poor. It may be helpful for us to use these groupings as we move forward.

1. Top Needs: Quiet study 63% / Children 55% / Computing & Technology 53%
2. Middle Needs: MCTV 46% / Small Meetings 46% / Large Meetings 45%
3. Lower Needs: Library Program & Events 31% / Adult 18%

The comments fairly mirrored the number data groupings except for MCTV probably because it is part of computer and technology more than most people realize. The Children's area garnered the most feedback in the comments section and I want to point out 15 comments that noted kids and teens should have separate space.

- **Quiet study, work or reading: 16 needed, 1 not needed**

*I have been to plenty of library where there is an abundance of space available to sit to use a computer, read, write...this is NOT the case at all at the Ilsey! Seeking privacy is almost impossible*

*Create area for computer and tech that is enclosed so as to minimize noise. Second, create quiet areas for reading, study. TOO much noise from front desk rises to second floor, thus making the area above not really usable for quiet work or reading.*

- **Children's space: 19 needed, 0 not needed**

\* NOTE \* 15 comments requested a separation between kids & teens

- **2 move kids up from basement**

*Quiet study is only possible when library staff and visitors are not talking in normal voices, and when the Vermont room is not being used for meetings, which is never. The space in the Vermont room does not work because sound carries upwards. The children's library is cramped. There are too few computers and library catalog computers need to be spread throughout. The teen use of the meeting room precludes large group meetings at certain times.*

*Children's space could really use some work. Especially the teen space. They have a lot of energy that after school can feel too much for the younger kids. I sometimes bring my second grader there to do homework (she feels like a big kid when we do this) often the noise and energy from the teen area is too much. Young adults need more and different space.*

- **Computing & Technology: 17 needed, 2 not needed**

*I think we need to think of space both for the present and future. Increasingly, meetings use technology to increase participation and reach. We don't always have to limit a group's participation to the actual people gathered in a room.*

- **MCTV: 2 needed, 1 not needed**

*Need easier access to information about MCTV programs that are available to be borrowed for home viewing... I miss a lot of events I'd like to easily pick up to take home for viewing... OR view again in a room at Ilsey. Why isn't there a line for teens in this format. We have poor accommodations to promote their lifestyle uses of learning resources, which tends to be much more "interactive" than the adult library-use/learning styles.*

- **Small Group Meetings: 5 needed**

*The meeting room is used a lot from what I know. Could there be another meeting room downstairs in the teen area? It would be nice to have a smaller meeting room other than the rooms off of the Vermont Room. In that area, there is too much interference from poorly behaved teens to really do anything. Perhaps a restructuring of that space should be considered.*

- **Larger Group meetings: 10 needed, 1 not needed**

*The meeting has grown too small for many library presentations. At the same time, we need a space that works for groups of, say, 20 to 30 participants.*

- **Program & Events**

*We often avoid the children's area - particularly in the summer. We get what we want and leave. If a summer program comes by, the area can be packed with kids and extremely loud.*

- **Adults: 1 more space for seniors, 1 more adult computer space**

8 space is okay, 2 more space

6 more space for books, 6 reconfigure furniture, space and books to fit, 1 building is the limiter, not the configuration, 1 lobby is great, 1 don't lose charm of library, 1 doesn't use library

2 are for the garden, 1 more space for book sale, 2 want more space for friends of library

2 move meetings out to other buildings, 1 move MCTV out, 2 use school library instead, 1 put computers in new town office building for public to use

1 meeting room acoustics could be better, 1 adults hog computers, 1 charge fees for meeting spaces, 1 request for lockers, 1 offer of help

<b>2. How would you rate the *quality* of the space currently available for each of the following groups or purposes?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>% Excellent or Good</b>	<b>% Fair or Poor</b>
Quiet Study, Work or Reading	41.1%	58.9%
Computing & Technology	46.6%	53.4%
Middlebury Community TV	50.4%	49.6%
Children	53.7%	46.3%
Small Group Meetings	56.7%	43.3%
Large Group Meetings	61.5%	38.5%
Library Programs & Events	65.7%	34.3%
Adults	75.0%	25.0%

293 respondents

The same four categories - Quiet Study, Work or Reading; Computing & Technology; Middlebury Community TV; and space for Children – were at the top of the list in terms of areas needing the most improvement as in question #1. Representative comments from those areas were as follows:

*Need for more quiet spaces for adults and children, more comfy couches and chairs for both would be nice.*

*Adequate for adults, except for the computing/technology areas.*

*I think MCTV does a great job with the space it has, but being up in the attic limits comfort, etc.*

*Open unused space abounds for adults..needs better seating, tables, more shelves for browsing..maybe step ups to make divisions in uses or ceiling changes? ....Children's rooms well organized but small for numbers using them. Include window seats...etc. that invite kids to use..like bathtub you have now! Both areas need small group spaces adjacent for programs/fitted out with equip. for videos, etc.One of 'extra' rooms might be outfitted with sink or?? for special programs?*

3. If you or a family member uses the children's library, how would you rate the following?		
Answer Options	% Excellent or Good	% Fair or Poor
Quiet Study, Work or Reading	17.1%	82.9%
Seating	26.2%	73.8%
Working Tables	28.0%	72.0%
Number of Computers	28.7%	71.3%
Small Group Meetings	29.7%	70.3%
Amount of Space	34.5%	65.5%
Location of Computers	35.8%	64.2%
Large Group Meetings	37.4%	62.6%
Ventilation & Temperature	44.7%	55.3%
Access from outdoors	45.9%	54.1%
Shelving	48.2%	51.8%
Lighting	52.3%	47.7%
Location in the Building	61.5%	38.5%

219 respondents

The children's library ranked much lower than the adult's library (see question 4) in every category.

Comments on the children's library reflected the data above, with the most comments received being related to **size** (14 comments), the **basement location** of the children's department (12 comments), and **noise level** (12 comments). Typical comments in these areas were as follows:

- *Programs are great but we need more space and more materials. This area gets a ton of use. We love the library and want to see more expansion.*
- *Basement is not welcoming or well suited for the purpose. It feels like children are being put out of sight-out of mind rather than welcomed*
- *Too bad the library is in the basement...guess that was an after-thought. There is no quiet area for teenagers to go to do their homework. I think that there should also be a quiet area with a computer for them to use as well, no computer games but access to research and not be influenced by the noisy kids that are playing games.*

Other concerns that showed up heavily in the comments section included lighting (9 comments), teenagers (9 comments), computers (9 comments), collection space (8 comments), and overall heavy use (7 comments). Representative comments were:

- *It is cramped and poorly lit. Carpets are dirty and the bathroom smells are unpleasant. It seems to be the most busy part of the library so it should be much better. Reminds me of Kellogg Hubbard in Montpelier before they renovated.*
- *We all know the basement's a bummer. Put the kids on the top floor, keep the fish tank, lose the computers. (and then the following comment was: more computers)*
- *Teens should have a separate area of the library since many stay there after school which can make the children's department unpleasant.*

4. If you or a family member uses the adult's library, how would you rate the following?		
Answer Options	% Excellent or Good	% Fair or Poor
Quiet Study, Work or Reading	40.8%	59.2%
Number of Computers	47.4%	52.6%
Location of Computers	49.3%	50.7%
Seating	51.9%	48.1%
Working Tables	51.9%	48.1%
Small Group Meetings	54.0%	46.0%
Large Group Meetings	58.3%	41.7%
Shelving	67.4%	32.6%
Ventilation & Temperature	70.6%	29.4%
Access from outdoors	72.0%	28.0%
Amount of Space	72.3%	27.7%
Lighting	75.5%	24.5%
Location in the Building	91.9%	8.1%

277 respondents

The adult's library ranked much higher than the children's library (see questions 3) in every category. Compared to the range of responses for the children's library, where anywhere from 83% to 39% of the responses were "Fair or Poor," responses to the question about the adult's library were 59% to 8% "Fair or Poor."

Quiet Study, Work and Reading space again ranked as the number one need for the adult's library, followed by the number and location of computers and then seating. Representative comments are:

*More and quieter study spaces would be appreciated.*

*Isolate the computers, maybe. Who wants to return from the gardening/home improvement section with one's child and have to pass a gauntlet of screen images that aren't really meant to be viewed in public?*

*Difficult to navigate levels, and access from outside, especially if in wheelchair or on crutches. Would be nice to have more computers spread throughout the building. Small quiet study rooms, with computer network access, would be great for both adults and after-school Middle School and High Schoolers. Ventilation in meeting room is inadequate at times. Lighting is okay. Book stacks appear crowded.*

*We like the second floor seating area and the small rooms that are accessible for quick small meetings.*

<b>5. How important do you think it is to have dedicated space in the library for the following?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>% Extremely or Very</b>	<b>% Slightly or Not</b>
Library Garden	60.6%	39.4%
Middlebury Community TV	73.8%	26.2%
Large Group Meetings	82.4%	17.6%
Small Group Meetings	87.2%	12.8%
Teens	93.1%	6.9%
Adults	94.9%	5.1%
Computing & Technology	95.9%	4.1%
Library Programs & Events	96.5%	3.5%
Quiet Study, Work or Reading	97.2%	2.8%
Children	97.5%	2.5%

288 respondents

Overall I don't feel that this question gives all that much guidance or direction. All areas we considered by the majority to more than less important and none were considered predominately not important.

- Children Area was the highest rated as Extremely Important and it was clear from comments that an improved Children's area should be a priority.
- The Library Garden ranked poorly and had the fewest respondents but did receive numerous written comments on how important it is.
- Teen Space Ranked high by way of importance but comments were very wide ranging - from integration of teens into adult spaces and don't segregate by age, to teens having enough spaces around town and they don't need to be in the library.
- MCTV got low ranks for level of importance and many people questioned the need for it to be in the library.
- Meeting Space was considered important by some, but there was hope that space in the new Town Office would address the need.

## **Q 6 How could specific spaces in the library be improved or better utilized?**

124 respondents

A large number of the comments go beyond the strict meaning of the question. For example, many would advocate not improvement of current space but new space. In addition comments move beyond "utilization" to more general comments about lighting, HVAC and so on. I have organized my summary under three headings: Space, Infrastructure, and Services.

### SPACE:

- Children's library: Probably the most commented on item. Comments range from upgrade of current space to much more frequent requests for relocation and/or new space. Many comments on the need to separate teen space from children's.
- Computers: Many comments on the need to relocate computers. To isolate the computer area because of noise. Some interest in distributed computers. The basement is the favored alternate relocation.
- Meeting room: The current large meeting room was faulted. Inadequate lighting, sound system, too small for large meetings, uncomfortable seating. One comment noted that it was underutilized much of the time and suggested trying to use the space for other purposes when no meetings were scheduled. There was expressed need for smaller meeting rooms. The Vermont room space was regarded as unsatisfactory: dark and subject to ambient noise.
- Nooks: several requests for nooks into which one could retreat to read or work on a small table.
- Bathrooms: everything from "iffy" to inadequate for the traffic. Dryers are too noisy!

### INFRASTRUCTURE

- Lighting: many comments on poor lighting both for smaller reading areas and conference rooms.
- Shelving: inconvenient, difficult to see items on the lower (or higher) shelves. Feeling of being cramped.
- Seating: more comfortable seating, particularly in connection with nooks and quiet places to read and study.
- Tables: more small tables. Large tables tend to be underutilized or monopolized
- Acoustics: need for isolating spaces acoustically. Particular issue for teens.
- HVAC: not too hot, not so cool!

### SERVICES

- Cataloguing: requests for clearer organization of CD's, separation of fiction/non-fiction, science fiction and mysteries
- Supervision: control of children and teens. Enforcing "library quiet"
- Instruction: instruction for seniors and others in computing. Tours. Signage. Map of library spaces
- Timing: control amount of time on computers. Extend time for sign-out of DVDs
- Cleanliness: can appear shabby
- Safety: one concern about children falling out of second story windows that are open at the bottom in hot weather. Also a space gap in the elevator entrance.

## **Q7 Is there anything else you would like us to consider about the space needs of Ilsley Public Library?**

126 responded

This question sought ideas that had not been prompted by the previous six questions or that the responders apparently felt were so important they deserved to be repeated. Most responses addressed matters the other questions had not posed. Overall, access to the library was the most urgent problem by a wide margin.

Thirty-one responses cited (a) the lack of parking per se, (b) poor at-grade access from outdoors, or (c) the need for drop boxes where individuals could return books, etc., without having to park their cars. Some local officials think motorists will cope with a shortage of parking if they are truly drawn to attractive places: the “build it, and they will come” theory. I think we need to pay close attention to this issue.

Here are the points made by five or more respondents:

- 17 want more parking next to Ilsley. Many of these think that it will be even more difficult to find parking once the new Town Office Building is open, and even now they find the parking inadequate. (I think such feelings are likely to increase if the EDI project happens unless it includes a major parking garage.)
- 9 re-stated their recommendations that the children’s library be enlarged, brightened up, and rejuvenated. One person who largely agreed with these points, also wrote “I know this section needs more growing room, but part of its charm is the child-like size of the space – low ceilings, short stacks, little cubbies, high windows. My daughter thinks it’s the best kind of hobbit hole, filed with books.”
- 8 persons recommended that IPL improve the ease, safety, and appearance of at-grade access. One noted also that the ramp serving the Community Room is hazardous for older persons in the winter.
- 7 respondents strongly urged that our Garden be saved.
- 6 people want to relocate – and perhaps enlarge – the space where adults currently use computers. They share concerns that computers users cause disturbances and excessive noise. (Several more people complained that Ilsley is too noisy.)
- 6 individuals said the town should not incur more debt, and therefore IPL should not expand.
- 6 want to create a separate space for teen-agers -- perhaps with work stations.
- 6 more asked that IPL install drive-up drop-boxes in the parking area behind the library and at Mary Hogan School so borrowers could return books, etc., without having to park their vehicles.
- 5 people want more, better, and cleaner restrooms.