

To the Ilsley Library Working Group

I was disappointed that I could not attend the meeting with the Working Group charged to review Ilsley's current needs and, one hopes, make recommendations to address them. We were in lockdown at the Residence at Otter Creek.

As a member of the previous committee that recommended the Gossens/Bachman architectural solution, I want to review my conclusions from our work. G/B solved most of the extant problems that were posed by current library facilities. In addition, fundamental structural review revealed issues previously unknown, e.g, leakage through the foundation of the original building and inflexibility in the 1988 addition. I emphasize the solution to problems lest there is any suspicion that recommended architectural solution and price were motivated by a lust for monumentality. On the contrary, the G/B scheme just solved Ilsley's identified problems.

Of course there may be other architectural solutions that will also solve Ilsley's short and long term needs. I am a great admirer of architectural ingenuity. Be that as it may, the solution to the problems at hand presented issues which were repeatedly interlocked. To solve issue A required also solving B and the C and so on....

Let me start with what I consider essential issues in any scheme worth funding. I do so in no ranked order.

* Infrastructure issues: foundation, windows, HVAC, etc. My sense is that solving only these issues alone without addressing programmatic and functional problems could cost \$3million plus.

* Entrance: for utilization and safety Ilsley needs a new entrance directly in sight of a circulation desk and security station. The current entrance from the parking lot not only fails for security reasons – it is out of sight of staff and only a few steps to the children's library – but it also fails to “introduce” the library. The entrance opens to a stairwell to [somewhere]. The current entrance off Main street also fails on the issue of security, in winter it is locked due to icy steps — and it is inaccessible to the handicapped. While we did consider replacing the Main street entrance with a new entrance off the parking lot, we considered the effect on other functions less than optimal. We agreed that the prime entrance should be on Main Street.

* A “readable” plan: the current library does not present a readable linkage of places and functions. To solve that problem – and to create new acceptable space for the children's library and create a fully functional community room– the 1988 addition proved a highly problematic issue – and led to the most controversial part of our proposal. We accepted G/B's analysis that the structural character of the 1988 addition could not be modified into open and flexible space. By removing the 1988 addition, it became possible to provide appropriate space for the children's library, proper location for the elevator, Main street entrance, and the circulation desk in sight of all entrances.

I am heartened by the attempt to again review Ilsley's needs which are basically the same as the ones we addressed. My greatest concern is that a recommendation only spruces up and repairs to the current configuration. If removing the 1985 addition seems improvident, removing the 1977 entrance area with elevator is absolutely necessary.

Warning! If you remove the 1977 appendage, a cascade of linked issues will arise that will, I believe, inevitably lead in the directions suggested by our recommendations and the G/B proposal.

Good luck!

Dennis O'Brien