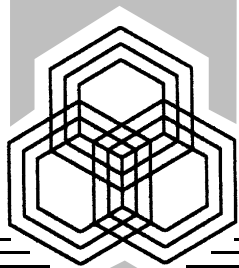


Service & Space Needs Scenarios: A Planning Outline

prepared for the
Walter E. Olson Memorial Library

Eagle River, WI



Anders C. Dahlgren / Consulting Librarian

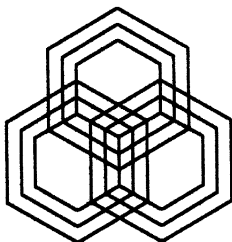
SERVICE & SPACE NEEDS SCENARIOS: A PLANNING OUTLINE

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Walter E. Olson Memorial Library

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November 26, 2002

Prepared by:
Anders C. Dahlgren



**ANDERS C. DAHLGREN / CONSULTING
LIBRARIAN**

P.O. Box 44006
Madison, WI 53744

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Library board and staff at the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library have come to acknowledge the need to explore long-term library service goals and space needs. The library's existing facility – planned and built in the late 1970s– has started to compromise the library's ability to provide sufficient resources and deliver quality services to the residents of Eagle River and the surrounding area.

Anders C. Dahlgren was engaged to assist the library board and staff with that review. This report outlines service scenarios for future growth at the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library and defines the corresponding space needs based on those library service goals. It is presented so that local library trustees and staff have an understanding of the range of planning issues facing the library. It is also presented as a starting point for discussion as to the suitability of the service goals proposed for the library and the feasibility of expansion strategies to support those goals.

The space needs are presented in a range, meant to reflect differing degrees of efficiency in service planning and library design – in an optimum setting, based on the service goals proposed for the library, the library's facility should provide roughly 27,024 square feet; at the very minimum, based on the proposed service goals, the library's facility should be 19,566 square feet in area. Within this range from high to low, a preliminary space needs estimate of 23,800 square feet is recommended.

The essential service goals the library seeks to support through this building include:

- a book collection of 62,700 volumes
- a periodical collection of 130 titles
- a nonprint collection of 6,820 items
- 18 computer network stations for public use

- 74 reader seats
- 21 staff work stations
- a library program room to seat an audience of 75
- a storytime room to seat an audience of up to 25
- a conference or board room to seat 12

This report examined a variety of expansion options at the present site – an expansion to the north, a wrap-around addition to the north and east, as well as the possibility of razing the existing building and building anew at the present site.

While these options do not exhaust the range of options that may be available to the library, it was determined that all of the options considered posed potential challenges and limitations. It appears that barring expansion of the existing site through the acquisition of adjacent land, the present location cannot reasonably support a building of the size recommended here. New construction on a new site appears to be the most fruitful option for meeting the library’s long-term service goals and space needs.

Pending the board’s review of these findings and their continuing assessment of these options, one of three broad paths will be pursued:

- if the present site can support a building of the scale described here but only if the site is expanded through the acquisition of one or more adjacent parcels, the library should explore the availability of the necessary parcel(s), followed by development of a building program statement and selection of an architect.
- if the present site cannot support a building of the scale described here, the library will need to initiate a site selection study to identify and acquire a new site for new construction.
- if the library is determined to remain on this site or if there is simply no other site is available, the service and resource inventory goals defined here will need to be scaled back to reduce back the overall space needed to support its services and goals in order to fit on the available site.

The Walter E. Olson Memorial Library cannot develop and extend its resources or improve services to the community without an expanded and improved library facility. The current building has served the community well for a generation or more. The time has come to provide a new foundation for the new millennium.

2 *PLANNING PARAMETERS for RECOMMENDING LIBRARY SERVICES*

In this section of the report, the underlying service and planning parameters for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library and this study are defined and described. The essential and elementary concept underlying this study is the first theme expressed below, that a library's service goals determine its space needs.

2.1. Library service goals determine space needs

For the purpose of developing a preliminary estimate of space need, a service-based methodology is recommended for assessing space needs. Such a methodology is organized around six broad kinds of space found in most libraries, regardless of whether the subject is a public library, academic library, school library or special library:

- *Collection space:* to house the library's basic print and nonprint collection.
- *Reader seating space:* to provide a variety of comfortable seating for library patrons to use the library's resources in-house.
- *Staff space:* to provide staff work stations as needed to support the library's various routines and operations (circulation, technical services, public services, administration, etc.).
- *Programming / meeting space:* to accommodate library programming for the general public, meetings of the library board and/or staff, as well as meetings of other community groups.

- *Special use space*: to house those pieces of unique library furniture or special library functions that have not been accounted for in previous types of space (e.g., public copiers, atlas stands, dictionary stands, pamphlet files, microfilm readers, public typewriters, etc.).
- *Nonassignable space*: to house those spaces which must be provided to support a functioning building but which cannot be assigned directly to library purposes (e.g., vestibules, restrooms, stairwells, furnace rooms, etc.).

Regarding each of these six types of space, the extent of the library's program of service and its preferred set of resource and service inventory goals will determine the library's space needs. By examining the library's past acquisition practices, comparing the library with peer institutions, and applying any applicable state-level standards, prospective service goals can be established, and a formula is applied to translate those program needs into the corresponding spatial requirements.

By examining the library's program of services expressed according to each of these six types of space, quantifying the respective space need in each, then adding together the six individual projections, the result is tailored to meet the specific needs of the individual community to a much greater extent than could ever be attained with a simpler, traditional measure of overall floor space per capita. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the results of this initial assessment do not necessarily account for *every* type of area needed by a given library. The intent is to provide an estimate of space need that is more precise than may be gained by traditional measures – though not necessarily an exact estimate – and accurate enough to allow the reasoned discussion of alternatives to meet these projected needs; subsequent refinement will provide a more accurate projection of space needs. The intent is also to demonstrate, through a basic example, the input-oriented process of space needs assessment.

2.2. The planning horizon

Library space planning usually results in a capital project of significant scope and expense. In order to achieve the highest possible return on the community's capital investment, local authorities should strive to meet not only the present service needs of the community, but its future needs as well. A library should grow into its facility, with sufficient space provided for shelving and other resources so that the setting does not become too soon overcrowded.

The conventional planning timetable for library facilities planning is twenty years. Over time, library planners have come to agree that a building designed to meet a twenty-year need will provide a suitable return on the community's investment, building to meet tomorrow's needs at today's pre-inflationary construction costs.

The planning horizon for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library study is set here to the year 2020, which allows roughly twenty years of use from the present time. Allowing for construction, this leaves the library with less than the preferred twenty-years of productive use, but available demographic and other forecasts do not extend beyond this date.

The recommendations presented here are meant to define an environment from which the library may respond to the needs of the service community during the years to come, acknowledging that change is occurring so quickly – socially, technologically, in every way – that the best strategy for dealing with the library's future needs is to provide a plan that is flexible and can be adapted for different uses in the future.

2.3. Design population

The first step in making an initial assessment of a library's space need is the determination of the library's design population – the population of the library's service community, on which the design for an expanded or remodeled building should be based. Although per

capita measures may be arbitrary – or at the very least may seem arbitrary – a per capita measure remains a useful tool for calculating some recommendations regarding individual program needs within a library’s broader range of services.

It is crucial that the design population represents a *projection* of the service community’s size, preferably twenty years hence. This corresponds with the axiom that facilities planning should meet the community’s long-term needs.

The current population of the library’s service area, based on the library’s latest annual reports, is estimated at 9,945. Official local forecasts anticipate relatively modest growth over the next twenty years or so, although some library trustees and others interviewed for this assessment expressed concerns that the official projections are too cautious. For purposes of the current study, the resident, or “municipal” population was forecast to grow to 11,000.

For reasons associated with the application of the Wisconsin public library standards (see the following section), it is also important to assess the impact of *nonresident use* of the library. Through the library’s participation in the Northern Waters Library Service, Eagle River residents enjoy the opportunity to use other libraries in the system and beyond. As a condition of system membership, the library is obligated to offer reciprocal service to patrons from other nearby library service areas. If the library did not accommodate this additional service aspect in its planning, it would result in a building expansion plan that will be too soon outgrown, to the disadvantage of the library’s primary service population – the residents of Eagle River and the surrounding townships.

An estimate of the library’s resident population can be adjusted to reflect a representation of the number of nonresidents who use the library. While the population of a library’s primary service area can be enumerated within the boundaries of that service area, the nonresident population is less precisely defined. Nonresident borrowers may come to the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library for a variety of reasons (convenience to shopping or work, the availability of resources not

otherwise available at their home library), from any number of points of origin. and a headcount of this portion of the library's service population is therefore difficult to accomplish.

For planning purposes, however, an estimate of the number of "nonresident equivalent" borrowers can be made. Given recent use patterns at the library – circulation activity by residents versus nonresidents, the rate of resident borrower registration as a percentage of total population – an estimate of 1,294 nonresident equivalents can be made for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library.¹ Adding the nonresident borrower population to the projected local population produces an estimated "service" population of 12,294 (11,000 residents + 1,294 nonresident equivalents).

¹ In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it is assumed that residents and nonresidents tend to borrow materials at the same rate per capita. If that's the case, and residents account for, say, X% of the library's circulation, then residents also account for X% of the library's total service population. Furthermore, if one assumes that the broad balance between resident and nonresident use will remain constant during the period contemplated by this planning study, then (continuing the same example) the projected resident population will account for X% of the library's projected service population.

Recently, resident circulation at the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library has accounted for slightly more than 81% of total use. Based on the library's present resident population of 9,945 if residents represent 81% of total use and therefore 81% of the total service population, then the total service population is 12,202 ($9,945 \div 0.8150$) and the nonresident population is 2,257 ($12,202 - 9,945$). If this 81% resident use ratio were to remain constant over the planning timeframe, the same 81% ratio could be applied against the library's projected resident population (11,000) to estimate the projected nonresident population.

It must be acknowledged, however, that all of the library's municipal residents do not together produce the library's resident circulation. Instead, the library's *registered resident borrowers* produce the library's annual resident circulation. The library's recent rate of registration as a percentage of population has hovered just over 61%. If that average registration rate were applied against the latest municipal census, it would produce a current estimate of 6,108 resident registered borrowers. If this resident borrower population were used as the base for calculating the current nonresident equivalent population, applying the 81% resident / 19% nonresident ratio, the current nonresident equivalent population is 1,432.

Assuming, however, that the library's registration rate will increase over time to 67% and that the balance between resident and nonresident use will shift slightly in favor of increased resident use (to 85% resident use / 15% nonresident use), the projected local population of 11,000 will produce a resident borrower population of 7,300 ($11,000 \times 0.6667$) and a projected nonresident borrower population of 1,899 ($7,333 \div 0.8500 = 8,627 - 7,333 = 1,294$). Adding the nonresident borrower population to the projected local population produces a design population of 12,294 (11,000 residents + 1,294 nonresident equivalents). This projected service population is used to guide the assessment of various collection development and service options for the library.

The library’s projected “municipal” population (11,000) and its projected “service” population (12,294) represent two different ways of expressing the library’s design population.

2.4. Standards for library service

The state library agency in Wisconsin, the Division for Libraries, Technology and Community Learning (DLTCL) within the Department of Public Instruction, is charged with producing standards for public library service. The most recent such standards were issued in 1999.

The standards define recommended quantitative resource and service goals for libraries based either on a library’s municipal population or an extended “service” population; libraries may choose whether to apply the standards based on their municipal population or their service population. The standards also define various “levels of effort” to reflect the fact that different communities may have different levels of expectation regarding library service. Based on the level of services demanded by their patrons, a library may elect to meet the standard at the “basic” level, at a “moderate” level, an “enhanced” level, or an “excellent” level.

The effort to define standards according to these two parallel paths – municipal population and service population – stems from the fact that in the Wisconsin library setting, public libraries are established by municipalities to serve their municipal residents but through system membership agreements libraries also serve residents of the outlying county where there is no direct municipal support for public library service. Although service paradigms vary from one part of the state to another, typically residents in those outlying parts of the county with no direct municipal support for libraries are in fact supported through a county allocation that is distributed to the existing municipal libraries in the county through a locally-agreed-upon formula.

In this setting, for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library, the consultants recommend the library’s “municipal” population as the

basis for establishing service goals. This recommendation stems from two observations: first, forecasts of the “municipal” population can be more objectively defined, and second, practice has shown that the application of an extended “service” population can be more effective in those parts of the state where the county-wide share of population residing in municipalities is small or where the relative share of outlying county residents’ use of a given municipal library is large.

Because neither of the latter two conditions apply in Eagle River, the Wisconsin standards based on a “municipal” service area are employed here, using the population noted above (11,000).

Based on a municipal design population of 11,000, the Wisconsin public library standards recommend the service and resource inventory levels reported on the chart above. At the “basic” level of effort, the standards recommend a collection of 44,000 volumes, 1,320 audio recordings, and 1,210 video recordings, and so on. At a more assertive service level, the “moderate” level of effort, the standards recommend a collection of 50,600 volumes, 1,980 audio recordings, and 1,760 video recordings.

2.5. The library's mission

Finally, note that the library's mission also affects long-term service goals. The library board has adopted a mission statement that guides the development of its services and resources:

The Walter E. Olson Memorial Library is organized to assemble, preserve, and administer an organized collection of books and other materials. Such a collection aids in the communication of ideas and promotes an enlightened citizenry and enriches their lives. The aim of the library is to serve the community as a center of reliable information and to provide a place where inquiring minds may meet original and often critical ideas that are essential stimulants to life in a society that depends for endurance on the free exchange and competition of ideas. And, finally, the Library is the logical center for encouraging children, young people, and adults to educate themselves continuously, and for affording them an opportunity to do so.

The library's mission and its stated goals and objectives provide direction for this study and as scenarios for future service delivery were considered.

3 *LIBRARY SERVICE GOALS & SPACE NEEDS: a planning model*

Appropriate space allocations for library services are based in a variety of environmental factors. The space needed to house the book collection is affected by the height of the shelves, the width of the aisles, the type of material being housed, and the amount of face-out display of the collection the library wishes to support, among other factors. As the pieces of the library are assembled in a plan, the general efficiency of design also affects the amount of space needed by the library.

This section outlines alternate space allocation formulas for different aspects of the library's program of service, in some cases acknowledging that the physical environment can be planned to meet an "optimum" space need, a "moderate" space need, or a "minimum" space need.

3.1. Housing the collection

The space needed to house a library's collection is determined by the size of the collection and a series of environmental choices or parameters that define the shelving environment, including the type of material to be housed, the height of the shelves, and the width of the aisle.

3.1.1. Books

Library books can be housed in a variety of shelving environments. Some are more space efficient than others, ranging from 5 volumes per square foot to 30 volumes per square foot, depending on such factors as the type of material being housed, the height of the shelving unit, and the width of the aisle in the bookstacks. Compact shelving units can accommodate even more material in the same amount of space.

An optimum estimate of library shelving capacity is 10 volumes per square foot. Ten volumes per square foot supports a setting that allows an aisle wider than the bare minimum 36" required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Shelf units may be somewhat shorter than might otherwise be found in a library, so that all of the shelving can be more easily reached. Each individual shelf will be planned with a more generous "working capacity" – meaning that more of each shelf will be reserved to accommodate day-to-day shifting and use of the collection, which also makes the stacks easier for patrons to use. In general, this optimum allocation of 10 volumes per square foot establishes the best possible balance between a setting that provides a reasonable collection capacity while maximizing patrons' ease of use.

If the library elects to pursue more assertive strategies for housing its collections, the library can certainly increase the number of volumes per square foot to be accommodated. A moderate estimate of capacity is 11.5 volumes per square foot, while a minimum estimate is 13 volumes per square foot (for clarity's sake, the label "minimum" is applied to what seems to be the "maximum" measure described here – 13 volumes per square foot instead of 10 or 11 – because this measure when applied to a library's collection produces the smallest recommended total square footage to house the collection).

As the library's collection capacity per square foot is increased from the optimum level of 10 volumes per square foot, the library is backing off from that optimum physical shelving environment. As the allocation of volumes per square foot increases, the library is less and less likely to be able to achieve a 42" or a 48" aisle, and is instead more and more likely to house its collection in bookstacks that have only the bare minimum 36" aisle required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. As the allocation of volumes per square foot increases, the library is likely to need taller and taller shelves to achieve its capacity goal. Instead of 84" full-height shelving, the library becomes more likely to need 90" full-height shelving – which becomes more difficult for more of the library's patrons to use.

For any larger collection – defined as holdings in excess of 100,000 volumes – it is also important to acknowledge that a portion

of the collection will be in circulation at any given time, thereby relieving the library of the need to provide shelf space for that material. Allowing for seasonal variations, it is typical to find that 10% of the collection will be in circulation at any given time. This “percent-in-circulation” factor is not considered in smaller collections for two reasons: (1) the portion in circulation from a smaller collection will number fewer volumes and account for a less significant area, and (2) in a smaller collection, there is a narrower margin for error in making estimates regarding the collection’s long-term growth and by calculating the floor space needed for the entire collection one balances that margin for error.

3.1.2. Periodicals

Similar considerations affect the space needs of the library’s periodical collection. The shelving environment determines the capacity of the collection and the square footage needed to support the collection. Housing a periodical collection is slightly complicated by the fact that typically two distinct types of shelving are required: display shelving for current issues and storage shelving for backfiles.

Note that the Americans with Disabilities Act limits current periodical display to a 54" maximum reach height in settings where individuals in a wheelchair can make a side approach and a 48" maximum reach height where only a front approach can be made. (The height of library shelving in all other parts of the collection is expressly “unlimited” under the requirements of the ADA.) In either case, display shelving for current periodicals must be lower than full-height shelving, which imposes a space premium on display of current issues.

In display environments, a library should allow 1.0 periodical title per square foot; in storage environments, a library should allow 0.5 square foot per title per year retained.

3.1.3. Nonprint collections

Audiovisual collections today appear in four major formats –

videocassettes, audio cassettes, compact discs, and CD-ROMs. The library should plan to provide all four in the short term. Videocassettes may be supplemented by other video formats in the future. Compact discs are expected to become the audio format of choice in the future because of the superior durability and sound quality. On the average, libraries can store recordings at an average of 10 items per square foot.

The key issue regarding the space needs of a nonprint collection is whether the library elects to display the collection in a single-box or double-box fashion. In a single-box display strategy, the item itself is placed on the open public shelf in its display case or plastic jacket. Patrons can then browse through the collection and make their selections directly. In a double-box display strategy, the library keeps the original videocassette or the CD secure behind a staff service counter while a “dummy” for the item is placed on the open shelf to indicate that the original is available for loan. The patron takes the dummy copy to the service desk, where it is exchanged for the actual item and charged to the patron. A double-box system is employed when the library has a concern for the security of the collection. Obviously, a double-box storage and display system for nonprint materials has an impact on the library’s space needs because an allowance must be made to store both the original and the dummy copy. A double-box storage and display system also demands more staff time for the retrieval of material at the patron’s request.

3.1.4. Electronic / digital resources

Public network stations should be provided in a variety of environments to meet a variety of patron needs and to encourage ready access to digital resources when a patron needs that access. Libraries must provide a balance of settings that will support patrons’ long-term use of electronic resources and at the same time encourage patrons to keep these stations available for other patrons who need to use them.

To that end, this planning model anticipates three settings for public network stations. The first setting provides terminals at a standing station. This setting is meant to provide quick and ready

access to digital resources. It is not meant to encourage long-term patron use. By encouraging more frequent turnover here, the standing stations will help ensure access to these resources. Each of these stations is allocated 30 square feet. Because patrons sometimes do need to spend extended periods consulting electronic resources, the second and third settings are provided in a seated environment. The second setting is a simple, small table or carrel, with an allocation of 40 square feet. The third provides terminals in a larger seated environment, with an allocation of 50 square feet. There will be sufficient space in these settings to support additional peripherals (possibly scanners or other input devices). There will be sufficient space for patrons to bring additional print resources to these stations and work for an extended period of time.

3.2. Supporting readers using the library

Reader seating should be provided in a variety of settings to meet a variety of user needs:

- lounge seating is appropriate in a browsing area or in an audiovisual listening area
- carrel seating provides private spaces for individual study
- group seating at tables is appropriate to provide an opportunity for small groups of patrons to work quietly together or to allow one or two individuals to spread their research out in front of themselves.

Seating should also be varied to meet patrons' physical needs. Small-scale seating is appropriate in the children's library; firm seating with arm rests is appropriate in a setting where senior citizens use the collection.

These different kinds of seating require different amounts of space. An allowance of 25 square feet per seat should be made for seating at reading tables. Lounge seating, on the other hand, requires approximately 40 square feet per seat. Individual carrel seating

requires 30 square feet per seat. This initial space needs assessment assumed an average allocation of 30 square feet per seat.

3.3. Supporting staff work routines

The allocation for individual staff work routines varies depending on the nature of the work being performed at any given station:

- public service desk work stations in this planning model are allowed an average of 150 square feet each, an allocation that provides space for the staff chair or stool, the desk, modest associated file space and, notably, space for patron queues to form
- staff work stations in work rooms and offices generally follow a space allocation model that allows 80 to 100 square feet for a clerical station (sufficient for a desk and chair, a PC and phone, some modest attendant file storage, either in a cabinet or on shelves, and adjacent corridor space to approach the station)
- 100 square feet for a station to support a librarian (the larger area typically required for additional files and storage for those positions)
- 125 square feet for a supervisor / department head's station (the still larger area typically required to accommodate additional files *and* to better accommodate an enclosed office to provide the privacy a supervisor sometimes needs to deal with personnel and other issues)

The space required for each staff work station will vary, depending in part on how assertively or efficiently the library's space plan will need to be. In an optimum environment, allow 150 square feet per staff work station. In a moderate environment, allow 137.5 square feet per staff work station. In a minimum environment, allow 125 square feet per staff work station.

3.4. Supporting library programming space

Space for public programming rooms typically is allocated at 10 square feet per audience seat in a conventional meeting room, arranged in a theatre-style setting. Additional allocations are made to support a speaker / presenter and projection equipment and the like. In Wisconsin, however, the state's building code has been revised to require an allocation of 15 square feet per meeting room seat. For this study, that higher allocation has been used.

Space for a children's programming room typically is allocated at 10 to 20 square feet per seat, depending on whether children's programming activities typically accommodate a craft activity in addition to the more traditional storytime. The smaller allocation is appropriate if children's program activities are limited to storytimes, while the larger allocation is suited to an environment that will support crafts and other activities in conjunction with storytimes. The larger allocation allows staff to set up small work tables for the children and to support supplies storage and a sink and clean-up facilities, as needed.

Conference space is typically used by the library board for its regular monthly meeting and any committee or other meetings that might be necessary between the board's regular meetings. A conference room would also be used by staff for planning and coordination meetings. A conference room would be available for use by small community groups when not being used by the library. Space for conference rooms typically is allocated at 30 square feet per seat, drawing its allocation from an environmental similarity with general reader seating at tables. Additional allocations are made to support a gallery or audience, as well as projection equipment and the like, as needed.

Space for a computer training room typically is allocated at 50 square feet per seat, in order to accommodate not just the trainee at a desk or table but the computer equipment that the trainee will use in the class. An instructor's station needs to be larger than the other stations in a classroom because the instructor's station usually needs to

support additional equipment, such as an overhead projector.

3.5. Providing for “special use” support functions

Typically, special use space in a public library constitutes an area equal to 10-15% of the projected gross area of the building. The amount of special use space a library needs will be determined by the number of photocopiers or microfilm reader-printers the library wishes to provide. It will be determined by the number and size of small group study rooms that the library wishes to provide. It will also be determined by factors like whether or not the library wishes to provide a public lounge or a coffee shop within the library.

In an optimum setting, a library should reserve 15% of its gross area for special use purposes. A library that plans to provide a public lounge or coffee shop likely falls at this end of the spectrum. In a moderate setting, a library should reserve 12.5% of its gross area for special use purposes. In a minimum setting, a library should reserve 10% of its gross area for special use purposes.

3.6. Providing for “nonassignable” support functions

Nonassignable space is defined as “those areas or rooms of the library necessary for the general use and operation of the building but not serving specific library functions, such as foyers, vestibules, corridors (but not aisles in bookstacks or other furnishings), stairs, elevators, toilets, janitor rooms or closets, ventilation ducts, and mechanical equipment areas” (from *Measurement and Comparison of Physical Facilities for Libraries*, ALA, 1970).

Nonassignable space needs for mechanical systems are determined largely by engineering requirements. Design specialists will direct how large certain pieces of equipment need to be in order to meet the environmental specifications for the library. Other nonassignable space needs will be determined by local codes. The number of fixtures needed in each restroom will likely be determined by code, and the

number of fixtures will determine the space needs of those facilities (as will the accessibility regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act).

In an optimum setting, a library should reserve 27.5% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes. In a moderate setting, a library should reserve 25.0% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes. In an absolute minimum setting, a library should reserve 22.5% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes.

4 *SERVICE GOALS & SPACE NEEDS:* *an application of the space planning methodology*

Following the definition of projected service goals and resource inventories for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library, the space needs allocation model described in the previous section can be applied and the corresponding space needs of the library can be calculated.

4.1. Collections

Collection space can be allocated upon the determination by the board and staff of projected collection development parameters for the library's book collection, periodicals collection, and nonprint collection. Access to electronic information resources is also considered as part of the library's collection development goals. A fundamental planning assumption underlying these collection development goals is that traditional library resources will continue to develop *in parallel* with newer, digital information resources. Electronic resources are expected to have an impact on the library's reference and periodical collections initially, and later may affect other resources. For the most part, however, electronic resources will not supplant traditional resources, but supplement them.

Consideration is given to collection development targets for books, periodicals (both current display and back issues retained), nonprint material, and computer network stations for public access to electronic information. In the case of the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library, service targets for collection size can be drawn from a variety of analyses, including public library standards, library annual report data, comparisons with peer libraries statewide, and comparisons with peer libraries nationwide.

4.1.1. Books

Based on the Wisconsin public library standards, the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library should provide a minimum “basic” collection of 44,000 volumes. At a higher, “moderate” level of effort, the library should provide a collection of 50,600 volumes. At an “enhanced” level of effort, the library’s collection should number 62,700 volumes. And at the highest level of effort, the library should provide an “excellent” collection of 77,000 volumes.

Through the library’s recent long-range planning efforts, the staff and board determined that the “enhanced” level of effort would be suitable for this community – 62,700 volumes. This was deemed somewhat more modest than the topmost level of effort defined by the standards, yet responsive to the higher expectations for ample resources that are being expressed, especially by newer residents moving into the area from other parts of the state or country where there are more established libraries.

As part of this study, recent collection development trends were examined as a means of forecasting possible collection growth at the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library (see Appendix C). Of the models developed to explore these growth trends, one series – those based on extending the library’s recent rate of net addition as a rolling five-year average – was discounted as unrealistic. This series was unduly influenced by the library’s recent heavy withdrawals from the collection and actually produced a negative forecast for growth. The other trend analyses were deemed more realistic. The first series – based on the library’s average net rate of addition over the last ten years – produced growth estimates ranging from a low of 47,000 volumes to a high of just under 70,000 volumes (with three of the five trend lines producing a collection of more than 60,000 volumes). The third series – based on variations on the library’s recent gross rate of addition – produced growth estimates ranging from a low of 41,300 volumes to a high of 67,500 volumes (with two of the five trend lines producing a collection of more than 60,000 volumes).

These two projections – the first and third series – indicate that

based on the library's past acquisitions patterns, it is entirely reasonable to anticipate a collection that will grow to 62,700 volumes, the "enhanced" level recommended by the Wisconsin public library standards.

(At the same time, these projections suggest that a collection growth goal 77,000 volumes, based on the "excellent" level of service recommended by the standards, could not be achieved at the library's recent rate of growth. Were local planners to adopt such a goal, the library' would need to improve its acquisitions rate.)

Also, in support of this study, several benchmark samples were drawn from a national library services database for the purpose of creating a point of comparison with the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library. These samples included

- all Wisconsin libraries
- Wisconsin libraries serving 5,000 to 15,000 population
- public libraries nationwide serving 9,500 to 10,500 population
- public libraries nationwide serving 12,000 to 13,000 population

The second sample effectively brackets both the library's current and projected population. The third brackets the library's current population, while the last brackets the library's projected population. Data from these comparative sample populations is presented in an appendix to this report.

In every instance, a book collection goal of 62,700 volumes would place the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library in the upper quartile in comparison with the sample group. Local trustees and staff felt that this reflected an appropriate result and a suitable goal for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library.

Accordingly, a collection development goal of 62,700 volumes was confirmed.

4.1.2. Periodicals

A similar comparison can be made for periodicals. However, because periodical literature is migrating into digital form, there appears to be less impetus to create a larger and larger collection of periodicals. In comparison with Wisconsin public library standards and peer library benchmarks, it is agreed that a more moderate collection development goal would be suitable in Eagle River.

While the recommended book collection places the library at the “enhanced” level of service defined by the Wisconsin public library standard, for periodicals, a more modest recommendation is appropriate – at 130 titles, the “basic” level of service advocated in the Wisconsin public library standard. A collection of 130 titles, while reflecting a more modest level of effort in the Wisconsin standards, nevertheless places the library in the upper quartile in comparison with all sample groups.

Of that number, the library should expect to retain 90% – 117 in all – in backfiles, for a period of two years, on average. Some titles (news magazines, for instance) may be retained for a longer period, while other, more ephemeral titles may be retained for a shorter period.

4.1.3. Nonprint materials

Acknowledging that more and more information is being presented in nonprint formats, many libraries are seeking to balance their collections with a higher proportion of nonprint holdings, in many cases approaching a nonprint collection that is up to 10% as large as the library’s print collection. (The library’s current rate of nonprint holdings as a percent of print holdings has grown to 7.90%, down from a peak of 10.00% in 1999 since which time the library has been forced to weed nonprint holdings owing to lack of shelf space, but up from 3.85% ten years ago.)

In response to the public’s demand for nonprint formats, illustrated by the increasing circulation rates for this material, it is appropriate to define a more assertive collection development goal for the library’s

nonprint holdings. At the “excellent” level of service defined by the Wisconsin public library standards, the library would support a collection of 4,070 audio recordings and 2,750 video recordings.

This combined collection numbering 6,820 items would represent a nonprint holdings ratio of 10.88%. Given the library’s current ratio, this means that the library’s nonprint holdings would be projected to grow at a faster rate than the library’s print holdings. In comparison with all four peer institution samples, a nonprint ratio in excess of 10% would place the library in the upper quartile.

A nonprint collection totaling 6,820 items is recommended.

4.1.4. Electronic resources

Computer technology offers a newer means of providing access to information. The library community continues to learn more about how these tools are being used by the public. Each individual terminal becomes a separate point of access to digital and electronic forms of information. It is essential that sufficient points of access are provided.

Because the character of these electronic resources is changing so rapidly, there are no accepted, tested guidelines describing how many terminals a library should provide. For a community of this size, it would not be unusual for the library to project as many as 18 computer terminals for public use. (Today’s inventory of just three computers is severely limited owing to space constraints in the present building.)

Accordingly a service goal of 18 computer network stations for public use is established.

In addition, it is anticipated that the number of “dedicated” terminals or public network stations to be provided by the library will be complemented by a building design – an electrical and data transmission system – that will foster the patrons’ ability to plug their own laptop at individual study carrels and seats, thus further expanding the library’s ability to support digital access to information.

Also note that this planning model addresses the provision of computers for *public* use. It assumes that computers for staff use will be provided as needed as part of the corresponding staff work stations.

4.2. Reader seating

The literature on library space planning includes several formulas for recommending reader seating quantities in public libraries. Typically these formulas are presented in the form of X seats per 1,000 population, with X decreasing as the population increases. The consultant has crafted an interpolation of these various formulas, the result of which is a recommendation that a library serving a population of this size provide roughly 74 reader seats. This would include only open, general purpose reader seating. Seats in a specialized or dedicated use environment – in a small group study room, for example, or at a computer terminal or a microform reader or an index table – would not be included in this count. As a point of comparison, today the library provides some 45 general-purpose reader seats.

4.3. Staff work stations

The space needed to support staff operations relates to the specific nature of those operations. There is not necessarily a correlation between the number of individuals or full-time equivalent staff on a library's payroll and the number of staff work stations that a library may need. Certainly a larger staff complement will require more space, but the number of staff is not the sole determinant for how many work stations a library will need. Work flow, work loads, efficient work patterns, and patron demands for support can also condition the number of work stations a library needs to provide. The number of work stations in turn determines the amount of space the library will need to support its staff.

The number of staff work stations recommended here – 21 in all – is based on the level of current and projected patron activity at public service desks, the consultants' direct observation of current work

routines, the need to provide for additional stations as work loads and work patterns change, and knowledge of conventional library practice. Note that three stations are included to accommodate a reference function that is to be developed in the future.

- √ Circulation
 - 2 charging stations @ circ desk
 - 1 registration station @ circ desk
 - 1 paging / sorting station
 - 1 ILL station in workroom (records)
 - 1 ILL station in workroom (processing)
 - 1 clerical support station in workroom
- √ Reference (future)
 - 1 station @ reference desk
 - 1 support stations in workroom
 - 1 department supervisor's office
- √ Children's
 - 1 station @ children's desk
 - 1 support stations in workroom
 - 1 department supervisor's office
- √ Technical services
 - 1 acquisitions / unpacking station
 - 1 cataloging station
 - 1 data entry station
 - 1 processing / repair station
- √ Administration
 - 1 director's office
 - 1 stations for administrative / bookkeeping support
 - 1 station for computer guru
 - 1 station for maintenance

4.4. Library meeting rooms

Rooms to support library programs and meetings have become commonplace features of today's public library. These rooms are used by library staff to sponsor lectures and other activities that are intended to boost the use of the library's traditional resources. Children's

department staff will use a meeting room or programming space to present storytimes that are meant to encourage children to explore the world of reading. Sometimes staff will use a meeting room to conduct a staff meeting or an in-service training session. Subject to the library's policy, meeting rooms can also be reserved for use by the public at large.

Today, the question is less one of whether to provide any meeting facilities in the library but what kind of facilities to provide and what the audience capacities should be.

Staff reports a growing interest from patrons in having spaces in the library that can be used for meetings and programs. An interest in having meeting rooms available for public use surfaced during information gathering efforts undertaken by the study team. Meeting rooms at the library would complement other meeting spaces that are already available for the general public in the schools, and other locations in the community.

One such room should be provided for general library programs and other uses. Such a room should be simple and flexible, to accommodate seating for a film or lecture or seating at tables for a craft program, etc. This room could also be used as a conference room for library board meetings and other committee meetings that have larger audiences. There should be a variety of projection and lighting options. Teleconferencing capabilities could be provided to this room (and to the conference / board room as well). The room should be configured with one or more moveable, sound-absorbent partitions so that different, smaller configurations of space can be provided in support of programs. Staff has indicated that a room to seat 75 would be responsive to the great majority of the community's and the library's needs.

Within the children's department a dedicated space for storytimes and other programming is recommended. The advantages of this dedicated space are twofold: it keeps the children's programs closer to the very collections that the programs hope to encourage the children to use, and it frees the general meeting room for other uses during the

day. Based on the library's experience with such programs and events, capacity of 25 is suggested for this space. Larger audience capacities for the occasional large-scale children's program can be accommodated in the larger meeting room.

A board room or conference room is also suggested. In this setting, the room should have sufficient capacity to support meetings of the library's board. Other small group meetings could readily be scheduled here when the library board is not in session. The conference table here should be able to support up to 12. The room should also support another 6 in an audience or gallery.

Note that if a separate community center were built for the Eagle River area, it would likely mitigate the need for some of the meeting room types and capacities outlined here for the library.

4.5. Special use space

Special use space refers to additional public and staff spaces that have not been accounted for in the previous four types of floor space. Examples of special use space include photocopiers, index tables, microform reader-printers, a staff lounge, a book sale storage area, a gift shop, possibly a patron lounge. Special use space also accounts for space for small group study rooms.

For purposes of the initial space needs assessment it is important to add a formulaic allocation of space for these special uses. Subsequent refinement of the space needs assessment can identify these spaces more specifically. Special use activities vary from library to library, according to local service priorities and practices. The definition of special use needs and spaces usually occurs as a minor complement to the library's larger, more central service goals (such as collection and reader seating resources), and by its nature is made on a case by case basis.

4.6. Nonassignable space

Nonassignable functions in a building provide necessary support for the primary activities in the building. Nonassignable functions include the building's mechanical systems, restrooms, vertical transportation in a multi-level building (stairs, elevators), and the like. The space needs for these functions are determined by engineering considerations, local code requirements, whether the library's expansion will take the form of an addition or new construction, among other factors.

4.7. Long-term space needs of the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library

The space needs assessment model described above can be applied using the inventory of essential library resources also enumerated above. The result is summarized in Figure 4(1).

A book collection of 62,700 volumes will require 6,270 square feet of floor space at 10 volumes per square foot, 5,452 square feet of floor space at 11.5 volumes per square foot, and 4,823 square feet of floor space at 13 volumes per square foot.

Periodical display will require 130 square feet while back files will require 117 square feet.

The nonprint collection will require 682 square feet of floor space.

Public network computer stations will require 900 square feet at 50 square feet per terminal, 720 square feet at 40 square feet per terminal, and 540 square feet at 30 square feet per terminal.

Reader seating will require 2,220 square feet.

Staff work space will require 3,150 square feet in an optimum setting, 2,888 square feet in a moderate setting, and 2,650 square feet in a minimum setting.

FIGURE 4(1)					
SPACE NEEDS ESTIMATE / WALTER E. OLSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY					
<i>Collection space</i>		Best	Mod	Low	Recommend
<i>Books</i>					
Opt: @ 10.0 vol per sq.ft.	62,700	6,270			
Mod: @ 11.5 vol per sq.ft.	62,700		5,452		5,452
Low: @ 13.0 vol per sq.ft.	62,700			4,823	
<i>Periodical display</i>					
@ 1 title per sq.ft.	130	130	130	130	130
<i>Periodical backfiles</i>					
@ 0.5 sq.ft. per title per yr held	117	117	117	117	117
<i>Nonprint</i>					
@ 10 items per square foot	6,820	682	682	682	682
<i>Public network stations</i>					
Opt: @ 50 sq.ft. per terminal	18	900			
Mod: @ 40 sq.ft. per terminal	18		720		720
Low: @ 30 sq.ft. per terminal	18			540	
<i>Reader seating space</i>					
@ 30 sq.ft. per seat	74	2,220	2,220	2,220	2,220
<i>Staff work space</i>					
Opt: @ 150.0 sq.ft. per station	21	3,150			
Mod: @ 137.5 sq.ft. per station	21		2,888		2,888
Low: @ 125.0 sq.ft. per station	21			2,625	
<i>Meeting room space</i>					
Program room I					
@ 15.0 sq.ft. per seat + 100 sq.ft.	75	1,225	1,225	1,225	1,225
Storytime room					
@ 15.0 sq.ft. per seat + 50 sq.ft.	25	425	425	425	425
Conference / board room					
@ 30 sq.ft. per seat + 6 gallery	12	420	420	420	420
Computer lab					
Opt: @ 50.0 sq.ft. per seat + 80 sq.ft.	-	-			
Mod: @ 40.0 sq.ft. per seat + 80 sq.ft.	-		-		-
Low: @ 30.0 sq.ft. per seat + 80 sq.ft.	-			-	
<i>Special use space</i>					
Opt: Estimated @ 15.0% of gross area		4,054			
Mod: Estimated @ 12.5% of gross area			2,856		2,975
Low: Estimated @ 10.0% of gross area				1,957	
<i>Nonassignable space</i>					
Opt: @ 27.5% of gross building area		7,432			6,544
Mod: @ 25.0% of gross building area			5,711		
Low: @ 22.5% of gross building area				4,402	
GROSS BUILDING AREA		27,024	22,846	19,566	23,798

Meeting space allocations include 1,225 square feet for the library program room. A children's storytime room will require 425 square feet, while the conference room will require 420 square feet.

Space allocations for special use functions, and nonassignable functions vary depending on how aggressive or generous planners elect to be in the design allowance for an expanded building.

Given these variables, Figure (4)2 summarizes space needs that range from an optimum allocation of 27,024 square feet to a moderate allocation of 22,846 square feet to a minimum allocation of 19,566 square feet.

Obviously, there are any number of alternate results within this overall range. If planners were to pursue a "moderate" allocation for the book collection, but an "optimum" allocation for nonprint, seating, and staff work stations, an "optimum" allocation for meeting room space, but a "moderate" allocation for special use space and nonassignable space, the result would be a blending of the combined "optimum" result and the "moderate" result shown in Figure (4)2 – something between 27,024 square feet and 22,846 square feet.

In fact, based on the consultant's experience and the general scale of the service parameters defined for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library, the board and staff are encouraged to consider the following specific allocations for planning purposes:

- a moderate allocation for the book collection acknowledges the likelihood that the size of the library's proposed collection will allow the creation of economies of scale in the layout while still preserving opportunities for marketing display of the collection
- a moderate allocation for public computer network stations acknowledges the ability to achieve some efficiencies of layout, given the number of stations recommended
- a moderate allocation for staff work stations

acknowledges that use of systems furnishings in shared workrooms is likely to produce efficiencies in the layout of these spaces

- a moderate allocation for special use space acknowledges some economies of scale in the likely layout, but still preserves options for the creation of features such as a library store or a public lounge / coffee bar
- an optimum allocation for nonassignable space recognizes the prospect of an addition to the existing building and the increased likelihood that a larger share of the gross area will be needed for nonassignable purposes in the design (note that if the library were to pursue new construction, a more efficient design would likely result, keeping the nonassignable allocation to about 25% of the gross area, which would reduce the estimated space need to 22,846 square feet)

As shown in Table 4(1), this produces an estimate of space need for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library of 23,798 square feet. Reflecting the fact that until architectural planning begins in earnest, such figures represent at best a broad estimate, a fairer expression of the library's long-term space need is 23,800 square feet. The other, more specific figure – 23,798 square feet – infers a level of accuracy that is not present in these forecasts.

This allocation anticipates shelving that would be shorter than the maximum 90" tall – no more than 84" tall and possibly as low as 72" – responding to the human needs of the library environment. These planning allocations would result in a bookstack aisle wider than the bare minimum 36" – at least 42" and possibly as wide as 48".

5 *STRATEGIC PLANNING ISSUES*

Given the finding that the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library should plan for a building of 23,800 square feet, various strategic planning issues begin to take shape. The most important of these is the ability of the existing site to support an expansion. Closely related to this – because it directly affects the footprint of the building imposed on the site – is the issue of how the building might be configured over one or multiple levels. Finally, given the scale of the expansion needed, implementation of the project in stages becomes a possibility. This section reviews these issues, starting with a discussion of building configuration.

5.1. Building configuration

The general configuration of an expanded building will have a direct effect on the feasibility of expansion at the present location. A single level configuration, for instance, will occupy more of the site and impose different pressures on the site than will a multi-level configuration, where portions of the building are stacked vertically.

A broad rule of thumb suggests that a public library building of less than 20,000 square feet should be designed on a single level. This kind of smaller building will include a combined public service space (adult, children's) that can be monitored from a single, effectively-placed service desk. If a smaller building is segmented over more than one floor, that division will often impose a need for additional staffing to monitor the functions located on the secondary level. This in turn is a cost that the library would not otherwise incur.

That same rule of thumb suggests that a public library building of more than 40,000 square feet can be built on more than one level. A public library building of 40,000 square feet in all likelihood will support an institution that will already have in place multiple public

service desks: in the normal course of its growth, such a library will already have in place at least a circulation desk, a children's desk, and a reference desk. With three desks already in place, it becomes easier for that library to contemplate shifting services off an entry level, and not incur an additional staff cost to do so. In fact, as a library building reaches and exceeds 40,000 square feet it starts to become more economical to build vertically rather than expand horizontally. The appropriate number of floors in any given multi-level configuration will be determined by the overall area in the building.

Finally, a building of more than 20,000 square feet but less than 40,000 square feet may be configured over a single level or over multiple levels. As the scale of the building progresses through this range, it becomes increasingly likely that a multi-level configuration will be developed.

At 23,800 square feet, the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library falls toward the lower end of that middle range, suggesting that either single-level or multi-level construction may be possible but that a single-level configuration is preferred. A multi-level configuration would likely require that a portion of the library's public service space be located on a secondary level, obligating the library to create a staff presence on that level, increasing operational costs.

(Note that the long-term space needs described here support the eventual development of staffing to support both reference and children's services during the library's regularly scheduled hours of operation. When both of those departments are fully developed, the prospect of a multi-level configuration would not incur *additional* staffing costs to occupy a secondary level; either the reference or the children's desk – in place in any case – could be relocated to that secondary level. Until such additional staffing is developed, however, a multi-level configuration would still impose on the library staffing costs it would not otherwise incur, and as a result, a single-level configuration is preferred.)

5.2. Expansion feasibility at the present site

This topic explores in a broad fashion issues relating to the capacity of the existing site to support an addition on the scale needed in Eagle River. Although it includes rough sketches illustrating the footprint of an expanded facility in various configurations, this analysis is not meant to replace a more thorough architectural examination of the current site. It does not extend to include possible constraints relating to zoning or existing conditions on the site (such as the placement of utilities). If anything, this analysis provides background so that library board and staff can undertake a more thorough architectural evaluation in a more informed manner.

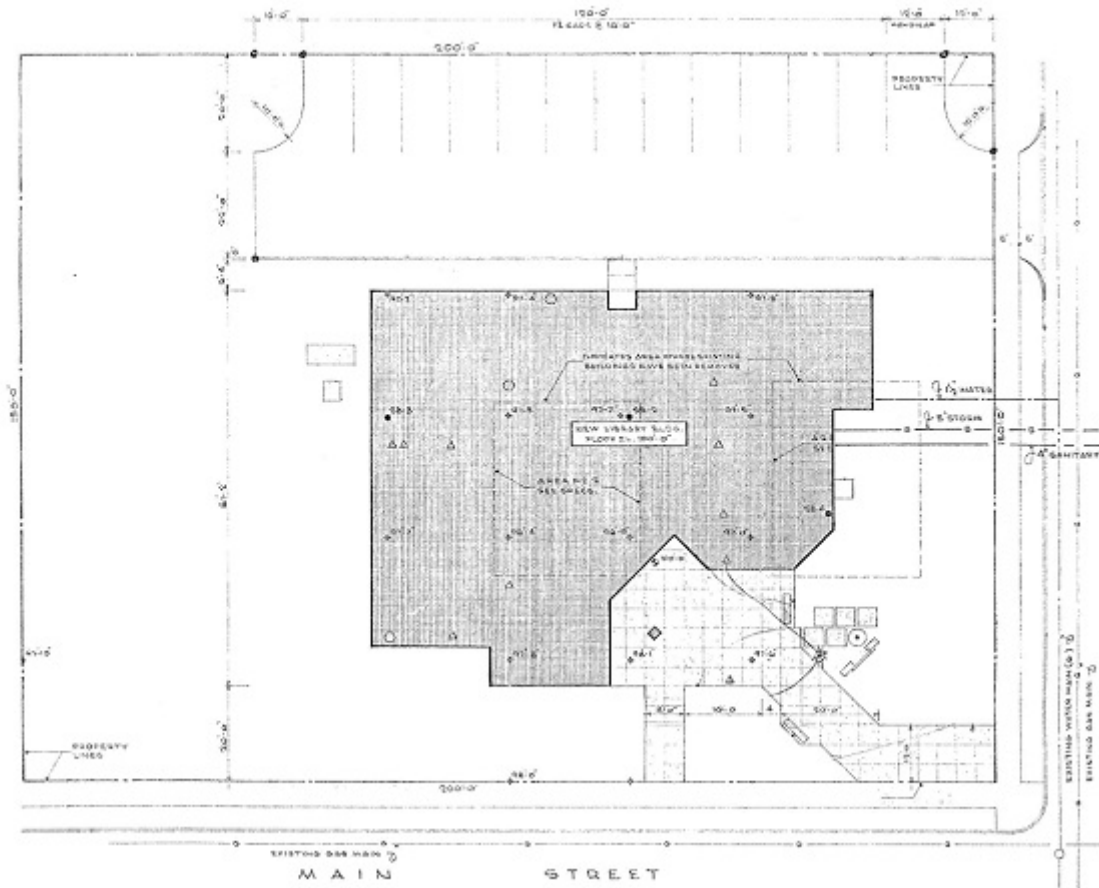
5.2.1. The current site

An illustration on the following page shows the library's current site. The library building occupies the northeast corner of Main Street and Spruce Street, with 200' of frontage along Main and 150' of frontage along Spruce. The current site affords a total of 30,000 square feet of area.

The site lies toward the edge of Eagle River's central business district, with commercial and residential neighbors within easy access. As is the case in many small towns, there has been considerable commercial and retail development on the edges of Eagle River, and this new development has drawn some of activity away from the traditional downtown.

A small, pleasant plaza fills the southwest corner of the site. The library's entry faces diagonally into the corner of the property. Parking for 13 cars (including one space designated for handicapped parking) runs along the east property line at the back of the building. A second entrance to the building is located at the middle of the building's east side, intended for use as a staff entry, but often used by library patrons coming into the building from the parking lot.

The north end of the site is open and undeveloped, reserved in the original planning for a possible future expansion.



The present library building was built in 1979/1980. It takes the broad form of a rectangle with one corner removed on the diagonal. The resulting form is divided internally into two broad areas – the adult collection and the children’s collection, with the circulation desk and a staff work area separating and defining those two areas. A small basement provides support for storage and mechanical equipment.

As shown on the library’s annual report forms to the state library agency, the gross area of the building is 6,814 square feet. About 1,150 square feet is found on that lower level.

5.2.2. Expansion option 1: expanding to the north

Note: the sketches referenced in this portion of the

text are no longer available.

The sketch above illustrates an addition that fills the open area on the north end of the site. Such an addition might extend along the 72' length of the north wall of the current building. If the addition extends to within 20' of the property line, the addition would measure 72' x 50' and would add some 3,700+ square feet to the present building. If local zoning and set-backs would allow an addition extending to within 10' of the property line (shown with the dotted lines), it would add another 720 square feet to the area of the addition, increasing the size of the addition to 4,400+ square feet.

This expansion strategy is complicated by the prospect that the north wall of the library is a bearing wall (suggested by observations of roof framing). This does not preclude expansion in that direction, but makes it more difficult or costly. An addition to the north that leaves most of the current north wall intact might reduce construction costs but the result would be separate internal spaces instead of the more preferred open, flowing space. An addition that creates a more open, flowing interior space would require more significant and more costly engineering to address the bearing condition along the current north wall.

In either case, an addition to the north combined with the present building area would *not* provide sufficient space to meet the library's long-term service and space needs (10,550 square feet or 11,250 square feet versus 23,800 square feet needed).

5.2.3. Expansion option 2: a wrap-around addition

The sketch on the following page illustrates a larger addition that incorporates an addition to the north and wraps around on the east side of the present building. If that addition were extended to within 20' of the property line, it would add roughly 28' along the east side of the building. This addition, combined with the smaller addition to the north, would add just under 8,100 square feet to the gross area of the building. If this addition could be extended to the north and east to within 10' of the property line (shown with a dotted line), it would add

roughly 10,650 square feet to the gross area of the building.

As with the previous option, there are significant structural considerations to resolve.

Furthermore, both of these alternates compromise the library's limited on-site parking, effectively eliminating any on-site parking.

And, as in the previous scenario, this wrap-around addition leaves the library shy of the gross area needed to meet the long-term service goals and space needs described in this report (14,900 square feet or 17,500 square feet versus 23,800 square feet needed).

5.2.4. Expansion option 3: new construction at the present site

The sketch on the following page illustrates the area that could be developed if an entirely new structure were built at the present site, extending to within 20' of the north and east lot lines and extending no further than the far south and west walls of the existing building. Such a floorplate would measure roughly 154' by 110' and encompass some 16,800 square feet. If the building could extend to within 10' of the north or east lot lines, it would expand the encompassed area further (to roughly 19,650 square feet).

By filling in the plaza space at the existing entry, this simple floorplate provides more total area than either of the two preceding scenarios, but still does not support a sufficient gross area.

5.2.5. Summary: expansion options at the present site

In the simplest terms, none of the options described here suggest that the library could be expanded to sufficient size at the present site. In order to accomplish a suitable expansion at the present site, the library would need to pursue the acquisition of adjacent properties to expand the capacity of the present site to meet the library's needs.

Note that on-site parking requirements were *not* addressed by any of the three scenarios described above. Providing on-site parking

would further extend the property needed to support an expanded library building at the present site (see Appendix D for a discussion of site selection issues).

Also note that *all* of these scenarios have anticipated a single-level addition. It may be possible to develop a multi-level addition in the context of one or more of these scenarios, if the library is willing to bear the increased staffing costs likely to accrue as a result of such a configuration. While architectural analysis would provide greater insight into the opportunities for multi-level construction at the present site, in all likelihood the most effective multi-level configuration could be achieved if the library were to pursue new construction at the present site.

5.3. Factors in staging expansion

Staging expansion is another possible concern or issue. Although a space need of more than 23,800 square feet is expressed here, it may be beyond the community's immediate ability to support an expansion of this scale (or the operation of such an expanded facility). The library may need to plan for a two- or three-phase expansion eventually leading to a building of 23,800 square feet.

If the library elects to pursue expansion in stages, it's important to confirm and verify long-term service goals and the corresponding long-term space needs *now* in order to keep those long-term goals in mind and at hand. Even though the library may implement a smaller project as part of a planned, phased expansion program, the long-term needs must be part of the larger scenario in order to guide other near-term decisions such as site selection (even if the full build-out described here is not pursued immediately, the capacity of the current site should be evaluated in the context of supporting a full build-out of 23,800 square feet, or likewise any new site considered for the library should be sufficient to support an eventual expansion to meet these needs).

A phased approach has been pursued successfully by many

libraries, and the scaling of each phase can be accomplished with the assistance of an architect. Typically, a staged approach is driven by economic concerns that it would be too expensive to build a structure that would meet the library's full long-term need. In this case, if the board can determine (or divine) a project budget that would be acceptable to the community, an architect can use that budget to work backwards and calculate how much building could be built for that price.

Such a calculation, however, should not overlook the service *capacity* of the library's planned phase one. If phase one is scaled too small, the building will be filled too soon, forcing the need for another addition before the community is otherwise ready to support it.

A library-service-based approach to setting an appropriate scale for the first phase of a two- or three-phase expansion scheme would start with the calculation of the library's immediate space needs based on the service and resource inventories that are in place today. To that estimate, planners should add an allowance of space that to accommodate some period of future growth. Perhaps it would be appropriate to split the difference between the estimate of the library's immediate space needs and the library's long-term needs expressed here. By setting the scope of phase one in this manner – and certainly no less than this – planners would gain the space needed to house today's resources and make some provision to accommodate some future growth.

5.4. Operating cost considerations

As the library considers any expansion project, operating costs must be kept in mind. An expanded building will affect the library's operating budget in a number of ways. Nearly all categories of expenditures will increase, but four broad categories will be subject to particular increases – staffing, maintenance, equipment, and collections – and guidelines for considering future operating costs are presented here. Note that a specific estimate of operating costs cannot be made without a specific expansion plan in hand, so the following

discussion is offered to help local planners structure their thinking about operating costs in an expanded building. Also note that in evaluating operating costs, it's important to attempt to segregate the impact of the expanded space on costs, apart from inflationary increases that the library may experience in any case.

5.4.1. Personnel

Personnel costs are always the largest single item in a library's budget. If one starts with a focus on personnel costs, one is likely to identify the largest share of additional operating costs that will be incurred by the library. Consider personnel costs in the context of five types of needs: existing needs, developmental needs, demand-based needs, service option needs, and design-based needs.

Existing needs: The library may have existing staff needs, unfunded positions that are needed based on current levels of service. Such needs will not likely disappear as a result of the expanded building. If technical services is 0.75 FTE short now, that department will probably still be 0.75 FTE short (at least) in the expanded building. In most cases, such deficiencies are only compounded by expanded facilities. The new facility accentuates the personnel needs that had been previously identified in the old building.

Developmental needs: A small library that doesn't now have a separate reference desk and department may be able to anticipate the need to add this new service point at some point in the future, as part of the natural progression of the library's development. If the service can be anticipated, the space should be anticipated, too. A medium-sized library with no assistant director may anticipate adding such a position a few years after occupying the expanded building.

Design-based needs: In some cases, the design of the expanded building imposes certain staffing needs. An example might be a smaller library that moves into a multi-level structure on a constrained site and suddenly finds itself needing to staff a new

control point on the secondary service level. If that small library had been able to build a single-level structure on a more generous site, it could have supervised and served the entire public service area from a single public service desk. The second desk is necessary as a result of the design choice to divide public service space over two floors. (An alternative, of course, would be to not provide the second desk and thereby avoid the cost of added personnel, but in saving the direct costs in personnel the library incurs indirect costs in service opportunities lost, possible increases in vandalism and shenanigans, and so on.) Any facilities planning process should attempt to minimize such design-based staffing needs.

Service option needs: This is an awkward name for the type of staffing increase that stems from the board's choice to change the parameters of the library's service goals. An expansion of hours is an example of this type of staffing need. Obviously, any time the library adds hours to its service schedule, it will likely need to add staffing, unless it can recoup the FTEs by implementing other efficiencies or elects to dilute other aspects of its services (longer lines at check-out, for example). This type of increased staffing can be considered separately from the library's building project, and technically it is not intrinsically connected to a building project, but the fact remains that many times boards like to implement such service enhancements in conjunction with the expansion project, a kind of happy coincidence.

Demand-based needs: As the expanded building opens, the library is also likely to experience increases in use, which in turn prompts a need for added staff, especially in public service areas, in particular circulation, and to a slightly lesser degree reference and youth services. The percentage increase is difficult to project, ranging between 10% and 100% in other libraries. Note that most libraries have a generally upward tracking use pattern. Typically, library use statistics in a new or expanded building will show a sudden surge when the new building is opened. This surge will last for three to six

months, as the public becomes accustomed to the new facility. Then use will level off or drop, and resume its generally upward-tracking path, *but at a higher level* than would have been the case had the library remained in its older facility. This precise increase in use is difficult to pinpoint and the library has relatively little control over the level of increase. Residents will use the library according to their choice, after all. As a general guide, the circulation staff should be prepared to handle an increase in traffic of 35%. Other public service desks should be prepared to handle an increase only slightly less than that. At the very least, the library should be aware of this general trend and should be prepared to respond with increased staffing allocations as needed.

5.4.2. Maintenance & utilities

Obviously maintenance costs will increase in an expanded facility. There is a larger area to clean, heat, and cool.

Maintenance and cleaning costs (which should include the cost of purchasing paper products and cleaning supplies) will increase, but the increase will not be directly proportional to the increase in square footage. Although there is a larger area to clean and keep up, economies of scale will reduce the unit cost and produce a less-than-proportionate increase in these costs. Current operating budgets should be able to provide estimates of these costs converted to a per square foot (unit) cost. This should be a sufficient base for estimating these costs for the present. Per square foot costs for maintaining an existing building will likely be less than the per square foot costs for maintaining an addition.

Utility costs will increase as well, and like maintenance costs, the increase will not be proportionate to the increase in square footage. Economies of scale apply again. Current operating budgets can be used to estimate utility costs per square foot, and this figure can be the basis for calculating future utility costs. Assuming that totally new construction can benefit from the more consistent application of energy saving technologies, the rate of increase in overall utilities costs will be

less than that for an addition, which will likely be supported by a hybrid of older and newer technologies, at some loss of efficiency.

Related to this category of expenditures are insurance premiums, which will increase as the valuation of the library's property increases. The library should investigate these changes with its insurance carrier to identify appropriate increases.

5.4.3. Equipment

New costs for equipment are likely to be incurred in an expanded building. The library may consider incorporating the hardware costs to expand its on-line circulation system and public access catalog into the proposed construction budget. These costs will surely include the addition of new terminals for staff and public use, and possibly general system upgrades.

5.4.4. Collections

The last major operating budget component that will be affected by expanded facilities will be the library's allocation for books and materials. As use in the expanded building increases, the library will experience pressure to expand its collections to fill the newly-available shelves. Periodical subscription lists will expand. More tapes and videocassettes will be purchased for the library. Like furniture, however, these are costs that can be controlled and contained to a greater degree, and in the first years in the new building it isn't at all unlikely that the library will afford just minimal increases in the materials budget, to reserve a larger share of its operating budget increases for other parts of the budget.

Local officials must remember that increases in expenditures for collections in turn affect other costs – a sudden increase in the materials budget and incoming acquisitions should prompt an increase in the technical services staff, to handle the influx of materials promptly and efficiently.

5.4.5. Other costs

Plans for expanded facilities for the library should accommodate an increasing use of automated technologies, from library automation applications to routine office automation applications. There may be a public microcomputer center proposed for the library, additional microfilm reader/printers, and additional photocopying machines, to name just a few of the equipment additions that will be motivated by an expanded facility. Many of the staff stations will be well-equipped, and the trend toward greater staff use of PCs for productivity will continue. An advantage of new construction is that the environment can be designed to support this equipment which has become such a central part of the work-day world.

In a similar way, an expanded building will motivate a more assertive schedule to replace and refurbish furniture. In order to reduce immediate capital costs, the library may defer purchasing some shelving or desks, and make do with the existing furnishings. In this case, the library will likely plan a larger annual operating budget to replace this furniture as the old becomes unusable.

Some of these costs can be controlled more readily than some of the costs previously discussed. Costs for new furniture and equipment that was not purchased as part of the building project can be placed on an acquisitions schedule. Some of these costs can be more readily deferred. It will be to the library's advantage, however, if these equipment costs can be built into the project capital budget.

Don't overlook the need to maintain service contracts for the new equipment, either. Service contracts for fixed equipment (mechanical systems, elevators, etc.) may be considered as part of these expense category if they haven't already been considered among maintenance and utilities costs.

6 *SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS*

This report had the following aims: to assess the space needs of the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library based on its projected holdings and program of service, and to explore expansion and site development options at the present site.

6.1 The library's projected space needs

The Walter E. Olson Memorial Library presently occupies a building that affords roughly 6,800 square feet in area, originally built in 1979/1980. The library's principal public service and staff support spaces are located on the entry level; a small basement supports mechanical equipment and miscellaneous storage. The library's collections and services have now grown to a point where the present building limits the library's ability to respond to patron demands.

A review of the library's essential service and resource inventory goals found that the library should provide a facility sufficient to house the following resources:

- a book collection of 62,700 volumes
- a periodical collection of 130 titles
- a nonprint collection of 6,820 items
- 18 computer network stations for public use
- 74 reader seats
- 21 staff work stations
- a library program room to seat an audience of 75
- a storytime room to seat an audience of up to 25
- a conference or board room to seat 12

Applying conventional unit space allowances for all of these resources produces an estimate that the Walter E. Olson Memorial

Library should plan for a building of some 23,900 square feet. This estimate is predicated on pursuing an addition to the existing facility. If the library were to pursue new construction (either at the present site or on a new site), a space savings of slightly more than 5% could be realized.

As the library looks to its future, it should seek to implement a facilities expansion strategy that will support these service goals. This will allow the library to continue to display its collections in an appealing and convenient manner. It would provide adequate staff work environments, thereby maintaining the staff's effectiveness when serving the public.

6.2. Strategic considerations affecting the library's space needs

The immediate factor affecting the library's consideration of strategies to meet the service and space needs expressed in this study is the capacity of the current site to support a building of the scale described here.

A rudimentary analysis of various expansion strategies was provided in this report. That analysis revealed complexities and potential complications with every expansion strategy explored here. Each expansion strategy raised a different set of issues. None of the strategies offered sufficient overall area to meet the library's needs, suggesting that expansion at the present site must be accompanied by efforts to acquire one or more adjacent parcel(s) in order to support an expansion to 23,800 square feet.

Pending the findings of the board's assessment of the possibilities at the present site in light of this report, the library will choose from one of several alternate paths:

If the present site can support a building of the scale described here but only if the site is expanded through the acquisition of one or more adjacent parcels, the library should explore the availability of the necessary parcel(s). As a site of sufficient overall size is assembled,

then the library should embark on the development of a building program statement, confirming the long-term service goals expressed in this report and describing in even greater detail (that is, on a department-by-department and room-by-room level) the spatial and environmental needs in an expanded building. At the same time, the library should undertake an architect selection process to designate the architect who will design that expanded building.

If the present site cannot support a building of the scale described here, the library will need to initiate a site selection study to identify and acquire a new site for new construction. (With this in mind, a discussion of site selection considerations is found in Appendix D.)

Alternately, if the library is determined to remain on this site or if there is simply no other site is available, the library will need to revisit and recast the service and resource inventory goals expressed in this report, scaling them back in order to scale back the overall space needed to support its services and goals and make the entire package fit on the available site.

APPENDIX A: Annual report summary

The following pages present a summary of the statistics submitted by the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library in its annual reports to the Illinois State Library over the last ten years. This data is useful for tracking local trends over time. It is important to note that some inconsistencies exist in the data, as recommended tallying methods changed from time to time.

APPENDIX B: Comparative library service data analyses

A useful source of information on public libraries across the country is the database developed each year by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education, drawn from annual report summaries submitted by the state library agencies. This resource was used to draw several sample groups of libraries to compare with the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library in an effort to assess “norms” for libraries serving populations of similar size. The samples included:

- all Wisconsin libraries
- Wisconsin libraries serving 5,000 to 15,000 population (effectively bracketing the library’s current and projected service populations)
- public libraries nationwide serving 9,500 to 10,500 population (bracketing the library’s current service population)
- public libraries nationwide serving 12,000 to 13,000 population (bracketing the library’s projected service population)

Data for the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library is reported across the left hand side of each page. The data analysis includes the high and low of the data range, quartile distributions, the average for the sample, and the library’s z-score in comparison with the sample. The z-score is a simple statistical measure that assesses the library’s deviation from the sample mean. A positive z-score indicates that the library’s result is above the sample average; a negative z-score indicates a result below the average. In a rough analogy to a bell curve, a z-score of ± 1.00 or more means that the library’s result is moving out into the tail of the curve, in the top or bottom 16% of the sample. A z-score of ± 2.00 or more indicates that the library’s result is even farther into the tail of the curve, in the top or bottom 2% to 3% of the sample. The higher the z-score, the greater the departure of the library’s result from the sample average.

APPENDIX C: Collection growth forecasts

On the following pages, planning models attempt to forecast growth capabilities in the library's book collection.

The first set of models is predicated on the library's average net rate of increase in the book collection over the period 1992 to 2001. These scenarios assume that the library's recent average net rate of increase is a reasonable representation of its capability to add to the collection in the years to come. The first alternate model simply extends the library's average rate of net increase to the year 2025. At this rate, barring a significant change (for better or worse) in the library's materials budget and acquisition capability, the library's collection could grow to 69,750+ volumes by the year 2025. The remaining four alternates adapt this simple planning model in different fashions. "Alt 2" reduces the library's average net rate of increase by 1% per year. "Alt 3" reduces the rate by 2% per year. "Alt 4" reduces the rate by 5% per year. "Alt 5" reduces the rate by 10% per year. In the last, most cautious, forecast, the book collection would grow to just under 47,000 volumes in the year 2025.

The second set of models is predicated on extending a rolling five year average to the year 2025. "Alt 6" extends a rolling five year average to the year 2025, actually reducing the collection to 32,000+ volumes (this trend line results from the library's recent heavy weeding of the collection to make way for new acquisitions). "Alt 7" reduces the rolling five year average by 1% per year. "Alt 8" reduces the rolling five year average by 2% per year. "Alt 9" reduces the rolling five year average by 5% per year. "Alt 10" reduces the rolling five year average by 10% per year and leads to a forecast of 32,900+ volumes.

The third set of models is based on a rolling five year average rate of gross additions, conditioned by varying levels of withdrawals. "Alt 11" extends the rate of gross addition, factoring in one withdrawal for every ten adds, thereby growing the collection to 67,500+ by the year 2025. The remaining models factor in one withdrawal for every eight, five, three and two adds respectively. "Alt 15" grows the collection to just 41,300+ volumes, figuring one withdrawal for every two adds.

APPENDIX D: Site selection considerations

The importance of site selection for a public library cannot be diminished. Some library space planners argue it is more important to obtain a good site than it is to build a bigger and bigger building. A well-chosen site will contribute to the use of the building, sometimes even to the point of overcoming some shortcomings in a poorly-designed building. But if the site is poorly chosen, even a sterling design – comfortable, welcoming, and efficient though it may be – will not reach its potential.

Site selection should be undertaken in the context of the library’s long-term service goals and space needs, even though the library may pursue a smaller initial project as part of a two-phase expansion project which would reduce its immediate site needs. Any site selected should be able to accommodate the library’s long-term space needs.

A number of available studies provide direction regarding the selection of a public library site.² The conventional wisdom advises that public libraries are most successfully sited in areas of high pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Public libraries typically benefit from the same bustle and convenience that motivates businesses and commercial / retail uses in a community to concentrate in a central business district and other centers or areas specifically zoned for such uses. A commercial area, for example, is usually heavily traveled and therefore highly visible; the surrounding businesses allow library users the

² The literature on public library site selection is extensive. For an introduction, note three *Occasional Papers* issued by the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science:

Wheeler, Joseph L. “The effective location of public library buildings.” *Occasional Papers*, no. 52 (July 1952).

_____. “A reconsideration of the strategic location for public library buildings.” *Occasional Papers*, no. 85 (July 1967).

Robinson, William C. “The utility of retail site selection for the public library.” *Occasional Papers*, no. 122 (March 1976).

Also note this newer treatment on public library site selection:

Koontz, Christine M. *Library Facility Siting and Location Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.

convenience of combining several errands on a single trip.

Based on the findings in the literature on public library site selection, the following twelve vital criteria are recommended for the evaluation of any proposed site. These should be applied to any site considered for new construction. They should also be applied to the location of any existing structure that may be proposed for conversion into a library. They should also be applied to the existing site to determine the adequacy of that site. These criteria may be reviewed and accepted by the library board and staff. Or some of these twelve criteria may be rejected. Still others may be suggested by the library board or staff.

Site size:

This reflects the suitability of the site to support the proposed construction, plus on-site parking, plus landscaping and set-backs. The ability to support further expansion at a later date should not be ignored. The library's space needs and possible configurations to meet those needs determine reasonable parameters for overall building size and the likely floor plate size, which in turn will have an impact on site size. Favored conditions for this criterion will allow the site to support the building itself, on-site parking, landscaping and room for future expansion. Less favored conditions involve a site so small as to restrict future growth, or the ability to provide on-site parking. Conversely, too large a site may be detrimental as well, involving the purchase of more property than is needed, possibly at a cost that is greater than needed.

Building floor plate: The building itself will occupy a certain amount of property, dictated by the size of the building floor plate, which in turn is determined by the number of stories used in the expanded building. Generally speaking, a public library of less than 20,000 square feet will prefer a single-level configuration while a building of more than 40,000 square feet will prefer a multi-level configuration (with the number of levels being conditioned by the size of the building). A building of 20,000 to 40,000 square feet will typically be configured over one level or two, depending specific local and site considerations.

Given the extent of the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library's space needs, a one-level building is likely to be the optimum configuration. Accordingly, the library's site should be able to support a building

floorplate of some 23,800 square feet.

On-site parking: Local zoning codes take precedence regarding parking requirements. The local code is non-specific regarding on-site parking requirements for a library use, leaving a determination to local officials on a case-by-case basis. Pending that determination, note that a typical building code will call for three or four spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross building area. Alternately, a broad rule of thumb allows that there should be one square foot of parking for each square foot of building. Given a projected building of 23,800 square feet, then, allow 23,800 square feet for on-site parking.

Landscaping / setbacks / easements: For purposes of site planning, a minimum of one-half of the property should be left open in anticipation of landscaping, set-backs, easements and on-site water retention. Applying the largest allocations discussed above, with 23,800 square feet allowed for the building floor plate and 23,800 square feet allowed for parking, an allocation for greenspace for the library will require 47,600 square feet.

Future expansion: Under ideal conditions, the library's site will also accommodate future expansion. Depending on the configuration of the original construction and the scope of the addition, an addition may further expand the footprint of the building on the site. An addition will definitely expand the library's on-site parking needs.

Exclusive of any additional property that would be needed to support a future addition to the library, a building of 23,800 square feet will require a site that offers roughly 95,200 square feet of area – or a little over 2.1 acres.

These estimates, of course, can be modified depending on the particulars of a given site and depending on how much leeway planners want to allow themselves in terms of future expansion, greenspace and landscaping, and so on.

Central location:

A central location refers to the general convenience of access by different segments of the community. Is a proposed site convenient to population, employment, and retail centers? This criterion may be considered a summary or broad overview of others that follow relating to accessibility and convenience (“vehicular access” and “pedestrian access” to name two).

Cost / availability:

This balances the cost of the property in question and the ability of the library to acquire the property. The total cost of the property is one aspect of this criterion, and its cost per square foot is another. Acquisition costs, however, cannot be examined solely in absolute terms (that is, which site is least expensive, which is next least expensive, and so on), but should also be evaluated in terms of whether the acquisition costs are fair and reasonable. A more costly, but otherwise well-situated, site will be well worth some measure of added cost; a poorly situated site is not a bargain, no matter what the price.

The number of parcels involved in assembling the site can be a factor affecting a property's availability, with fewer parcels typically favored over many. Likewise, the number of current owners is a factor, with fewer owners typically favored over many. Obviously, the fewer parcels or owners to involve in the negotiations, the simpler and the more direct the negotiations should be. The displacement of current residences and commercial and / or other uses is a factor; payment of relocation expenses for current owners may be required under state or federal regulations. The current owners' willingness to sell is perhaps the crucial consideration; sites that could require the exercise of eminent domain are less desirable. Ease of acquisition is at least of equal, if not greater, standing with the straight cost of the property.

Potential for visibility:

One recalls the saying, "Out of sight, out of mind." A location with high visibility will help keep the library in the forefront of the community. Usually, visibility and general accessibility are closely related. A site located on an arterial street, with nearby vehicular and pedestrian traffic, will be a visible one. This criterion also speaks to the image that will be projected at a particular site. This in turn can be conditioned by adjacent uses and the surrounding neighborhood.

Adjacent services / uses:

The nature, compatibility, and proximity of surrounding uses. Are the neighboring properties supporting uses and usage patterns that are compatible with those that will be created by the library? What is the

schedule or cycle of activities that exists around the present site? Are neighboring properties occupied by entities that will help attract library users to the area during hours the library is open? Are there times when the library, if located at the site in question, would become a sole destination point for users?

Vehicular access:

In most parts of the country, people continue to rely on the automobile for transportation. In such communities, it is important that the site be one that can be reached readily by car. That often translates into a site found on an arterial street. Vehicular access should also consider mass transit options. Sites are preferred that are on existing public transit routes. Typically, the further removed a site is from arterial streets or existing public transit routes, the less favorable it is.

Access to parking:

Issues relating to vehicular access also affect a library's need to provide parking on site or nearby. People not only continue to prefer to drive their own cars to work, or to school, or to stores or on other errands, they prefer to park their cars as close to their destination as possible. One noted librarian has observed, "It's far better to build a \$2 million parking lot next to a \$20,000 building than the other way around," and there's a certain truth to that. Many local zoning codes reflect this by requiring an increasing number of on-site parking for most uses, libraries included. Sites are preferred that will support current code requirements for parking on-site. Consideration can be given to existing parking that may be adjacent to a site in question. Consideration can also be given to opportunities to develop sufficient parking jointly with neighboring uses.

Pedestrian access:

Pedestrian access has two dimensions – ease and desirability of access to and from surrounding uses, and ease and safety of access on foot and by bicycle for student use. There is a natural tension that exists between this criterion and "vehicular access." While the latter requires a location on an arterial street, arterials are not always favored by pedestrians or cyclists for safety's sake. Under this criterion, sites

would be examined to determine the degree to which there are populations in the vicinity that are likely to reach the library by foot or bicycle and whether those individuals would need to use main streets to reach the library. In many communities, reliance on the autos (and, to a lesser degree, buses) is minimizing the importance of pedestrian access.

Topography / existing conditions:

This includes the general lay of the land (flat vs. sloping), the impact of any existing structures or uses on the property, and the potential for converting any existing buildings that may exist on the proposed site. It also accounts for any *known* “unseen” conditions (easements, subsurface conditions).

Property shape:

A simple shape – a square or rectangle – is preferred for its ease of use in designing an expanded building. An irregularly-shaped lot can present limitations that will compromise a design’s effectiveness. A long and narrow site will often be reflected in an inefficient, long and narrow design. The impact of an irregularly-shaped site can be mitigated if it is large enough to allow a variety of building placements on the property.

Utilities:

Are utilities – including water, sewer, electric, telephone – delivered to the site in question, or will it be necessary to bring basic utility services to the site?

Zoning:

This criterion asks first whether a public library is a permitted use according to the current zoning of the property in question. There may be other limitations or restrictions in the zoning code generally or in the code as it pertains to a particular property, issues like front, side and rear set-backs, height restrictions, or restrictions regarding the proportion of land that can be “built.” Variances can be sought for any restrictions that may apply, and in most municipalities the variation will be granted, but it is nevertheless easier to implement the building program if the existing zoning will support the library’s plans.

* * * * *

Also note that consideration of a new site infers vacating the existing building. In most communities, the disposition of the existing building is an important aspect of the overall project. Funding authorities and voters generally feel more inclined to support the library's move to a new site if they know how the existing building is going to be used, and that the community's investment in that existing building – even if made and fully paid for many years ago – will be sustained through an appropriate re-use.

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