

December 1, 2008

Meeting: Library Task Force for Revitalization  
Tuesday, November 20, 2008  
Grand Forks Library Board Room

Members in Attendance: Jim Hovey, Caprice Benoit, Doug Carpenter, Kenneth Dawes, Ginny Dullum, Paul Holje, Dorette Kerian, Carol Lamberson, Ann Pederson, Brian Poykko, Jeff Regimbal, Brian Schill, Rhonda Schwartz, and Susan Mickelson

Also present: Kay Berg, head of Circulation Department, GF Library  
Terri David, head of Children's Department, GF Library  
David Haney, GF Library Tri-Director and head of technology  
Wayne Springer head of Maintenance Department, GF Library  
Toni Vonasek, GF Library Tri-Director and head of Reference Department  
Connie Wylot, GF Library Tri-Director and administrative assistant  
Marilyn Hagerty, Grand Forks Herald

Absent: Kathy McFarlane, Brian Osowski and Lana Rakow

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Jim Hovey.
2. Jim announced that Dorette Kerian has agreed to represent the Task Force by serving as a member of the Selection Committee working to hire a new Library Director. Posting for GFPL director applications closes on January 15, 2009, at which time the Selection Committee will begin its process.
3. The Tri-Directors and three department heads from Grand Forks Public Library presented overviews of operations in their individual departments and shared insight regarding their vision for the library. (All presentation hand-outs are attached as part of the minutes of this meeting.)
  - A. Connie Wylot presented the 2008 financial overview, which shows an annual budget of \$1.7 million. A 9.57 mill levy from the City of Grand Forks provides \$1.2 million in revenue. Remaining income is derived from funding through the County of Grand Forks and the State of North Dakota.

Books, periodicals, and AV materials comprise the bulk of the capital outlay fund. (Approximately 1/3 for AV materials and 2/3 for books.) General equipment includes computer expenses (approximately \$35,000 annually). Pension funding is projected to increase 22% throughout the next few years. Connie commented that the strength of the library is the collection and the staff.

Question regarding the last time the library received a mill levy increase. Connie is researching that information with City Hall, as she was not sure about a specific year. She believes it was sometime in the early 1980s.

Question regarding grant applications. There is no specific grant writer on staff, so various employees have written grant requests as appropriate to the subject matter. In the past, the library has received grants from the Myra Foundation, as well as matching grants from the Gates Foundation (\$15,000). A State Library grant in the amount of \$5,000 was recently received in recognition of a high level of interlibrary loans.

Question regarding internet access for library patrons. A library card is required to access internet at the library.

Staff pays for professional memberships, with the exception of the director's ALA membership, which is paid out of the budget.

- B. Kay Berg, head of Circulation, began her presentation with an observation that the Grand Forks Public Library's collection is recognized throughout the region and respected for its scope. Direction at the library has always supported the philosophy that patrons come first. In recent years, it is more and more apparent that patrons who don't have cable television access especially appreciate the DVD collection. Circulation staff now administers the DVD and CD sections, in addition to the traditional books and periodicals.

Wants: Secure check-in station for return material; increased floor space and shelf space; additional budget for more staff; automated phone system (circ staff currently serves as receptionist); separate entrance for children's department.

The lack of handicap accessibility compounds the need for more space. ADA requirements weren't in effect when the library was originally constructed. The shelves are positioned with 32" aisles, rather than the necessary 36" to accommodate a wheel chair. Restrooms are not ADA compliant. Ginny suggested using the UND occupational therapy department to help with consultations prior to developing any new shelving systems.

AV budget includes books on tape or CD. A mail order service known as Mail Order Library is available to citizens of Grand Forks County. Although books are not mailed to residents of Grand Forks (to save money), the requests for specific books can be made through the Mail Order Library. A catalog is distributed twice a year. The program is not available on-line at present. Question regarding availability of audio book downloads: Platforms are not stable at this point, but possible for future.

Question: What is the budget for operating the Mail Order Library? Connie will check.

Question regarding discarded books. When books are weeded out, they are made available to patrons.

- C. Terri David, head of the Children's Department, commended the Friends of the Library group for their financial assistance to provide recent upgrades in the children's section. Since shelves were removed in 1997 for recarpeting, this department has adequate accessibility for wheelchairs and special needs. Popular items: books on CD; DVDs; reference materials and books for home school usage. Story time is also very popular. The second floor meeting room was recently recarpeted by Friends of the Library and the area is well utilized for summer story time, accommodating 180 people comfortably. Overall usage in the children's department is down the past year and half.

Wants: self-charging system, additional meeting space, craft room, improved lighting, and additional computers.

- D. Toni Vonasek, Tri-Director and head of the Reference Department (also cataloguing and processing). The reference section deals daily with all ages of patrons and all types of questions. Want list includes computer lab for community education classes and staff training, security system, increased space for housing the Grand Forks Room and theatre space which could also be used for public education sessions.
- E. David Haney, Tri-Director and head of technology, stated that in the area of technology, the Grand Forks Public Library is one of the better facilities in the state. How has computer usage changed in the last few years? Web-based technology has significantly impacted many areas in library usage, including: reference, electronic databases, cataloging, circulation, and research. Perhaps the biggest change has been in the usage patterns of library patrons, with more electronic requests vs. standard book requests. One of the most popular services at the library is wireless access. There are reported instances when patrons access the library's wireless system from their cars parked in the library's lot.

The library's current infrastructure is not conducive to technological needs; particularly for access to electrical outlets. Internet stations are especially busy in the evenings and on weekends. Expanded hours requires larger budget for additional staffing. Current staffing levels are very low when compared to other North Dakota cities. David is also responsible for the library's web page. He has assistance in the technology department from Wayne (4 hours/week).

Question regarding the GFPL relationship with UND. Contracted for online catalog (early 1990s) at a rate of \$85,000/year for usage.

Future plans for technology advances in the GF Public Library? Satellite branches for additional internet access. Classroom space for IT training.

Discussion regarding capital outlay in relation to ongoing operating costs. David estimated that an RFID system for shelf checkout would cost \$200,000 - \$300,000, including installation. In the event that a branch system was adopted, operating costs would increase accordingly. Some libraries have helped alleviate this expense by utilizing volunteers in select staff positions.

Observation by Ken: GF Public Library could serve as archive location for City of Grand Forks historical documents.

- F. Wayne Springer, head of maintenance, provided an update on building and grounds. The library was constructed in 1972, and the heating and air conditioning systems are original to the building. As years pass, it becomes more difficult to have service work done, since so few technicians are familiar with the system and replacement parts are often not available. Efficiency is a concern. A geothermal system is not an option because of insufficient space adjacent to the building, which is necessary to house the equipment. Also, it is typically not cost effective to renovate heating and cooling systems in an older building. Access to power is an ongoing problem; electrical capabilities are maxed out. When the building was originally constructed, there was no need for the electrical access that is currently required. A \$150,000 roof replacement that took place in 1989 is beginning to show need for major repair. Parking is inadequate and adjacent space for expansion is not available. There is no security system; the camera system is outdated.

Question regarding the possibility of partnering with another entity. Staff is open to that idea. What partnerships would be desirable? Discussion included a comment that it would be nice for the library to be in close proximity to day care service, an exercise center, or a coffee shop.

4. Next Meetings -- Thursday, December 4, at 7 p.m., the general public will be invited to participate in an input session to be held in the Children's Department of the Library. Susan will work with staff to write and distribute news releases and posters publicizing the event.

Guest presenter for the December 11 meeting will be Beth Postema of the Fargo Public Library.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m. by Chair Hovey.

Duly submitted,

Susan Mickelson  
Recording Secretary