

The Charge of the Library
and the Master Plan Process

III. Introduction



THE VISION- AN URBAN LIBRARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

People crave the excitement and pride of place that can only be satisfied in a vibrant downtown, but they also need the comfort, security and sense of belonging found in a good neighborhood. The Dallas Public Library system with a powerhouse Central Library linked to support a network of friendly local branch libraries was created and developed to meet such needs.

While this model still works, it must be tested against the demands of a new century. What new roles will the public library fulfill? What does the library do today that will become outdated? We know that it must make better use of promising new technologies to more effectively deliver its services. And if we have learned anything from the past, it is that the library system must be carefully planned so that it will have the capability and the flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing needs of its patrons and its environment.



The Vision for the Dallas Public Library system, as defined in Master Plan 2000-2010, is to improve services by achieving a higher level of excellence for all aspects of the system - collections, technology, staff and facilities.

The Dallas Public Library system is a large and complex public service organization that serves a population of over 1,100,000 within an area of 378 square miles. The Library's present physical plant occupies 927,087 square feet in twenty-three locations. Assuring that these facilities continue to support the changing needs of the public is a challenge. However, a library system is much more than a collection of buildings. The facilities exist to house the system's collections and technology resources, to provide space for library programs, and to provide a comfortable environment for the public.

THE MISSION OF THE LIBRARY

The Library's mission is to link resources and customers to enhance lives, and to make available a broad spectrum of ideas reflecting diverse points of view.

Within a safe, inviting, welcoming, and barrier-free environment, the Library's primary role is to provide for and serve the recreational, informational, referral and communal needs of the public. Services will be delivered in a courteous, knowledgeable, timely, convenient, and efficient fashion.

The Library will also provide support for and offer environments that encourage the advancement of self-learning, formal education, literacy instruction, and cultural pursuits.

In order to effectively communicate its service mission and monitor success in achieving its goals, the Library developed the following list of primary and secondary roles.

Primary Roles:

Recreational - Providing popular materials and a comfortable environment that people will use for recreational reading. Materials will include bestsellers and genres such as Mystery, Science Fiction, and Romance in popular formats.

Informational - Providing access to information of any type and format that responds to the needs of the community it serves.

Referral - Providing additional or primary source information outside the scope of the collection through referral to a person, organization or agency.

Communal - Providing a meeting place where the community can come for instruction, programming, and independent learning.

Secondary Roles:

Formal Education - Providing space for organized classroom instruction.

Informal Education - Providing material and learning environments that support independent study.

Literacy Efforts - Providing space, materials and programs that promote and encourage literacy.

Cultural Pursuits - Providing programs and activities such as art exhibits, music programs, etc., that provide for cultural experiences.

**THE DALLAS PUBLIC LIBRARY MASTER PLAN 2000-2010
THE PLANNING PROCESS - AN OVERVIEW**

Recognizing the changing environments of libraries, the changes in the city's demographic make-up and the aging infrastructure of the Library's physical plant, the City of Dallas decided to undertake a Master Plan study that would provide for a comprehensive assessment of the Library system and achieve a coordinated plan of action that would guide its future development for the next ten years.

With the daunting goal of achieving a comprehensive Master Plan study that addresses all of the most critical components of a library system, the following objectives were outlined for the Master Plan 2000-2010.

- Perform surveys and analysis of all library facilities with appropriate recommendations.
- Develop planning and design guidelines for existing and future library facilities.
- Develop site selection criteria for future library facilities.
- Prioritize and recommend library capital improvements needs with cost estimates.
- Conduct assessment of Library's technological infrastructure and provide appropriate recommendations for the future.
- Conduct evaluations of library collections and develop appropriate recommendations and strategies.
- Conduct evaluation of library staff allocation and utilization and provide recommendations.
- Undertake a market analysis to identify current and future service markets.

Meeting the objectives of Master Plan 2000-2010 required the commissioning of a broad-based team of consultants and a highly integrated action plan. In addition to library building, planning and engineering consultants to deal with facilities, this team included specialists who provided expert consultation in the areas of collections, staffing, information services and community assessment.

Library administration stressed the importance of developing a plan that supported the mission of the Library system and its primary and secondary roles. The plan was not only to be comprehensive by evaluating facilities and developing planning standards for the future in relation to collections, technology, and demographics, but the plan was to also be responsive to customer needs and expectations.

MARKET ANALYSIS- STAKEHOLDER INPUT

This Master Plan was not developed in isolation. The consultant team, with the assistance of Dallas Public Library staff, undertook an ambitious and comprehensive approach to community involvement in the planning process. Through this involvement, stakeholders were:

- Given the opportunity to provide input.
- Able to assist in the development of consensus for Master Planning goals.
- Educated and excited about the process.

Key stakeholders were identified and were given opportunities to make comments and suggestions in an intensive series of interviews and meetings. Those key informants were:

- The Mayor and City Council Members.
- The Municipal Library Board.
- The Friends of the Dallas Public Library.
- The Library Staff.
- The Community at Large.

Involvement of these groups was obtained in several ways. Members of the community participated in a series of twenty-eight Community Forums. Community members were also able to participate in a survey. The Mayor and City Council members were interviewed individually. Separate focus groups were conducted with the Municipal Library Board, the Board of the Friends of Dallas Public Library, Inc., and Library staff members.

Common themes emerged from this process. Generally, stakeholders valued the Library, particularly noting its strong collections and helpful staff. Many persons indicated that they used and valued the Library as a community center/meeting place.

Stakeholders identified check-out of Library materials, research for personal use, and use of computers as the most frequently used Library services.

When the consultant team asked stakeholders about facilities, these features emerged as the most important, listed in order of priority:

- Access by car and adequate parking.
- Access by pedestrians and convenient walkways.
- Sufficient exterior lighting to create a feeling of safety.

Stakeholders also saw room for improvement by the Library. The areas identified most often as possibilities for improvement were:

- Increased number of popular materials (best-sellers, for example).
- Improved and updated technology to increase access to electronic information.
- Cleaner and more attractive Library buildings and grounds.
- Greater convenience.
- Additional space (particularly at branches) for programs and for community meetings.
- Increased marketing so that more people are aware of the services and resources of the Library.

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Mayor and City Council are generally supportive of the Library and the need for additional funding. There is interest in using technology to expand access to services and an awareness that the Library plays a significant role in providing technology access to those who would not otherwise be able to afford computers.

Regarding Master Plan issues, City Council members made clear that the rapidly changing and growing city drives the needed changes in Library facilities and services. There was interest in strategic cooperative facilities planning with other agencies. Several City Council members indicated that a variety of strategies were necessary to serve the city's growing multi-ethnic and multi-lingual communities.

The Mayor and City Council members view the Central Library as a signature facility that represents the entire system and that supports the branch libraries by providing materials and resources to patrons through a delivery system.

MUNICIPAL LIBRARY BOARD

The Municipal Library Board was interviewed as a group. Board members contributed ideas and suggestions for all aspects of the Master Plan. Several issues seemed important for a majority of Board members:

- Changing demographics of Dallas.
- Exploration of multi-use facilities, particularly with schools.
- Measurement of the impact of technology on Library service.
- Need for community rooms and other meeting facilities at all libraries.
- The importance of the Central Library, with its need to be a strong facility in itself and to provide support for the branches.

FRIENDS OF DALLAS PUBLIC LIBRARY, INC.

In a focus group meeting of Friends' Board members, strengths of the Dallas Public Library were identified:

- The Texas/Dallas Collection.
- The knowledge and friendliness of the staff.
- The strong relationship with the City.
- The strength of the Friends organization.
- The Library as an equalizer for the community by providing access to computers and technology for those who cannot afford it.

There were a variety of suggestions to be included in the Master Plan. Specifically, the Friends identified the need for:

- Adequate and safe parking at all facilities.
- Emphasis on the educational role of the Library, especially in teaching people how to access resources and collections online.
- Improved signage to the branches and the central library.
- Quiet areas and study areas in each location.

- A variety of kinds of lighting for all types of uses.
- The Central Library to serve as a "downtown branch" and as a city-wide resource.
- Marketing of the whole system to share the Library's treasures with the community.
- Additional staff is needed to provide services.
- Competitive salaries for staff.
- Adequate security and housekeeping.

THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE: COMMUNITY FORUMS

During November 1999, the Dallas Public Library held a series of 28 community meetings to solicit involvement in the Master Plan. Community opinion was obtained on a variety of aspects of Library service and facility use, including suggestions for future development of the Library system. Approximately 400 individuals attended the meetings.

Publicity for the forums was widespread. It included mailing of flyers to members of branch library support groups and to all public and private schools served by the Library, distribution of brochures in all library facilities and city recreation centers, information on the Library's web site, and a broadcast fax to Dallas Plan Partners. "*The Dallas Morning News*" provided coverage of the forums, including a guest editorial by the Library Board Chair, an article in the Metro section, and paid advertising.

At the forums, a facilitator from DMG - MAXIMUS asked questions and helped keep the meeting on topic. The schedule of meetings, questions used by the facilitators, and the complete summary of each meeting, in alphabetical order by location, is in a separate appendix.

Attendees were particularly clear in describing the services they wanted to see in the future. Primary among the services requested was access to technology-related services. New services were suggested, relating primarily to convenience, such as off-site delivery of library materials (books by mail, remote access to electronic resources) and coffee bars.

Programs and services requested by forum attendees tended to focus on the Library's educational role. These included:

- Internet and computer classes.
- Instruction in the use of the library and its resources.
- English as a Second Language , GED, and literacy classes.
- Children's programs and summer reading programs.

Additional suggestions for programs and services included:

- Book discussion groups.
- Arts and crafts programs.
- Music programs and lessons.
- Art exhibits.
- Film and film programs.

There was general agreement on the use of the Central Library: people go to the Central Library confident that items or information not found at branches can be found there.

Significant concerns were expressed about the safety of pedestrians at several facilities due to heavy traffic near branches and lack of sidewalks or crossing signals. Attendees reported difficulty entering and exiting parking areas into vehicle traffic, with poor visibility and lack of traffic lights mentioned as dangers. The need for directional signs in the neighborhoods and for highly visible signage was clear.

The attendees identified staff, collections, programs, and technology access as primary strengths of the Library. Specifically, attendees referred to the staff with superlatives. Attendees especially appreciated the children's collections, the special collections at the Central Library, and the availability of current popular titles. Programs for children were cited as especially strong. Technology mentioned included the Library's online catalog, public access to Internet, and the availability of computers for many uses.

The Library's hours were generally considered a strength, although attendees would like to see increased hours. Other recognized aspects of the Library included the delivery of materials among libraries and the branches' locations and their importance to the community.

The improvement opportunities identified by forum attendees fell into several areas, including maintenance, staffing, public information, and collections. In the maintenance area, numerous physical problems with the facilities and furnishings were identified. The attendees mentioned the problem of inadequate staffing and were aware of vacant positions. There were requests for more timely information about Library programs and services and for the wider publication on that information. The suggested improvements to the collections included requests for materials in specific subjects, faster arrival of new materials, faster delivery of materials between branches, and retention of the historical and in-depth resources of a research library.

Attendees were asked to identify core services of the Library. Since they felt that identified core services might be given funding priority, attendees had some difficulty narrowing core services. They identified as core library services:

Programs

- Children's programs.
- Community events, meetings, discussions.
- Cultural programs (art and music).
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Classes, including computer classes, ESL, GED, and literacy.

Collections

- Wide selection of books, including pleasure reading.
- Videos, music, books on tape.
- Research collections.
- Rare materials.
- Periodicals.
- Spanish collection.
- Internet access.

The Library as a place

- Quiet place for reading.
- Information resource.
- Education and recreation center.
- Reference services/librarians.
- Community center.
- Equal treatment of all; free services.

Community at large: opinion survey

In addition to the interviews, focus groups, and community forums, the Dallas Public Library conducted an Opinion Survey to gain additional public input. Surveys were provided to patrons visiting Library locations and at the Library's website. The document was available in English and Spanish. A total of 1,153 surveys were completed and submitted to the Library.

Patrons were requested to choose the Library services they most frequently use. The most popular choices were:

- 1) check out books, videos, and other Library materials.
- 2) research for personal use.
- 3) use the computer.

These three services accounted for 53% of the responses.

Patrons were asked: How would you rate the importance of the following features of Library facilities? Car access and adequate parking were rated higher than the need for pedestrian access and public transportation access. However, all were considered important. Landscaping received the lowest priority with one-third stating it was not important. Interior/Exterior style and interior lighting were all given slightly lower scores with the averages being moderately important. Exterior lighting and security were both rated very important.

When patrons were asked about the importance of the library as a neighborhood or community activity center, the responses showed that the great majority consider this an important function of the Library.

Patrons were asked a series of questions about computers and technology. The responses gave access to the Internet the highest priority of importance, while remote access from malls and recreation centers was not considered very important.

Many libraries are facing difficult budget decisions. The survey noted some ways that public libraries spend money. The responses showed that library users strongly support the continued emphasis on printed materials with - 83% responding that this was Very Important. Asked about funding, the survey revealed that patrons support additional funding over reduced services. A bond election was the most popular choice, closely followed by increased taxes and charging for services.

Respondents comments are summarized into the following most frequently mentioned subjects: collections, technology, staff, programs, hours, and funding.

Comments varied widely regarding all aspects of collections. While a strong majority of survey respondents asked for more best-sellers and popular materials, there were a number of respondents who cautioned that the depth and quality of the Library's collections should not be sacrificed in order to buy popular high-demand items. There were also a significant number of requests to strengthen and expand the Genealogy Collection. Other frequently-mentioned collection areas included children's materials, audio books, and videocassettes.

Most writers on technology asked for more computer workstations, for improved speed, improved software, expanded information resources, and better access from home.

Comments about staff were generally positive, complimenting the staff on customer service skills or appreciating good work done under difficult conditions. However, respondents also noted some staff members' need for improved customer service skills. Quite a number of responses noted that salaries should be increased for staff. Several respondents asked that the Library appoint more Hispanic staff.

The survey respondents addressing facility issues were either very specific about the need for added space or renovation at one particular branch, or the general need for additional facilities. Respondents writing about facility maintenance were highly critical of the cleanliness of facilities. Maintenance of buildings was seen as critical. Other facility ideas included addition of private study rooms, more computer labs, video preview rooms, and coffee service.

Survey respondents had many suggestions for programs and services, a number of which are currently offered by the Library. The following is a sample of requested programs and services:

- Reading program for elementary school students.
- Encourage volunteerism at the library.
- Programs and activities for children and youth during summer and school breaks.
- Community outreach to educate people about the Library and its services.
- Lectures and public meetings.

Many respondents asked for more hours, while a significant number took time to appreciate the recently added Sunday hours in several locations. A very few respondents suggested reducing hours, mostly in order to increase another program or service.

Several respondents supported a bond election, and the vast majority of respondents requested additional funding for the Library. A number of ideas for generating funds were also made, including user fees. These suggestions were countered by many that supported and appreciated the Library as a place for free access to information for all.

COLLECTIONS

The Library's most important commodity is its collections. The purchase of new books and printed materials was rated "very important" as a spending priority for the Library, by library stakeholders. Contrary to the belief that computers will herald the demise of the book, *USA Today* recently reported that the tremendous growth in the number of computers in use over the last decade has been matched by a dramatic increase in the number of books published. Availability of electronic access has heightened awareness of, and demand for, books and other media.

With collections approaching 3,000,000 volumes, Dallas Public Library provides approximately 3 volumes per capita. The system's oldest branches need a program to update their collections. New branches must be provided with large start-up collections. The Central Library's materials should be more visible and accessible to the public to increase awareness, interest and use.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS- NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM

The consulting team evaluated the collection of the Dallas Public Library as it currently exists. The evaluation was based on stakeholder input, trends in publishing and vision of the future as seen by members of the Library staff. Supporting evaluation information for this part of the Master Plan was attained from the Library's integrated automated system, from interviews with Library staff and administrators, and from the consultants' own findings and observations.

The Library's centralized collection development process, which provides support for the selection of materials throughout the system, was also reviewed. This review was not conducted to document, measure or audit the process, but rather it was done to understand the context of its effect on the collections and provision of information to Library users.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Providing access to information technology, expert consultation, and training has become one of the most popular services in public libraries today - an expectation that crosses cultural and economic boundaries in Dallas, as elsewhere.

Because the 700 computer workstations it currently provides for the staff and public will not be sufficient to meet projected demands, the Library in conjunction with department of Communications and Information Services is already planning to double this number within the next three years and to begin a three year replacement cycle for computer workstations. This will have significant facilities and staffing implications.

The Library's computers will continue to be used primarily to provide convenient and free information services, integrated with traditional print materials. The Library should focus many of its new technology initiatives towards speeding the acquisitions, processing and delivery of traditional library materials to its patrons. It will also utilize the power of new technology to expand worldwide access to more of the Library's treasures such as its photograph archive.

STAFFING

The Library's most critical asset is its staff. Public forums and patron survey responses reinforce this emphasis. It is the staff that operates the system, develops and maintains it collections and technology resources and provides expert guidance to the Library's patrons. The Library must continue to place emphasis on recruitment, retention and staff development to assure that this core asset is maintained and developed adequately now and in the future.

The library will also be challenged as a significant number of professional and senior staff near retirement. While current successful efforts must continue, future recruitment efforts must focus not only on hiring librarians but on developing a professional workforce that is capable of adapting to the changing environment, and is representative of the population the Library serves. This attrition managed wisely will allow for internal promotional opportunities that will strengthen the Library's succession plans.

Other strategies include the development of best-practices methods for maximizing the effectiveness of non-professional staff and for fostering where appropriate, a self-service capability in it patrons. The facilities planning and design guidelines include recommendations that will make it easier for public service staff to interact with patrons and monitor larger areas of library space.

FACILITIES

A critical part of The Dallas Public Library Master Plan 2000-2010 was to complete a comprehensive assessment of the physical plant and its functions and to make recommendations for capital improvements in response. Because of the age and conditions of its facilities and new forces affecting changes to the roles of the library, there exists a great opportunity to link much needed repairs and physical improvements of the library facilities with important and innovative design and planning enhancements.

To develop the Master Plan for the Dallas Public Library (DPL) the consultant team led Library and Public Works & Transportation (PW&T) staff representatives in a comprehensive and coordinated planning process that included the following major work tasks:

The consultant team collected available existing documentation on 22 of the Library's 23 facilities. (Lancaster-Kiest was funded for replacement in the 1998 G. O. Bond Program.) This included previously conducted system studies, current building programs and statistical data relating to the Library System.

The consultant team first met with the city representatives at a project kick-off meeting where the goals and objectives of the planning study were reviewed. Project team members described their specific roles and assignments. The project scope and schedule were reviewed and future meeting dates were confirmed including five additional plenary meetings of the entire committee. These included a facilities assessment review, blue-sky planning workshop, an interim brainstorming and program review session, a mid-term progress review and a findings integration meeting.

The consultant team toured Library facilities over a period of six weeks. They met with Library staff, verified building floor plans and layouts, and recorded current utilization of space (program use and arrangement) and the physical conditions of each library site. Preliminary documentation was forwarded to city staff for review and comment and was formally presented in a number of work sessions.

Project Kick-off and Subsequent Committee Meetings

Facilities Surveys and Documentation

<i>Benchmarking Analysis</i>	Concurrent with this effort, the consultant team began assembling data from index cities for benchmarking analysis and comparison.
<i>Demographic Analysis of Service Areas</i>	Utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and demographic analysis of current and projected service area populations, the consultant team gathered usage patterns, determined physical space provided per capita, and other valuable comparative information to help facilitate planning for future building standards and services.
<i>Needs Assessment</i>	Understand customer expectations attained through a comprehensive stakeholder input process.
<i>Program Development and Planning & Design Concept Studies</i>	Based on the physical survey, benchmarking information, and other data gathered, the consultant team presented preliminary recommendations for revisions to the program and designs of Library facilities.
<i>Facilities Assessments & Preliminary Recommendations</i>	<p>Analytical sketches, maps, and spreadsheets were developed to help illustrate the capability of existing Library facilities and proposed system-wide changes.</p> <p>An analysis of space utilization in the Central Library and in each branch correlated with patron traffic data and circulation statistics provided a comprehensive and objective means for evaluating differences in the distribution of existing Library facilities.</p>
<i>Planning and Design Guidelines</i>	After reviewing the preliminary program and design recommendations, the consultant team began to develop a new set of planning guidelines and design standards for the Library system. These standards more accurately measure the design adequacy (organization, flexibility, capacity, etc.) of each facility and the appropriateness of the construction materials, systems, equipment, and furnishings. The guidelines and standards were used to develop a new "kit-of-parts" model to be used by city staff and future design consultants to implement the Master Plan.
<i>Findings Integration and Alternative Strategic Planning</i>	The consulting team and the DPL and city planning team met to review the preliminary findings and recommendations of each consultant and sub-consultant. This helped to coordinate the facilities planning and design recommendations with all other components of the Master Plan.
<i>Final Recommendations and Implementation Plan</i>	The present organization and conditions, as well as the external and internal influences that must be considered during evaluation, were defined for each Library location. Each facility was

described in simple terms indicating what currently works and what should be maintained, what does not work and how this should be corrected, as well as specific recommendations for dealing with new requirements.

These recommendations were again carefully reviewed with city staff to develop a coordinated plan of action, budget and schedule for facilities improvements, and to establish the planning and design guidelines needed to assure proper implementation.

An important measure of a library system is the space it provides the public in relation to its total population. Measured against the index cities, at .868 SF per capita, DPL's total facilities rank high along with Atlanta-Fulton County (.743), San Francisco (.668) and Seattle (.652). Denver is the only index city that exceeds DPL's total space usage at 1.557 SF per capita.

However this analysis can be misleading because the distribution of space in the Dallas System is unique. While 70% of its space is located at the central library (compared to the index city survey average of 51%), 65% of material circulation & patron traffic occurs at all branches. Improvements have been recommended to increase the use of the central library along with a carefully targeted increase in branch space.

Comparison of Index Cities &
Recommendations for Improved Space Usage