

## **PORT JEFFERSON FREE LIBRARY**

**Facilities Study  
February, 2014**

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## THE BUILDING

One street up from the harbor and just on the edge of the commercial heart of town, the Port Jefferson Free Library (PJFL) is housed in a two-story, 23,351 gross square foot building. The initial portion of the Library was constructed in 1924, with subsequent additions made to the rear in 1967 and 1997. The building and its small parking lot (8-10 cars) fill the entire site, from the lot line on the northwest boundary on East Main Street, clear to the edge of the sidewalk on Thompson Street. The Library purchased a derelict residential property adjoining its parking lot, several years ago.

The design scale of the 1967 and 1997 additions has been constrained by both the “village” scale of the original 1924 building and the adjacent domestic properties along Thompson Street and in the neighborhood in general. It is virtually impossible to postulate the demolition of the existing building in order to construct a new two-story or two-and-one-half story building of similar size on this site. Simply put, there is no other building of comparable size on either Thompson Street or East Main Street. In fact, the closest equivalent would be the Village Center down on the Harbor, a renovated 1917 shipyard building, now managed by Port Jefferson’s Recreation Department.

Another important factor is that the original 1924 building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005, meaning that permission for any alterations to its façade, let alone demolition, would be difficult or even impossible to secure.

Constructing a comparably-sized 23,351 gross square foot building on an alternate site, at \$300-\$400 per square foot, would cost somewhere between seven and ten million dollars. A brand-new building constructed on a new site would likely be somewhat larger than the current facility, and thus even more costly.

Generally speaking, it is also important to note that a library would not fit easily into either an existing school or office building given the structural issues related to supporting the weight of books. A library requires a minimum “live load” structural rating of 150 pounds per square foot, while schools or office buildings are, as a rule, designed only for a “live load” of 60 to 80 pounds per square foot. A confirmation of this principle is evident in the current Library’s book stack, which the 1997 architect placed on a slab on the lowest level of that addition.

Relocating the Library to another site has been considered multiple times during the past 45 years:

1963: “The library trustees began to meet with the village trustees to discuss the possibility of locating the library in a complex of community structures near the harbor. After looking at the plans the library trustees raised many objections, chiefly the area’s propensity for flooding and the impossibility of including a basement in the building. During the months that followed, the trustees investigated fifteen additional sites, none of which proved satisfactory. In the end they decided to expand the existing building. This decision met with general approval in the community. People liked the “charm and beauty” of the 1924 building; expanding would be less costly than erecting an entirely new building; and leaving East Main Street would strike a blow to an area already in decline.” *A History of the Port Jefferson Free Library*, Earlene O’Hare and Valerie Schwartz. 2008.  
<http://portjefflibrary.org/docs/history.pdf>, p. 5.

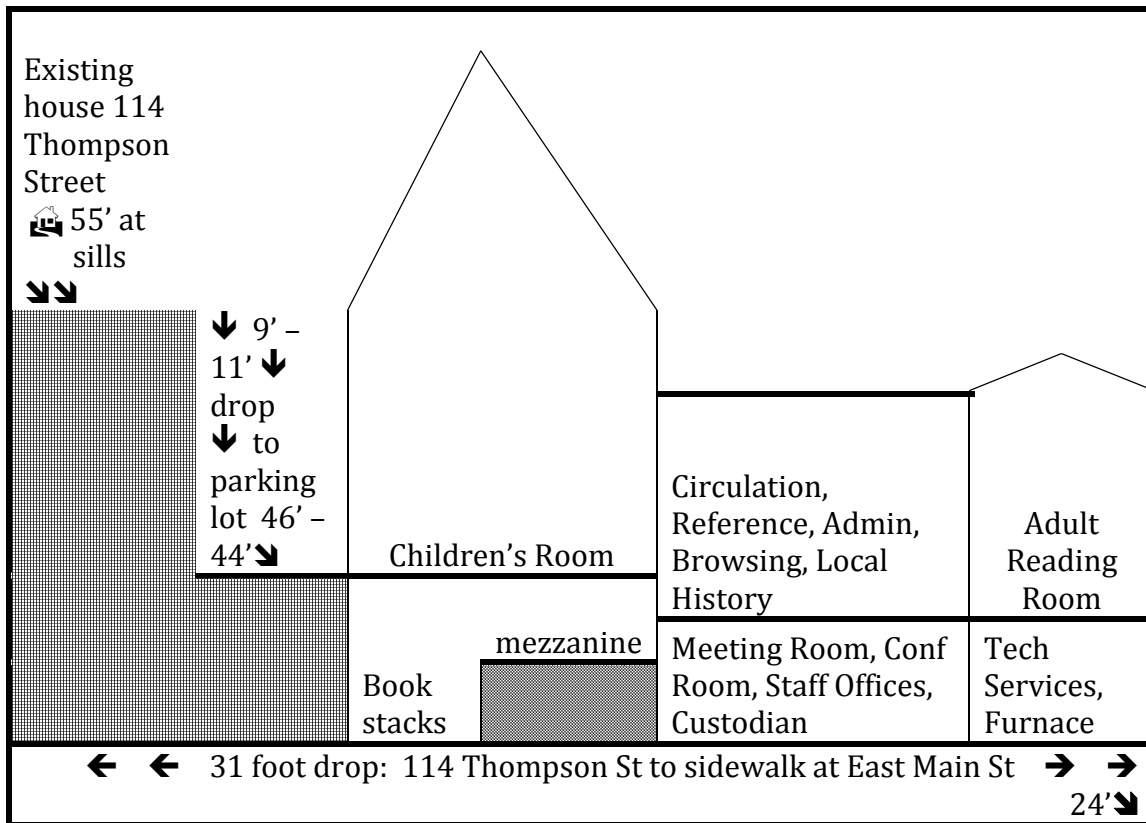
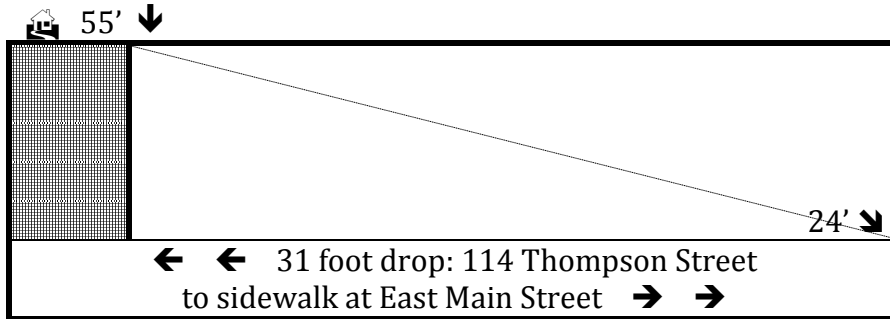
1993: “...leaving the former junior high school on Spring Street vacant. A public meeting was held on October 29, 1992 to discuss the possibility of renovating the junior high school into a new library building. Reaction among the approximately 80 people who attended was positive. Accordingly, the board decided to put forth a proposal to the community to fund further plans and to develop an estimate of the cost of acquiring and renovating the building. The feasibility study vote, held on April 1, 1993, resulted in a tie vote—118 for, 118 against.” *A History of the Port Jefferson Free Library*, by Earlene O’Hare and Valerie Schwartz. 2008.  
<http://portjefflibrary.org/docs/history.pdf>, p.8.

1995: “A survey conducted by the trustees indicated that many residents preferred that the library remain in its convenient downtown location. As a result, the board decided to develop plans to expand the library at its existing location...” *A History of the Port Jefferson Free Library*, by Earlene O’Hare and Valerie Schwartz. 2008.  
<http://portjefflibrary.org/docs/history.pdf>, p. 9.

These decisions over the past forty years—to reject the concept of joining a future municipal complex on the harbor (1963); to reject the concept of moving into the former junior high school on Spring Street (1993); to remain on the present site and expand (1995); and to accept placement on the National Register of Historic Places (2005)—along with various decisions to purchase adjacent properties on Thompson Street, have left the Library in 2014 with few options, limited parking, and hard choices.

## THE SITE

The site of the Port Jefferson Free Library slopes dramatically down Thompson Street, from 55 feet above sea level at the retaining wall at the northernmost corner of the existing parking lot, down to 44 feet at the parking lot level, and then down to 24 feet at East Main Street. The net drop in the site is 31 feet.



## THE FACILITY

The Port Jefferson Free Library facility comprises three segments, laid out more-or-less like a caterpillar:

- The original 1924 building, typical of the late Carnegie-era of library design, is built to look large and imposing at minimal cost and with minimal space, while offering an expansion possibility.
- The 1967 one-level-plus-basement addition was constructed before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 became law.
- The 1997 two-level-plus-basement addition was constructed prior to the time when the concepts of the U.S. Green Building Council (founded in 1993) and the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification initiative began to take hold.

<u>1997</u> 7,288 SQ.FT. (31%) 1 STORY + MEZZANINE BELOW + BASEMENT	<u>1967</u> 13,000 SQ.FT. (56%) 1 STORY + BASEMENT	<u>1924</u> 3,063 SQ.FT. (13%) 1 STORY + BASEMENT
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The building's total length is 174.7 feet (nearly two-thirds the length of a football field). The total area, on four levels, is  $\pm$  23,351 gross square feet.

Design and construction have evolved over seven decades under three different architects. At this writing, the most recent addition is seventeen years old. There are four separate roof systems, at least three separate foundations, and at least two, perhaps three, HVAC systems.

Overall, it can be said that the 1947 gift of the site along Thompson Street, adjacent to the rear of the 1924 building, was pivotal to the future of the Library, and that the construction of the 1967 addition, twenty years later, was visionary for its time—both in size and in the potential for library service. Thirty years later, the 1997 addition provided for major collection storage, a charming, light-filled Children's Room, and the purchase of additional land created a modest parking lot.

Today, the building is a vital resource for the community it serves.

## IS THE FACILITY BIG ENOUGH?

This is a complex issue, with no simple answers. The topic was first addressed in the 1950s, when the American Library Association developed a standard formula of 0.7 square foot *per capita* for the population served. Of course, this calculation was established before the era of extensive children's services, automation, public access computers, copy machines, small and large meeting spaces, children's crafts at the library, DVD's and videotapes, CD's, art exhibits, etc. It was also a time when the standard practice was to cram more and more books into a finite space, any way it could be done, with no requirement for accessibility.

The State of Wisconsin has been attempting to address this issue for over thirty years through a very useful series of standards, the latest of which, the fifth edition, was published in 2010. See [http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld\\_standard](http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld_standard).

The Wisconsin Standards provide multiple yardsticks for measuring library resources, in two categories.

- The first category is the actual residential population of the town (which, for Port Jefferson, is 7,750).
- The second category, a bit more complex, is the service population.

Including the entire populations of both the Miller Place School District and the Mount Sinai School District at their full census counts of 14,000 and 12,985, respectively, gives us a population of 26,985 for the contracting districts. Adding this to the 7,750 resident population of Port Jefferson, the total service population would be 34,735, an unreasonably high figure. Further complicating matters is the presence of faculty, staff and students from nearby Stony Brook University and Suffolk County Community College, as well as employees and associates of both Mather Memorial and St. Charles hospitals—any of whom may not live in Port Jefferson full time and are thus not counted in the official census figures.

To arrive at a workable service population for the Port Jefferson Free Library, the following calculation has been derived:

Port Jefferson resident population	7,750
30% of Miller Place and Mount Sinai residents	8,095
<hr/>	
Total service population	15,845

On a *per capita* basis, the standards for a resident population are higher than the standards for a service population:

- The current facility, at 23,351 gross square feet, offers 3.01 gross square feet *per capita* for Port Jefferson's resident population, or 1.47 gross square feet *per capita*, for its service population.
- 3 square feet *per capita* would be considered at the high end for the resident population of Port Jefferson alone, whereas the 1.47 square feet *per capita* for the service population would be considered about average.



## WHAT ISSUES CAN BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY?

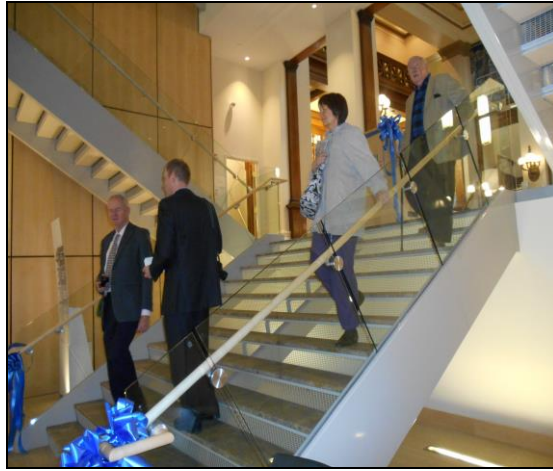
Longer-term, more complex problems will require both staff and trustee deliberations and the eventual employment of an interior designer to plan, phase and coordinate the tasks. In the short term, five issues can be effectively addressed at minimal cost and with little disruption.

### (1) The Children's Room Staircase

The Children's Room is reached by an open staircase, meaning that the treads have no back—presumably constructed this way 17 years ago in the hopes of providing some kind of “see-through” connection to the area on the mezzanine below. Now a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the lack of physical risers is cause for concern: children, the elderly, and the mobility-challenged may well stumble and fall. (See End Note <sup>A</sup>.)



Aside from completely rebuilding this staircase (which may be advisable if the book lift were to be eliminated), the only immediate solution is to install risers of a rigid but transparent mesh. Lighting from underneath the staircase may serve to enhance transparency, as the following photos depict:



One or more strategically placed security mirrors at the present circulation desk could provide staff with a view of activity down on the mezzanine level.

## **(2) Lower Level Conference Room**

The Conference Room has no interior windows and no glazing in the door—claustrophobic for occupants, unwelcoming for anyone waiting in the corridor, and a security hazard. At a time when there are serious concerns about child safety, a “secret” public space in a public library is a liability. In addition to eliminating a security problem, glazing in the door will also provide some “borrowed light” from the hallway.

This glazing must be tempered, fire-rated glass to meet the fire code. (See End Note <sup>B</sup>.) Door replacement should be coordinated with the local Fire Chief. If the budget allows, the larger Meeting Room would also benefit from matching doors.



### **(3) The Furnace Room**

A quick inspection of the furnace room in the basement of the 1924 building revealed that the door is not a fire door. Both door and frame should be replaced. However, the lack of a fire door calls into question whether the entire space (i.e., the walls and ceiling) are indeed fire-rated. This whole issue requires immediate attention, again in consultation with the Fire Chief and the Building Inspector.

### **(4) HVAC System**

The Library's complex and aging heating and cooling system does not provide sufficient fresh air, particularly for staff working in the basement. The basement is humid, which is to be expected in the lower level of a building not far from the harbor, but dampness is a liability for people, materials and furnishings. It can and will result in the growth of mold.

All existing HVAC systems should be reviewed by an independent engineer, with emphasis on:

- Rebalancing temperatures throughout the building;
- Reduction and control of humidity;
- Increase of air movement—particularly on the lower level; and
- The introduction of fresh air.

An additional issue is noise caused by the HVAC system, particularly noticeable in the meeting room. This can be remedied or at least mitigated with additional sound insulation of the ductwork as well as with adjustments to or possibly replacement of fans or vents.

### **(5) Lock on the Friends Book Store / Young Adult Center**

The building at 150 Thompson Street (Friends Book Store/ Young Adult Center) has a “thumb lock” on the inside of the main entry door. If a staff member or volunteer is working alone, a predator could enter, lock the door from the inside, and assault that individual. The recommendation is to remove the “thumb lock” and replace it with one that must be locked from the inside with a key.

## WHAT CAN BE ADDRESSED IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

### (1) Expand/Enhance the Meeting Room

The Meeting Room is approximately 40' by 30' or 1,200 gross square feet. Depending on the formula used, about 90 people can be seated in the Meeting Room in an audience configuration.

The research conducted as part of the Library's strategic planning initiative confirms that the Meeting Room is in serious need of an update. (Please see later discussion regarding new layouts for the lower level, or even relocation of the Meeting Room.)

The first problem is lighting. A new lighting plan should be developed to include some indirect lighting, sconces, spots, etc.

This low-ceilinged, windowless space could be more radically "liberated" in several ways:

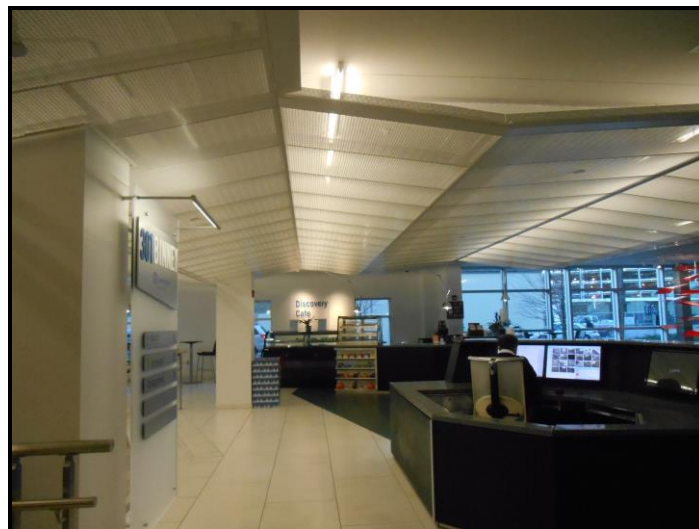
- Glass doors or even several small windows would improve the confined, claustrophobic atmosphere. Because any doors or windows would also be located in the walls of a fire egress, their glass would need to be fire-rated.



- Removing the ceiling tiles could make the ceiling feel higher. It is also possible to remove the grid that supports the ceiling tiles. In either case, the pipes and ductwork above the ceiling, as well as the "deck" above, should be painted black. A sound barrier, placed between the wall and the upper "deck" of the floor above, will contain sound within the meeting room as well as provide a smoke barrier.



- Another option would be to install a translucent perforated metal screen ceiling with lighting and pipes/ductwork visible above and painted white.





- A mural along one of the shorter walls would improve the room's atmosphere. A painted mural should be done on a canvas that can be removed for cleaning, repair, or preservation, in the case of future demolition or reconfiguration of the space.
- A more expensive, but dramatic, option would be to install a luminous wall. The one below perfectly enhances a dark, narrow, windowless basement conference room rendering an otherwise useless space very appealing.



Lower level, West Concord (MA) Branch Library

## **(2) Improve Parking Management**

Parking at the Port Jefferson Free Library is troublesome for both patrons and staff. The aggravation increases in the busy summer months and in bad weather at any time of year. To address the issue in the short term, the Library might consider:

- Distributing the Village's parking map or publishing a Library-focused map that shows parking opportunities near the Library in more detail.
- Establishing a program similar to that offered by local businesses to pay for any patron's parking fee at a nearby parking lot (possibly funded by the Friends?). The patron would park and pay, and then obtain tokens from the Library which could be used on a future visit. (According to [www.portjeff.com/village-information/metered-parking](http://www.portjeff.com/village-information/metered-parking), residents have access to a sticker for free parking—this program would serve non-

residents.)

How would the Library calculate the cost of such a program? We propose the following example:

334,572 total visits in 2011  
-149,100 children visits  
185,472 adult visits

Subtracting an estimated 60% of adult visitors (111,283) who either have a free parking sticker or arrive on foot, there would be 74,189 visitors per year for whom parking could be an issue.

From those visitors, we'll subtract an estimated 25% (18,547) who carpool, leaving a total of 55,642 annual visitors (1,070 per week) in need of parking.

Subtracting 14 weeks of free parking (14,980; December 2 – March 15) further reduces the number of annual visitors needing parking to 40,662.

Estimating that 30% of these visitors (12,198) find library lot or on-street parking leaves us with a final 28,464 visitors who must pay for parking.

At \$0.25 per token, 1 token per visit would cost \$7,116 per year. Two tokens per visit would cost \$14,232 per year.

For whatever reason, many patrons will not ask for parking tokens at the circulation desk, but this program should eliminate negative perceptions and a cause for complaint about parking.

In any case, the Library should also allow paid time for the night shift employees to relocate their cars closer to the building from remote, unlit spaces to better ensure staff safety at closing time.

### **(3) Expand Space for Parking**

Beyond management measures, there is the issue of the ultimate use of the property at 114 Thompson Street purchased by the Library several years ago.

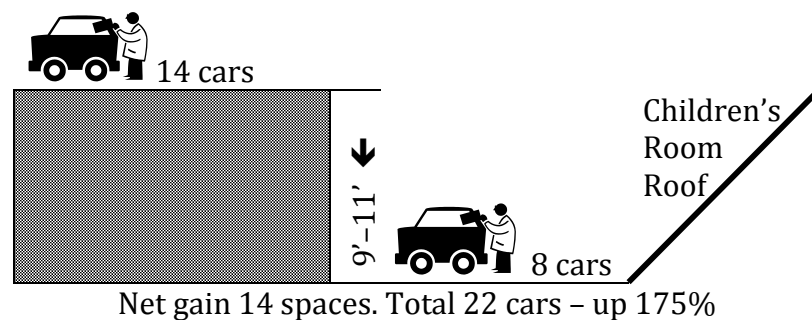
The building at 114 Thompson Street, formerly a domestic structure, appears to be derelict and in need of either extensive, costly renovations or demolition. Because of the dramatic slope of both the site and the building, it is impossible to contemplate constructing any kind of addition on either the current parking lot or at 114 Thompson Street. Such an addition could not be integrated into the existing

building, would destroy the coherence of the 1½ story Children's Room, and require the addition of yet another elevator and staircase. In light of the fact that participants in most of the focus groups—with the exception of the teen group—mentioned parking availability as a key factor in their willingness to come to the Library, demolition of this house for parking appears to be the highest and best use for this property.

To convert 114 Thompson Street to a parking lot, the Library must consider issues of drainage and structural and retaining walls; nevertheless, realistically, this property presents an opportunity that should not be ignored any longer.

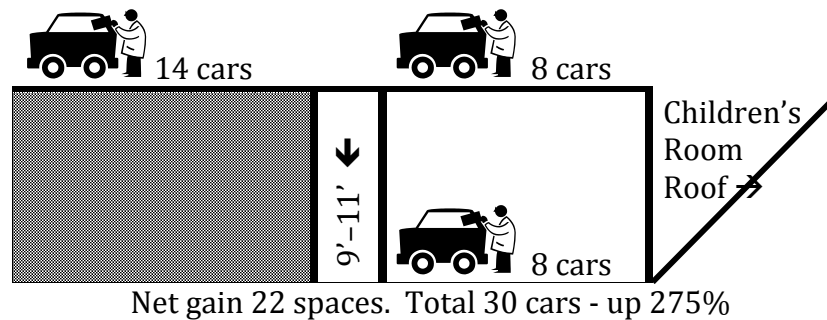
The lot measures 47' x 106', or 4,982 square feet. By comparison, the existing parking lot measures 35' x 100' (down to 28' wide at the back) and can be expected to accommodate only 8 or 9 cars. According to a standard formula (350 square feet per parking space, which includes aisle space), a lot this size should accommodate about fourteen parking spaces at a construction cost a bit less than \$20,000 per space—a reasonable cost, considering the location. A parking lot behind the library and further away from the commercial center of town will have the added advantage of being relatively "inconvenient" for people other than library users.

A simple approach would involve demolition of the existing house and construction of a parking lot on the site, with drainage.



A more complex approach would be to demolish the house and also construct a parking deck over the present parking lot. In either case, careful attention must be paid to landscaping, fencing and drainage, and lighting must be carefully positioned so that it does not shine into the windows of adjacent homes.





If zoning and funding would permit, the purchase of the lot to the west of the Library along East Main Street might also be considered. To make use of that lot, a historic house would need to be moved. A parking lot located on East Main Street would, of course, be less convenient for Library users and more attractive to non-users. This lot is not well-suited for yet another addition to the original building.

A useful suggestion came out of the Executive Interviews: the Library could explore further parking in the immediate area, perhaps in cooperation with the Port Jefferson Historical Society.

When all is said and done, however, the ultimate solution to the never-ending parking issue might be a town-wide parking effort that involves parking on the outskirts and shuttle buses to the center of town.

#### **(4) “Rightsize” and Balance the Collection**

When the expanded Library opened in 1997, the enlarged building no doubt seemed very spacious. At that time, the Library owned 5,343 videotapes and 6,727 audios—presumably also tape format. By 2011, however, the media collection had mushroomed to 17,969 videos and 10,333 audios, both largely in DVD format—a net increase of 236% in videos/DVDs and 54% in audios. And the numbers continue to grow.

The dramatic increase in the media collection size is undoubtedly one explanation for the crowded layout of shelving in the main browsing area adjacent to the circulation desk and in the media shelving area on the mezzanine. The overall effect is dense, cluttered and disorganized.

Exactly how many books is a public library supposed to offer? The aforementioned Wisconsin Standards also provide guidelines for levels of holdings and facilities ([http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld\\_standard](http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld_standard)) ranging from “Basic” to “Moderate” to “Enhanced” to “Excellent.” In Chapter 3, entitled “How to Use These Standards”, the

following caution appears:

Generally, the service targets recommended in these quantitative standards are drawn from the data assembled from the latest public library annual reports submitted to the Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning (DLTCL). The Public Library Standards Task Force used this information, standards established in other states, and their collective professional judgment to establish the quantitative standards used in this edition. Standards are established for seven different population levels at four levels of effort: *basic*, *moderate*, *enhanced*, and *excellent*. These correspond with the actual 2009 Wisconsin Public Library Service Data by population range at the 30th, 50th, 70th, and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles, adjusted for anomalies and outliers. (Page 10)

Generally speaking, in planning the size of a new library facility, most small public libraries choose a collection size that is at the “Basic” or the “Moderate” level, to serve the town’s population size. The “Excellent” level is, generally speaking, excessive, inappropriate and wasteful, particularly for collections of hard copy books, in this age of Interlibrary Loan and e-books. In a small public library, the “Excellent” level might also indicate inadequate weeding.

(a) If the Port Jefferson Free Library served only residents of Port Jefferson, it could be considered to be more than double the necessary size and with nearly double the collection needed and 39% more seating than required.

PORT JEFFERSON 2013 RESIDENT POPULATION:				7,750	
	2013 holdings	Holdings per capita	Per capita range of standards	# of holdings by which PJFL exceeds maximum standard	% by which PJFL exceeds
Volumes	130,282	16.81	6.0 – 9.3	+58,187	<b>80.7%</b>
Audio	10,495	1.35	0.32 – 0.74	+4,760	<b>+83%</b>
Video (1/2013 statistics)	16,670	2.1	0.42-1.08	+6,700	<b>+80%</b>
Overall collection size	158,066	20.40	7.0 – 10.3	+78,241	<b>+98%</b>
Public Computers per 1,000 population	15	1.94	1.00 – 2.72	Moderate level	
Seating	Main	96		Seating Exceeds Standards by ? %	
	Teen Cntr	11			
	Total	107	(30 more than called for)		<b>+39%</b>

(b) Alternatively, if the Library served a resident population of 15,845 (Port Jefferson residents, plus 30% of Miller Place and Mount Sinai residents), it appears that only the video portion of the collection would be dramatically excessive, while the overall collection size would still be large to serve this population. The number of computers falls to an almost-inadequate level, particularly for a locale with a stream of visitors.

PORT JEFFERSON 2013 RESIDENT POPULATION (7,750) + 30% OF MILLER PLACE AND MOUNT SINAI (8,095) =					15,845
	Pop. 15,832	Current hldings per capita	Per capita range of standards	# of holdings by which PJFL exceeds maximum standard	Exceeds standards by
Volumes	130,282	8.22	4.8 – 7.1	17,783	16%
Audio	10,495	0.66	0.28 – 0.60	988	10%
Video (1/2013 statistics)	16,670	0.99	0.29 – 0.64	6,529	64%
Overall collection size	158,066	9.98	5.5 – 8.2	28,137	22%
Public Computers per 1,000 population	15	0.949		Only "Basic" level+	
Seating	Main	96			
	Teen				
	Cntr	11			
	Total	107		lacks 4 seats	

(c) If the much lower yardsticks recommended for a service population of 15,845 are applied, the level of service and resources would be still disproportionate, with the video component hugely excessive and the overall collection size also quite a bit larger than necessary.

<b><u>SERVICE POPULATION of 15,845</u></b>					
	2013 holdings	Holdings per capita	Per capita range of standards	# of holdings by which PJFL exceeds maximum standard	% by which PJFL exceeds
Volumes	130,282	8.41	2.9 – 5.2	+47,888	<b>+58%</b>
Audio	10,495	0.67	0.16 – 0.39	+4,315	<b>+69.83%</b>
Video (1/2013 statistics)	16,670	1.07	0.21 - 0.51	+8,589	<b>+106%</b>
Overall collection size	158,066	10.2	3.3 – 6.1	+61,412	<b>+63.5%</b>
Public Computers per 1,000 population	(15	0.949	0.6-1.35	Basic plus level	
Seating	Main	96			
	Teen Cntr	11			
	Total	107	5 – 7/1,000 or 79-111 seats		(lacks 4 seats)

(d) To take this a step further, consider what the collections and facilities of the Port Jefferson Free Library would offer to an actual resident population of around 35,000: the population of Port Jefferson + Miller Place + Mount Sinai, or the size of many small cities. First of all, the building would only offer 0.67 square feet *per capita*, which would be grossly undersized. But what else?

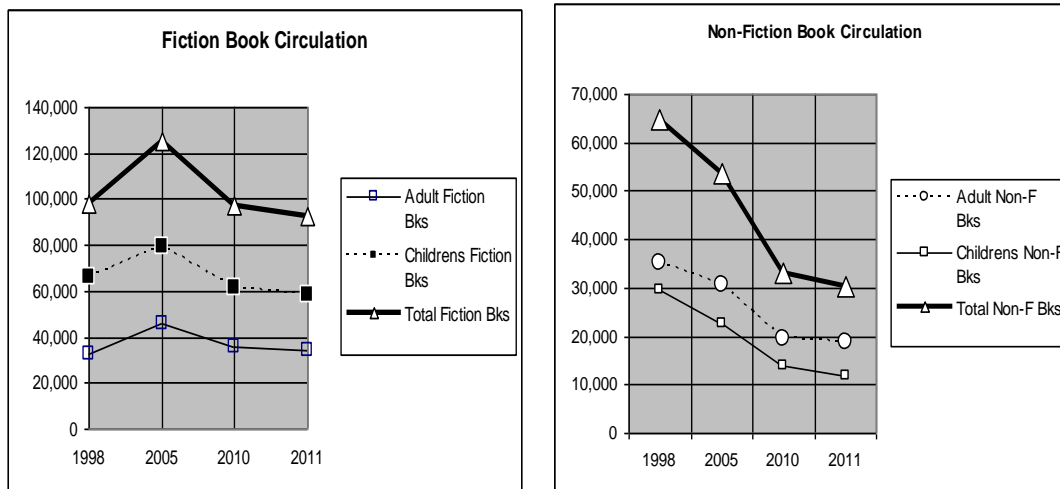
Port Jefferson's existing number of volumes would be at the "Basic" level for 35,000 people—fewer than required to serve 35,000 people—but an "Excellent" for the number of videos. In addition, because of the size of the audiovisual collection, the overall collection would still be in the "Moderate-to-Enhanced" size range. The Public Computers would falls to "very Basic/Below Basic" and a resident population of this size would not be able to find a place to sit!

<b>RESIDENT POPULATION of 34,735</b>	2013 holdings	Holdings per capita	Per capita range of standards	# of holdings differs from "Basic" standards by ?	Level for resident population of 34,735
Volumes	130,282	3.75	3.4 – 5.9	+12,183	<b>Almost "Moderate"</b>
Audio	10,495	0.30	0.23 – 0.44		<b>"Moderate"</b>
Video (1/2013 statistics)	16,670	0.47	0.23 – 0.44	+ 8,681	<b>Still exceeds "Excellent"</b>
Overall collection size	158,066	4.55	4.0 – 6.6		<b>"Moderate"</b>
Public Computers per 1,000 population	15	0.43	0.53 – 1.34		<b>Below "Basic" level</b>
Seating	Main	96			
	Teen Cntr	11			
	Total	107	3.5 – 4.5 per 1,000 or 121 – 156 seats		<b>(lacks 10 – 49 seats)</b>

At this writing, the Library is reporting about 28,272 adult fiction books and 43,394 adult non-fiction books, for a total of 71,666 adult books in 2011. This has been a fairly stable number over time—a stability, without a doubt, that is the result of consistent and even heroic weeding efforts on the part of the staff. However, the weeding has been constrained by the existence of a formalized adult book stack of a certain size that has been waiting to be filled since it was built in 1997.

By contrast, the number of books in the Children's Room has risen from 49,023 in 1998 to 64,121 in 2011, a net increase of 31%. This has no doubt necessitated the addition of shelving and, in some instances, an increase in the height of shelving, even beyond what a child can reach.

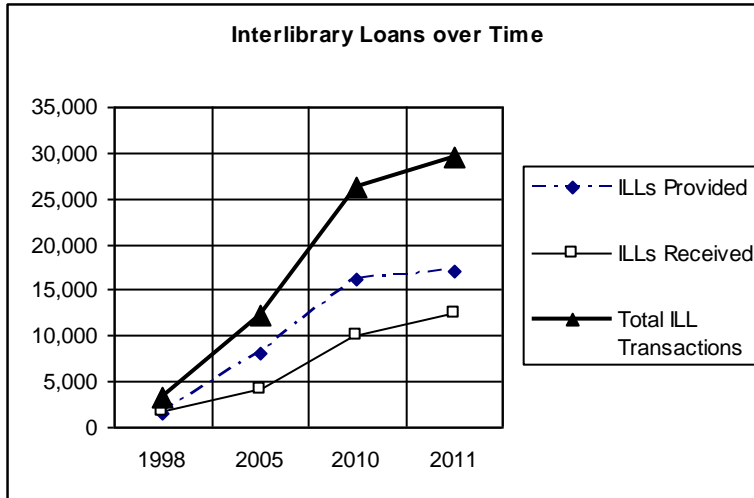
In the meantime book circulation has been dropping steadily.



A logical conclusion is that the Port Jefferson Free Library is housing too many books. In a world of interlibrary loan and e-books, almost anything is obtainable. Initiatives such as Project Gutenberg and the Hathi Trust make almost any title as far back as the Gutenberg Bible available electronically. Even medieval manuscripts are now accessible online<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Adventures of a Medieval Manuscript Expert, by Kathleen Burge. Boston Globe, West. January 23, 2014.

The statistics reveal that public library patrons have obviously discovered both interlibrary loans and electronic sources.



Staff has been coping with a rising mountain of interlibrary loan transactions for both borrowing and lending, without adequate space to store, house and ship these “books to or from outside.” As a result of local and state-funded resources, e-book access has added an entirely new dimension to public library services.

In the face of plunging book circulation, particularly non-fiction book circulation, as well as rising use of both interlibrary loan and electronic books, the Port Jefferson Free Library may not be able to justify devoting so much space to the warehousing of older and unused hardbound books. In particular, outdated or seldom-read non-fiction as well as older and seldom-requested fiction and mystery titles should be discarded.

Some examples at the Library which were selected at random from the online catalog include:

De la Roche, Mazo	11 titles
Dickens, Charles	48 book titles in “Adult”
Patterson, James	106 book titles in “Adult”
Steel, Danielle	62 book titles in “Adult”

This random list represents 183 volumes. Assuming that there are 8 volumes per lineal foot, these books are occupying 22.87 linear feet of shelving. This is approximately 7.62 shelves, the number of 36” shelves in one 7-shelf section. Does the Library really need to devote so much space to retain the older titles of these authors?



To put the implications of the size of the collection in context, consider that one hardbound adult book requires 0.1 square foot of space. And 10 hardbound adult books require 1.0 square foot of space. If space costs \$400 per square foot to build, it costs \$40 to build space to house ONE BOOK. By contrast, consider the following space requirements:

- 1 public computer = 40 square feet or 400 adult books
- 1 lounge chair = 30 square feet or 300 adult books
- 1 study/meeting room for 4 = 150 square feet or 1,500 adult books
- 14 juvenile fiction or non-fiction books = 1 square foot of space
- 24 easy/picture books = 1 square foot of space
- Study table for 4 elementary school students = 100 square feet
- 4 kids' computer stations = 120 square feet

When evaluating the amount of space dedicated to the shelving of books in relation to other institutional priorities—meeting and small meeting facilities; improved staff working conditions; more public computers; shelving for other types of library materials; increased and alternative seating—it is apparent that the time has come to reduce the space allocated to book warehousing.

The bottom line: this is a finite building. It must be thought of as a “space budget.” A reprioritization of space utilization will require difficult, yet balanced decisions.

### **(5) The Friends Book Store / Young Adult Center**

In August, 2007, the Library established a Friends of the Library Used Bookstore and Young Adult Center in rental space at 150 East Main across the street from the original Library building. The Young Adult Center, which offers Internet access, recreational reading, games and conversation space, has been well-received by teens who are pleased to have a designated space they can think of as their own.

The Book Store/Young Adult Center is staffed by the Friends of the Library and permanent Library staff, including a Teen Librarian. Some Book Store proceeds are incorporated into the Library's budget.

The facility consists of two spaces plus a link between them that includes restrooms and storage. The Book Store and Young Adult spaces measure about 32' x 21', or 672 square feet each. With the “link”, the total area of available space at 150 East Main Street is approximately 1,512 net square feet. These are approximate measurements taken informally and do not include such factors as the thickness of walls, ductwork, heating pipes, plumbing, etc. Even a share of an attic, a basement, and staircases can also be considered a part of the gross square footage of a facility. Officially, the area of this facility is given in annual reports as 2,500 gross square feet. Presumably the

larger number is the basis on which rent is being paid.

What is fair to conclude is that this facility is quite small and that each of the spaces is only marginally larger than the downstairs conference / Trustees' room in the main Library building. The total area of all three spaces would be comparable to the Library meeting room or possibly the main level of the 1924 original Library.

Difficulties with the Book Store / Young Adult Center focus around three general issues, only one of them financial:

Whether the facility is counted as 1,512 net square feet, or 2,500 gross square feet, the rent is rather high. In FY 2013, the Library paid \$46,748 for rent. This number included \$37,704 in actual rental at the rate of \$3,142 per month, to which was added 33 1/3% of the real estate taxes for the building—roughly \$8,667.<sup>2</sup> Under a new five-year lease, which would end in October 31, 2016, rental payments will rise to \$3,488 per month by FY 2015, with additional exposure to the real estate tax payments at \$8,667 or higher.

The FY 2013 rental payment and taxes work out to \$1.56 per square foot (per month) or \$18.70 (per year) if we assume that 2,500 gross square feet is indeed the yardstick or a surprising \$2.59 (\$31.16) per net square foot. Also of concern is the fact that this arrangement is apparently requiring a tax-exempt organization to pay the landlord's real estate taxes.

When the costs of heat, electricity, communications and insurance are added to the calculation, the net cost of the Friends Book Store/Young Adult Center building plus taxes comes to \$56,049.65 in 2013. That is \$1.87 (\$22.41) per square foot or \$3.11 (\$37.36).

In addition to the annual expense of the actual facility are the costs of staffing and benefits. It is to be noted that staffing, at the rate of \$285,408.77, might remain a fixed cost even if the Young Adult Center is relocated to the main building.

However, it is also important to look at how the portion of the building dedicated to teens is actually being used. The collection is limited to fiction. If teens need reference assistance, want a quiet place to study, or are looking for non-fiction materials, they have to go to the Main Library.

The teen librarian has been successful in forging relationships with the teens who come there. The research indicates that the teens value the space which they

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<sup>2</sup> Baldesarri & Coster, LLP. Port Jefferson Free Library. Financial Report With Additional Information, June 30, 2011. Page 23.

consider their own but it also reveals that a relatively small group of young people who want to play games are using it as a club house. It would seem that staff assigned to the Book Store and the Teen Center could be used in a more versatile way if they were working in the main building. The facility's location is inconvenient and isolating for staff and awkward in any kind of bad weather. It also has the potential to be a security liability for staff working alone.

An additional difficulty is that the Friends Book Store/Young Adult Center is set apart from the Library. This means that patrons need not enter the main building at all and do not make use of (and may not even be aware of) other library services, ranging from reference assistance to computer availability, best sellers displays, and quiet study space.

## **(6) Other Noteworthy Problems**

A carefully-planned upgrade of the finishes and lighting of the Port Jefferson Free Library, with the assistance of an interior designer, should be projected for the next two years to explore options for floor plans and recommend a color scheme, furnishings and finishes. This becomes an opportunity to deal with the multiplicity of other issues that impede the basic functioning of the Library for both staff and patrons.

- The original 1924 building is laid out as a “living room” and is underutilized. It houses large print books, magazines and newspapers. Many patrons do not even know it exists. Those who have been in the room characterize it as the nicest part of the Library—one that they would not want to see changed.
- The “Quiet Study Porch” is drab, uninviting and appears to be underutilized.
- The main circulation desk and the reference desk were clearly designed and laid out *ad hoc*, and the result is a congested, cluttered area which does not work well for either customers or staff.
- The computer room, which had been converted from an old Audiovisual Room, is dated and outmoded in this day of Wi-Fi and laptops. Its very existence screams “1990”.
- The Director’s Office is a fishbowl— far too much in the public eye and ear. A Library Director must handle confidential matters with staff, the public and Trustees and be able to concentrate without distraction on the preparation of reports, budgets and proposals.
- Both adult and children’s book collections have grown too large and the space

to house them really cannot be justified in terms of population served or circulation levels.

- The DVD/CD general media collection has grown topsy-turvy. It may soon be time to actually DISCARD older formats when virtually no one has a working VCR or tape deck. It is also time to discuss just what the objectives are for the DVD and CD collections with an eye to either weeding dramatically or storing older titles elsewhere. It is even foreseeable in this day of downloadable music and film that public library circulation of such items will drop, and media will diminish in importance as a library service.
- A facelift and rearrangement of the seventeen-year-old Children's Room is overdue. The space measures 42 ½' x 72 ½', or 3,081 square feet—the largest open space in the entire library and the space with the most daylight, making it very attractive. It should also be noted that there is no office for the Children's Librarian on the main level.
- The Children's Program Room is too small at about 420 square feet. It should have at least 600 square feet of open space plus adjacent storage. An enlarged and more inviting Program Room could be used more extensively, perhaps for a Story Hour in the morning, after-school programming for younger children, quiet study space for older children, and a play area on weekends.
- Collection sizes need to be reviewed objectively, and weeded heavily. After the Young Adults Center was established, their materials were no longer part of the Children's Room, and some space was gained for children's materials and programming. The entire layout of the Children's Room needs to be reconfigured.
- The presence of the emergency egress in the Children's Room poses a "child snatching" risk because it cannot be monitored easily by staff or parents. The door should be reflected in a centrally-located mirror, and a door alarm should be installed. The Fire Chief should be consulted to determine if a delay on the opening of the door would be acceptable.
- The lower level layout, including conference room, meeting room, staff break room, technical services and rest rooms, could be completely re-organized to eliminate one of the corridors and still provide a second means of egress. It should be quite possible to improve on the existing layout by eliminating most or all of one of the corridors and incorporating it into the meeting room space. Discretion for the existing rest room doors could be accomplished with a free-standing screen as a visual barrier. It may even possible to install a small "Pullman" kitchen within the meeting room itself, instead of a separate

“service” room.

One possible approach to a revised floor plan for the lower level is shown in the sketch below. (Overall dimensions 99' x 65' = 6,435 square feet.) There are, of course, multiple other options.

	↑ Emergency Egress	Expanded Meeting Room (or book stack?)	↑ Emergency Egress
←20' →		45' x 36' = 16,200 square feet = seating for 120+ OR shelving for 1,620 volumes @10 vols/sq.ft.	Restroom
↑ 27' ↓			Restroom
↑ 21' ↓ Conference Room	Entrance and Egress ↓ ←6'→	↑ 45' ± ↓ ← 30' + 6' = 36' → elevator☒	
←20' →			

## LONG TERM CHALLENGES, POSSIBILITIES AND VISIONS

If a four-phased library building is to be entirely reimagined, key issues must be addressed.

### (1) Where Does the Meeting Room Really Belong?

The present meeting room is windowless and uninviting. While the Library cannot aspire to house a large auditorium, particularly on the present site, it is also, in a sense, competing in peoples' minds with the rather elegant finishes and water views of the meeting spaces at the Village Center on the harbor which are available for a fee through the Department of Recreation.

Although the Library cannot compete with the Village Center, there is space to create a more attractive public meeting room. The main floor of the original 1924 building measures 32.8' by 46.7' (1,531.76 gross square feet). Furnished as a large living room, it is clearly underutilized, although in people's minds a strong image of the Library.

As a multipurpose meeting room, this space would also seat about 120 people. Such a meeting room, with its high ceilings, large windows and lavish woodwork, would be unique, memorable and splendid.



Taken From: [A History of the Port Jefferson Free Library](#)

In order to make more space for amenities such as a mini serving area, storage, a coat rack or coat hooks, art displays, a pull-down screen and other audio visual

equipment, the wall-hung book shelves could be removed and repurposed in other areas of the Library or even throughout the Village—a way for the Library to build even more good will.

For maximum flexibility and ease in rearranging furniture, some of the existing furniture could be mounted on casters. There is no reason why a sofa or a lounge chair could not be moved to the side of the room for a large formal meeting yet incorporated into the seating for small meetings with fewer attendees.

When no meeting is scheduled, such a multipurpose meeting room could be used more informally by adult patrons. Put out a coffee pot in the mornings! This could be one of the places where patrons can take advantage of the Library's WIFI using either their own laptops or loaners provided by the Library.

If the meeting room were to be relocated to the original building, space would be freed on the lower level. The choices then would be to house a portion of the adult book collection in the basement or to establish additional staff spaces, meeting spaces and storage areas on the lower level.

For example, the present meeting room space (which alone is 1,200 square feet) could also provide space for one of several possible uses, such as

- 12,000 adult volumes
- 24,000 adult volumes in compact moveable shelving
- 3 additional conference rooms the size of the present conference room
- A combination of one additional conference room or Local History Room (550 square feet), a group study for six (200 square feet), and three group study/tutoring rooms for 4 (150 square feet each)
- A combination of additional meeting spaces and some office spaces, including potentially a new Director's office.
- A Young Adult space equal to the one on East Main Street would use up only 53% of the existing meeting room space.

If most of the lower level were to be repurposed, 6,448 square feet could be reconfigured to house many more books—including the entire adult book collection—or some combination of meeting and study spaces as well as book shelving.

The space may be more useful if there is a staff service desk on this level. One lower-level issue to be dealt with in any case would be security, both for the public and for staff, especially in the basement where it would be prudent to install an alarm system and video cameras.



## **(2) Friends Book Store and Young Adult Center**

It seems clear that the establishment of a separate facility at 150 East Main Street to serve as a Friends Bookstore and Young Adult spot in 2007 was a costly commitment that may not be viable in the long term. Because the lease expires on October 1, 2016, it would be wise to begin to explore options for relocating both the Friends and the Young Adults. If looming cuts to the Library budget (and, indeed, to all town budgets) were to occur in the next two years, this situation would become urgent.

A careful analysis of all the costs of 150 Main Street—rent, taxes, heating, telephone, paid library staff, and equipment—should be calculated and compared to the profit generated by sales at the Friends Book Store. The actual number of teens using the Teen Center should be tallied and reported on a monthly basis, perhaps using a sign-in book. An effort should also be made to determine whether the Teen Center attracts a small number of teens who come in repeatedly or whether it actually has a broader base of teen users.

One option might be to return the Friends book sale operation to a corner of the main floor and establish a Teen Center on the Quiet Study porch (which is, coincidentally, the same size as the existing Teen Center – 600 square feet).

## **(3) The Quiet Study Porch**

The Quiet Study Porch was added to the building as part of a small renovation phase in 1997. There is no carpet on the floor. Daylight from a multitude of windows is obstructed by shades that are kept pulled down. The porch is 12' wide, conveying a grim, tunnel-like impression at least partially due to the rank of study carrels which are placed in close proximity to one another along the inner wall.

In all probability, the porch also serves as an emergency egress corridor for the main library space and cannot, therefore, be either closed, locked off, or subdivided. It can, however, be made more appealing.

The pull down shades covering the windows—whether for controlling glare or light—are unattractive. One hallmark of new “green” buildings is the availability of daylight, but in this instance, available light is being blocked. If the problem is glare, a better solution might be to apply a film on the glass. If the problem is privacy or isolation from the street, consider reconfiguring the carrels—possibly as a “laptop bar” located horizontally along the corridor.





In any case, this space would be more appealing if at least some of the shades are removed entirely while others are drawn open as part of the library routine. When an interior decorator recommends a new color palette for the Library, the plans should include new, more appealing colors in this area which is one of the first that visitors see when they enter the building.

It should be noted that the Quiet Study Porch is very much valued by young adults and adults, according to the students participating in their focus group. If this porch is to be repurposed, another location for “Quiet Study” will still be needed.

#### **(4) The Computer Room**

The concept of the computer room is predated by the A/V room of the 1960s and 1970s. It is crowded, claustrophobic, uninspiring, and reinforces the stereotype that libraries are stodgy and out of date. Staff report that it is seldom used. To demonstrate its leadership in technology access and to encourage the use of technology in the Library, this environment must be upgraded.

Today, public access computers are generally distributed throughout a library—sometimes in computer work stations, reference areas, children’s sections or on tables or at a laptop bar. Many libraries lend patrons a laptop to take and use anywhere in the library.

Computer training is generally more successful if conducted in a classroom setting or a place similar to the present basement conference room. Printers and color printers, however, need to be located in an area where staff can supervise and maintain them.

## **(5) Adult Service Desks**

Patrons in the focus groups report positive interactions with Library employees. However, several of the adult public service staff in Circulation and Reference are working under difficult, crowded conditions while trying to sustain quality customer service.

The entire area should be redesigned. One possibility is eliminating the Computer Room or converting it into a work space. Another possibility would be to move the Reference Desk/Office to the northeast or northwest corner of the main space, near the present Study Porch. New electrical outlets and at least some of the public access computers could be located nearby. Individual instruction on the computers could take place in this zone, while more formal classes, with laptops and a projection screen, could be conducted in a conference or meeting room.

A much-needed reconfiguration of the Circulation Area should provide room for a queue of patrons—along with carriages and strollers, wheelchairs and walkers. The new space design should also make it easier for people entering and leaving the building and accommodate a self-check-out option.

The Library handled 83,702 interlibrary loan items in 2011—an average of 1,610 transactions per week. Without doubt, this function requires more space. Behind the Circulation Desk or nearby, a space should be designated for the receipt of interlibrary loan deliveries, for their housing, and for pickups and returns of reserved items.

## **(6) The Library Director's Office**

The location and “fish bowl” configuration of the Library Director's office are really derived from outdated expectations of the function of a library director. For many years, the director was supposed to provide direct supervision of everything transpiring in the library. Conversely, the public and the staff were supposed to be privy to all that took place in the director's office.

Today, public library directors are responsible for all operations, including planning, budgeting and personnel. Rather than being the first person seen on entering the library, making the director vulnerable to drop-in visitors, the office should be somewhat secluded. The director requires privacy for conferences with trustees, for handling personnel matters, and for periods of concentration on reports and budgets. Acoustics are important. When the office door is shut, whatever is said in the office should not be audible in adjacent spaces. While a door with a window is necessary, a full interior window wall is not. Public seating areas should not be located directly adjacent to the office door.

The Library might consider relocating the Director's Office or at least minimizing the glazing and repositioning the door so that it does not open directly into the adjacent circulation area.

### **(7) Rest Rooms**

In the last redesign of this building, both public and staff rest rooms were short-changed. Rest rooms are always a problem in public libraries, and doubtless the problem is exacerbated in a resort town like Port Jefferson.

Regardless, the present rest rooms are unlikely to be ADA-compliant, and it may be time to upgrade them, particularly in the context of other public rest rooms in the Village.

### **CONCLUSION**

To achieve building goals, the Library, first and foremost, will have to reduce the size of its collections. Public libraries always face pitfalls when weeding, "reprioritizing" or "right-sizing" collections, even when they provide discards to another library or book recycler or for sale to the public. Throwing books and outmoded media out can seem wasteful, and the Library must have a plan in place to communicate the whys and wherefores of a practice that might cause some controversy.

In addition, community residents—particularly frequent customers—have a strong sense of ownership, and there are features of their Library—particularly its cozy intimacy—that they do not want to see altered. There is no doubt that Port Jefferson Free Library is an icon in the Village, beloved and well-used. However, many aspects of the facility in its present condition are at worst dysfunctional and at best simply worn out. It is time for change: the challenge is to communicate effectively and energetically with both staff and the public that proposed changes will make a great Library even better.

## END NOTES

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<sup>A</sup> Citations on Open Risers in a staircase.

**504.3 Open Risers. "Open risers are not permitted."**

Source: 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Titles II and III, p. 153. U.S. Department of Justice. September 15, 2010.

<http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.pdf>

**4.9.2 Treads and Risers. "On any given flight of stairs, all steps shall have uniform riser heights and uniform tread widths. Stair treads shall be no less than 11 in (280 mm) wide, measured from riser to riser (see Fig. 18(a)). Open risers are not permitted."**

Source: 28 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Part 36. Revised as of July 1, 1994 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities. Code of Federal Regulations reprint. Excerpt from 28 CFR Part 36: ADA Standards for Accessible Design Pt. 36, Appendix A. p. 30

<http://www.ada.gov/adastd94.pdf>

<sup>B</sup> Fire-rated doors are commonly available and described in detail on the Internet. See for example <http://www.supadoor.com/technical-specifications/fire-rated/fire-rated.html>, or <http://www.fireglass.com/framing/designer/>. A consultation with the local Fire Chief is recommended.