

NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY RENEWAL

A paper for the IFLA satellite meeting

“Libraries as Place and Space”

19-21 August 2009

Torino, Italy

by

Anders C. Dahlgren

Library Planning Associates, Inc.

Normal, Illinois U.S.A.

Member, IFLA Standing Committee on

Library Buildings and Equipment

and

Jeffrey Scherer

Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd.

Minneapolis, Minnesota U.S.A.

Introduction

In August, 2005, Hurricane Katrina tracked through the Gulf of Mexico on a course for New Orleans. Most of the world watched the events unfold on television – the evacuation order, the streams of vehicles leaving the city, the residents who stayed behind out of choice or because they had no other choice. On the morning of August 29, Katrina made landfall, the eye passing some miles to the east of the city. To those of us watching on TV, to those of us without direct experience in these matters, it appeared to be less than the direct hit the news programs had been warning about. Then the levees broke.

The city was devastated. Within an hour of the first reports of a breached levee, the water was six to eight feet deep in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. Within three hours, the water was as ten feet deep or more. Entire structures were submerged.

Libraries in the city were part of the devastation. Every building operated by the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) suffered some degree of damage. At some locations, the damage was relatively minor. The Milton H. Latter branch occupies a house along St. Charles in the Garden District and suffered modest wind damage and rainwater infiltration. The Robert E. Smith branch in the Lakewood area was flooded to a depth of more than six feet. The furnishings, fixtures, and collections housed on the entry level were deemed “unrecoverable.” Although the upper floor did not suffer flood damage, there was extensive mold and mildew. The branch was a complete loss.

The Main Library in the Central Business District fared relatively well. The siting and grading around the building places the building on a small rise. The building also rests on a low plinth. The floodwaters surrounded the Main Library building and came within inches of overtopping a ventilation shaft on the back of the building. Had the water level reached just a little higher and

flowed into that air shaft, the basement and subbasement would have been flooded. The main library would have lost its mechanical and electrical systems and the mainframe computer that supports the entire library system. Moreover, had the lower levels flooded it would have destroyed the library's archival collection, which includes some of the oldest historical records in the United States, pertaining to the settlement of New Orleans and the area.

Shortly after the floods, the architectural firm of Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd. (MS&R) became involved with the efforts to restore and re-open NOPL's Alvar Street Branch. The re-furbished Alvar Street Branch re-opened in June, 2006, in conjunction with the annual conference of the American Library Association. (As an aside, the 2006 ALA conference had been slated for New Orleans well in advance of the storms in 2005. Following much internal debate about relocating the conference, the Association held to its original plans and became the first major convention to be held in New Orleans post-Katrina.) A year after that, MS&R, together with the library consulting firm Library Planning Associates, Inc. (LPA), was engaged to prepare a system-wide masterplan for rebuilding NOPL. The masterplan featured, as a case study, the application of a space planning model based on the methodology recommended by the IFLA Standing Committee on Library Buildings and Equipment in its recent publication *IFLA Library Building Guidelines: Developments & Reflections* (K.G. Saur, 2007). This paper summarizes the efforts to rebuild the Alvar Street Branch and develop a facilities masterplan for New Orleans Public Library.

Redeveloping the Alvar Street Branch

MS&R has had long standing working relationship with the periodical *Library Journal* and its editor Francine Fialkoff. Jeffrey Scherer was on the core team in the planning of their LJ Design Institutes. These annual institutes are held in different regions of the United States and are organized around design "make-overs" for libraries – case studies involving selected participating libraries from the institute that explore strategies for improving or expanding those facilities.

Shortly after the first Design Institute was held at the New York Borough of Queens, Hurricane Katrina (and then Hurricane Rita) struck New Orleans. Coincidentally, the American Library



Association was scheduled to have its annual meeting in New Orleans in 2006 -- just 9 months after the hurricanes struck. Jeffrey Scherer's firm, Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd. is a member of the 1% for Architecture nonprofit organization. The firm pledges 1% of its annual billable hours to be focused on nonprofit causes. This commitment has been applied to a variety of causes. It seemed only logical, given that MS&R specializes in library architecture, to unite the LJ Design Institute's "make-over" of a library and MS&R's library experience.

The Alvar Street building was completed on November 7, 1940. It was a building completed under the Works Progress Administration. A short history from the NOPL (used with permission) follows:

The Alvar Street Branch of the New Orleans Public Library opened on November 7, 1940 following a formal dedication ceremony on November 6. Completion of the branch ended a long struggle by neighborhood groups and public officials to secure library facilities for the eastern section of the city. The building was designed by city architect Maurice B. Depass and a Works Progress Administration allocation of \$20,523 financed construction of the building. Under the supervision of librarian Shirley K. Stephenson, the branch was an immediate success, with more books loaned for home use in its first full month of operation than any other branch except for Napoleon.

The area surrounding the Alvar Street Branch has a rich history. The structure stands on the site of the old Guillot Market, once a central location in the Ninth Ward. The library faces an open green space which was once part of McCarty Square, a large and shady public park that was the hub of leisure activities for neighborhood residents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Several fine homes were built around the square including the Frey mansion, once owned by the L. A. Frey Meatpacking family, and a former Schwegmann family residence.

Only seven years after the library opened, the New Orleans city government traded McCarty Square to the School Board for a piece of property on Perdido Street. City Hall was built on the Perdido Street site and Francis T. Nicholls High School (now Frederick Douglass High School) was built on the McCarty Square site. The Alvar Street Library now faces the athletic field behind the school's gymnasium.

By the mid-1970s, circulation had fallen off considerably as the building began more and more to show its age. In 1977, members of the Bywater Neighborhood Association decided to take an active role in revitalizing the Alvar Branch. These efforts culminated in a large scale renovation project, completed in 1982. Made possible through \$118,552 in federal Community Development grants, the renovation included a new roof, new doors and windows, and new electrical wiring. The Bywater Neighborhood Association meanwhile, developed a small park in the lot adjacent to the building and "adopted" the library grounds.

The goals for renovating the branch were reported by Francine Fialkoff in *Library Journal*:

The Alvar Street Branch restoration in New Orleans was complicated not only by the destruction of furnishings but also by the loss of all the books, other materials, and computers that make a library viable.

We had several goals at the outset. We wanted to restore a library in a neighborhood that was on the road to recovery and that had people living in it and returning home to it. We wanted the makeover to be quick: people in New Orleans had been worn down by the dislocations in their lives and by dealing with Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and other government agencies. We wanted to make it as easy as possible for the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) staff, which at the time we began numbered only 19 – and they were busy serving customers and keeping the few open branches operational. And, no small order, we wanted the services (or as many of them as possible) and materials to be donated. The library and city were both operating on a shoestring.

LJ served as a conduit for vendors, publishers, distributors, and others in the library community to channel their commitment to libraries and to the role they play in sustaining – and rebuilding – community. This one small library in the Ninth Ward became the focal point for that passion.¹

The New Orleans Public Library Foundation reported on the results of the renovation and the reopening of the branch in its *Rebuild* newsletter:

Hand fans waving steadily in the heat, 200 people crowded into the Alvar Street Branch Library's courtyard to celebrate its reopening on June 25. In less than four months, this Bywater landmark, downriver from the French Quarter, had been transformed from a flooded, moldy ruin into a state-of-the-art neighborhood library.

The guests included librarians from the American Library Association's annual convention, neighborhood book lovers, members of the library industry, and donors. Speakers were Tania Tetlow, New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) Board chair, Councilman James Carter, Baker & Taylor's George Coe, MS&R project manager/architect Paul Mellblom, and Francine Fialkoff, editor of *Library Journal*, which spearheaded the renovation. They were eager to share their excitement and anecdotes of the successful and challenging process.

Before the hurricane, Alvar was heavily used by students from Frederick Douglass High School across the street. Singer Charmaine Neville (of the well-known Neville family of musicians) lived nearby and came to the library to read to children. By 2005, monthly average circulation had risen 29%; new patron registration was up 24% over 2004.

After the hurricane, standing water remained in the building for weeks. The branch lost its entire collection, as well as all interior furnishings and technology equipment. Residents of the Bywater district and nearby Holy Cross neighborhood (both in the city's Ninth Ward) were eager for the return of their library.

¹ See <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6370900.html>

The project originated on March 2, when *Library Journal* publisher Ron Shank and editor Francine Fialkoff toured the branch and the devastated lower ninth ward. They met with City Librarian Bill Johnson, senior members of his staff, Tetlow, NOPL Foundation consultant Ron Biava, lead architect Jeffrey Scherer, local architect Eean McNaughton, contractor Tom Boudreaux of Citadel Builders, and the City's senior architect, Miriam Lemann.

The building had been cleared but not cleaned; mold filled the air. Some members of the group were skeptical; renovating this public building by June 25 during the American Library Association meetings would be a very demanding undertaking. In the end, everyone agreed that if all parties expedited their work the library could be transformed by late June.

“The new design, some 60 years later, works to bridge the mid-20th century world with the emergent 21st century,” Scherer said. The new design retained the structure's historic perimeter shelving and ceiling details. The renovation introduced contemporary features including 22 computers donated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the modern recycled rubber, low-maintenance floor, colorful furnishings and shelving end panels featuring images of local jazz musicians. Fabric wall panels for sound absorption are designed to display work of local artists.²

As architects, MS&R's responsibilities included building survey, design, contract documents and co-supervision of the construction with Eean McNaughton Architects. MS&R also, with the lead of interior designer Leanne Larson, designed all custom furniture and selected vendor furniture and finishes. This was done in coordination with companies making contributions.

A facilities masterplan for New Orleans Public Library

Following the successful rebuilding of the Alvar Branch, Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd. and Library Planning Associates, Inc. were engaged to prepare a master plan for the NOPL. This Master Plan provided the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) with a road map to build a world-class library system for the citizens of New Orleans and its region, as well as the city's visitors. In the world of library service, it is our experience that customers usually judge the quality of a library based on their answers to the following questions:

- Does the library have the materials that I need for education or entertainment?
- Is the library conveniently located near where I live or work?
- Is the library open when I need to use it?
- Is the library building welcoming and designed to support my library needs?
- Does the library provide programs that supplement and complement the printed and audio/visual materials in its collection?

² Rebuild A Progress Report from the New Orleans Public Library Foundation Fall 2006 Issue

- How does my library compare to others in similar cities?

If the answers to these six questions are positive, chances are residents will feel that the library cares about and is responsive to their needs. These became the guiding principles of the facilities planning process.

The library's mission

During the months following the storms, the trustees of the NOPL library board, members of the NOPL Foundation board, and the library's administrative staff – in addition to the monumental task of working to recover from the damage done by the storms and restore basic library service – sought to express and redefine the library's overarching mission. They understood the importance of having a clear mission as a sound foundation for future planning. These points also became central organizing themes of the facilities masterplan.

- The New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) inspires the individual and enriches the community through access to information, resources, technology, and programming that are delivered by knowledgeable and creative staff.
- The New Orleans Public Library is the premier cultural institution that preserves and celebrates the collective memory and living history of New Orleans, Louisiana, and the world. We foster the future aspirations and democratic dreams of all.
- The New Orleans Public Library is New Orleans' gateway for education, information, communication, culture, and recreational enrichment – by utilizing the fundamentals of sight, sound, and taste.
- The New Orleans Public Library leads the recovery and the economic redevelopment of our community, fosters the future aspirations of every individual, and protects intellectual freedom and the democratic dreams of all.
- Like Jazz, the New Orleans Public Library is authentic to New Orleans. We embrace the democratic values of Jazz and the healing spirit of New Orleans through:
 - Improvisation – individual investigation
 - Blues – the sound of American optimism
 - Swing – quality and style with participation
 - Ceremony, celebration, and competition

Population forecasts

Another important aspect of the facilities masterplan involved understanding the population the library would be serving. The demographics of the area had changed dramatically immediately after the storms, with the dislocation of so many city residents. And there was evidence that the city was now repopulating in different patterns than had been experienced before. New

concentrations were appearing in different neighborhoods. Different ethnic groups were returning to New Orleans and settling in different parts of the city.

Like any business, the library system uses the number of people it serves to help it decide the number of print and non-print items, seats, computers, programs, meeting rooms, and parking spaces for each library.

The number of citizens living in New Orleans before Katrina was approximately 484,684. After Katrina, estimates of the local population varied. The U.S. Census Bureau said there were 223,388 residents of the city, a loss of more than 50%. The area's Regional Planning Commission (RPC) estimated the post-storm population to be slightly higher, at 264,969. The differential resulted from differences in the data studied to create the estimate. The RPC was using census data, but also information from the United States Postal Service, public utilities and Entergy New Orleans account-level utility data; Metro Disposal Garbage Can Registration; and building permit data from the City of New Orleans. The RPC estimates seemed to be "closer to the ground" and were therefore taken as the basis for future projections.

The Regional Planning Commission estimates that by the year 2030, the city's population will be at 84% of its 2000 census population or 409,056. RPC data also showed that the population distribution among its planning districts would shift as well and not mirror the pre-Katrina population profile by planning district. This redistribution varies from a low of 23% in Planning District 8 (the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross neighborhoods) to a high of 227% in Planning District 1 (the Central Business District, French Quarter and the upper portion of Lower Garden District neighborhoods).

Along with a population loss of 45%, the library lost 24% of the total square feet of library space. However, of the branches (not counting the main library), the library lost 63%, or 57,660 square feet of library space – going from 92,096 square feet to 34,436 square feet. As a percentage of the total area, the branches dropped from 38% to 18% of the system-wide space.

Comparisons with peer libraries

It was important to understand how New Orleans Public Library compared with other libraries serving a population of similar size. Benchmark comparisons would provide a framework for understanding how other public libraries in the area operate – what kind of collections they provide for their communities, what kind of staffing levels they offer, how much fiscal support they receive, and so on. In turn, these comparisons would provide direction for the future development of NOPL.

A sample of libraries serving a population of 350,000 to 500,000 was drawn from a database of public library statistics maintained by the U.S. Department of Education.

From a comparison among the libraries in this sample, it became clear that the New Orleans Public Library was under-resourced even before 2005. In 2004, the Library's print holdings placed it below the 25th percentile in relation to its peer libraries in other cities. The number of volumes per capita – 1.69 at the time – was below the lower quarter measure of 1.90, and well

below the peer average of 2.80. Put simply, New Orleanians have had far fewer books from which to choose than have citizens of most peer cities.

This Master Plan recommended an increase in print items per capita to 2.97 or 1,214,896 total items – a 45% increase over 2004 that would bring NOPL up to about the peer average. Non-print items would shift from 5.95% of print (23rd percentile) to 11.0%, placing NOPL in the 60th percentile.

Libraries must have enough staff to serve customers well and to keep libraries open when needed, including evenings and weekends. Immediately before Katrina, there were 216 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members, or one staff member per 1,142 square feet of library space, or 0.55 FTE per 1,000 people served. After plunging to 20 employees immediately after Katrina, NOPL staff will reach 96 FTE employees by the end of 2008. The Master Plan recommended an ultimate staff size of approximately 250 FTE (150 for branches, 4 for the Foundation, and 96 for the Main Library). This level allows the libraries to remain open every day, for an average of 69 hours per week.

These resource goals became some of the core resources the library was to house and came to determine the space needs recommended in the masterplan.

Achieving these objectives – increased collection size, expanded staff, and greater service hours – are among the steps necessary to achieve other key goals: an increase in per capita circulation from 2.97 items per capita per year to 6.20, and an increase in gate count (customers through the doors) from 3.73 visits per capita per year to 6.10. Improved circulation and gate count will be important indicators of the success of the Master Plan.

Community input

No successful planning venture is done in a vacuum. New Orleans is one of the oldest cities in the United States. It has been shaped by tourism, food, music, Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico commerce and, of course, race and cultural history and heritages.

Given the dynamic nature of the city and the specific characters of the neighborhoods, it was critical that the process included representations from as many constituents as possible. To begin with, the planning team held a two-day workshop with board members and invited civic leaders. This included an all-day session at which we discussed and determined the guiding principles of the Master Plan. However, this session also formalized the idea that the branches would be “themed” around the cultural richness of the city. These included music, food and history.

In addition to this session, the study team interviewed key staff, donors, representatives of the neighborhoods, the Friends of the NOPL organization and NOPL Foundation. Finally, a “town hall forum” was conducted in a central hotel. More than 100 people attended.

From all of these meetings, one overarching principle emerged: Libraries should reflect and serve the neighborhoods.

It became very clear that distinct geographical, cultural and economic characteristics described each neighborhood. People wanted service to be close at hand. While this demand created some interesting overlaps and inefficiencies in the final plan, it was accepted as part of the historical continuity of the city. This requirement was compounded by determining who gets their neighborhood branch first.

The impetus to restore local library service was very keenly felt. In one neighborhood, residents operating independently of the library secured philanthropic donations to rebuild their destroyed branch library – even though the proposed site and size did not conform with the recommendations emerging from the facilities masterplan. In other words, local politics threatened to override sound library planning.

A service and space planning model for NOPL

As the MS&R/LPA study team worked with library staff and trustees to define the overall characteristics that would define a “world-class” library for New Orleans – a collection of some 1.2 million volumes, 120,000 nonprint items, and so on – the study team started explore how the library’s resources should be deployed across the city in order to maximize convenient access by residents to library collections and services.

There was general agreement that the library’s pre-storm service configuration involving a main library and multiple branches should be continued. Prior to the storms, the library had developed a three-tiered approach to its branches. Although there had been relatively little deliberate coordination of the pattern of branch development, before Katrina there had been three essential branch “types” – a small branch, a medium-sized branch, and a large (or regional) branch. There was broad agreement that as part of the masterplan the library should deploy different branch types. And there was an understanding and expectation that the branch types deployed post-Katrina would be different than those deployed before the storms, and that they would probably be located in new places to serve newly emerging neighborhoods.

So the study team set about defining what those branch types should be, what type of facility should be located where, and how large each should be. These issues would determine the long-term capital and operating costs of the library – a critical element of the masterplan.

Working with library managers, the study team defined service models for five branch “types.”

- Storefront – a storefront branch might be considered a test branch for neighborhoods that may merit a permanent, free-standing branch in the future. Use of storefronts allows NOPL to minimize capital costs, while honoring its commitment to serve all of the citizens. This small branch would be located within leased retail space. Its primary purpose is to provide quick access to computers and a limited collection and for pick-up of reserve materials.
Collection: 5,000 volumes / 500 nonprint
Readers’ seats: 12

Computers: 10

- Neighborhood – This branch type is the smallest, purpose-built library prototype. It would house a basic array of collection materials, reader seats, computers, and one meeting room.
Collection: 16,000 volumes / 1,600 nonprint
Readers' seats: 24
Computers: 10
Meeting room seats: 30
- Community – This prototype expands on the services offered in the neighborhood model by increasing the collection size, more than doubling the number of computers, and providing more staff to assist with technology.
Collection: 40,000 volumes / 4,000 nonprint
Readers' seats: 30
Computers: 24
Meeting room seats: 30
Other areas: children's area program space
- District – This prototype significantly adds collection, seating, and meeting room space and adds a dedicated space for children's story time.
Collection: 60,000 volumes / 6,000 nonprint
Readers' seats: 60
Computers: 30
Meeting room seats: 60
Other areas: 30-seat story time area
- Regional – The largest prototype would support a collection five times the size a neighborhood branch, several meeting rooms, and an increased staff for circulation, reference and children's services.
Collection: 80,000 volumes / 8,000 nonprint
Readers' seats: 100
Computers: 36
Meeting room seats: 150
Other areas: 30-seat story time area

By defining the service goals of each branch type, the study team was able to make an estimate of the space needed for each. The collections, resources, and services to be housed in any library will determine the space needed to support that library. The space need of the library in turn affects cost estimates, site size requirements, and a host of other factors.

This direct connection between a library's essential service goals and its space needs has been at the heart of library space planning for many years. The recent IFLA publication, *IFLA Library Building Guidelines: Developments & Reflections* (K.G. Saur, 2007), describes a methodology whereby a library can estimate its space needs based on its essential resource and service inventory goals. A space needs assessment methodology modeled on that recommended by the

IFLA Standing Committee on Library Buildings and Equipment was used to define the space needs of each of these five branch types.

The recommended methodology defines six types of floor space found in nearly all libraries. A service goal relating to each of the six types of space quantifies the inventory to be housed by the library. This in turn is used to estimate the space needed for each element of the library's overall service inventory. The space need estimates for all six types of space are combined to produce an estimate of the library's gross space need.

The six types of space defined in the IFLA methodology are:

- Collection space – for books, magazines and journals, nonprint collections, and computer work stations used by the public to access electronic information resources
- Reader seating space
- Staff work space
- Meeting room and activity space – including auditoriums, multi-purpose rooms, storytime rooms, conference rooms, and so on
- Special use space – which reserves floor space for features such as small group study rooms, the server room, public refreshment areas, a staff break room, and similar activities
- Nonassignable space – which reserves the necessary space for mechanical equipment, restrooms, stairwells and elevator shafts, and the like

Table 1 at the conclusion of this article provides a summary of the service goals and space needs recommended for each of the branch types. Note that measurements are calculated in square feet rather than square meters.

Book collection space for the three smallest branch types was calculated at 10.0 volumes per square foot (100 per square meter), seeking to reserve for the library the option to house the collection using shorter, more reachable shelves and ample face-out marketing display of the collection. The collection space need for the “district” and “regional” branches were calculated at 11.5 volumes per square foot (115 per square meter) on the assumption that the larger collections housed in those two branch types would achieve some economies of scale in their layout. All of the calculations of collection space need assumed that 10% of the collection would be in circulation at any given time and therefore would not need to be accommodated on-shelf.

Other common allocations applied in the calculation of space need for these branch types included:

- Nonprint collections at 10.0 items per square foot (100 items per square meter)

- Computer network stations for patron use at 40.0 square feet per station (4.0 square meters per station)
- Reader seating at 30.0 square feet per seat (3.0 square meters per seat)
- Special use space is estimated at 12.5% of the gross building area in the smaller branch types and 17.5% of the gross building area in the larger branches (on the assumption that the larger branches are more likely to provide a public refreshment area)
- Nonassignable space is calculated at 27.5% of the gross building area

As a result of these calculations, the study team came to an understanding that the small, “storefront” branch will require 2,838 square feet (roughly 280 square meters), the “neighborhood” branch will require 6,100 square feet (roughly 600 square meters), the “community” branch will require 14,236 square feet (or 1,400 square meters), the “district” branch will require 21,015 square feet (or 2,100 square meters), and the “regional” branch will require 31,206 square feet (or 3,100 square meters).

A similar planning exercise was conducted to estimate the space needs for the main library. As the study team identified prospective locations for branch libraries and recommended what branch “type” should be deployed at each location, the combined collection and service resources to be housed in the branches could be totaled. These holdings were then subtracted from the recommended systemwide collection development goal, and the remaining collection represented the inventory to be housed at the main library.

Conceptually, the main library operations were organized into five categories. There were three public service components – the general public collection and two special collections, the Louisiana and archive collection and the African-American Research Collection (AARC). There were two “central service” components – administrative offices and support services relating to technical services (which includes information technology).

A similar planning process was undertaken with library staff to identify the essential inventory of resources and services that would be allocated to each of those five components. The results are summarized in Table 2. The general public collections would require 133,529 square feet (about 13,250 square meters). The Louisiana collection and archives will require 42,287 square feet (4,200 square meters). The AARC will require 6,881 square feet (680 square meters). The library’s central administrative functions will require 10,364 square feet (1,000 square meters). And the technical services operations will require 10,283 square feet (also about 1,000 square meters). Together, the combined space need of the main library will be 203,344 square feet (20,000 square meters).

The study team used all of this information to evaluate the feasibility of re-using any existing library branches and facilities to support the emerging goals of the facilities masterplan, to define site selection requirements for any new branches recommended as part of the masterplan, and capital cost parameters for all recommended improvements.

The final facilities masterplan

Before Katrina, there were 12 branches plus the Main Library serving a total of 484,684 people. The system had a total of 242,096 gross square feet or about 0.50 square feet per capita. This placed New Orleans in the bottom quartile of peer cities. This Master Plan recommends a total of 380,833 square feet for a projected population of 409,056, or about 0.96 square feet per capita. Accomplishing this expansion would nearly double the per capita space NOPL can offer New Orleanians for reading, computer use, educational programs, and community meetings. This expansion would move NOPL from the lower quartile to the 90th percentile among its peer cities.

Convenient locations are as important as size for public libraries. This Master Plan defines “convenient” as no more than two miles from a residence to the branch, with the exception of the East New Orleans Regional Library. Specific, building-by-building recommendations are summarized at the end of this presentation.

The devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 created the opportunity for the NOPL to rethink how and where it should provide services to the citizens of New Orleans. With foresight and courage, the directors have chosen to reimagine rather than simply rebuild the system as it was. While the latter choice would be politically easier, the former choice is the right one. The construction of a new library system is the act of building social and educational capital. Today, patrons are rediscovering that libraries are essential community-based learning centers in addition to being providers of traditional library services, such as study space, materials for serious scholarly work, collections for entertainment purposes, and computer access to databases and the Internet.

Similar to the explosion of library construction at the turn of the 20th century, communities across the United States are building new libraries in this new millennium. Conceived and realized as distinct places for individual user groups, libraries are being designed extremely flexible with retailing techniques in mind to enhance the experience for young and old alike. And sustainable design strategies such as energy conservation are increasingly part of the process. In addition to responding to these emerging trends, the NOPL should provide places for people to obtain information in the event of another catastrophic storm or other natural disaster. NOPL was a first responder immediately after Katrina, providing the citizens of New Orleans with vital information, faxing, internet access, and in some cases, the only working telephones available.

Successful libraries respond to their communities’ specific service needs. As institutions, they are reasserting themselves as important centers of learning and community focus. With the right resources and political will, the NOPL can become the institution of first resort for all things cultural, intellectual, and educational. What Hurricane Katrina wrought can be righted with a renewed financial, political, and community effort. The Library should not be forced to diminish its service aspirations or dispose of useful resources because of lack of space. For instance, relocation of the Louisiana Division (currently located in a substandard below grade space in the

Main Library) must be done immediately. The citizens of New Orleans need to act as a community and support a Library system in total to prevent it from becoming a series of separate libraries unequally serving neighborhoods. They must also recognize and support the effort and resources required to agree on the recommended locations, sizes, and operational costs for the libraries. The only institution in a city that serves the minds of all of the population, one individual at a time, the public library remains the most equitable and democratic institution to serve all needs without judgment.

The masterplan was unveiled in New Orleans in early March, 2008. The plan was presented to the national library community at the Public Library Association conference in Minneapolis at the end of March. The city of New Orleans has taken the resulting Master Plan seriously. It is currently in the process of building five of the branches damaged by the floods, following the broad outlines of the facilities masterplan developed by MS&R and LPA.

Main Library

The current Main Library should be replaced with a new landmark civic building that is a dynamic, resource-rich, and a unique and an important downtown destination that complements the mission and purpose of the Library and the city. It is also recommended that this important modern building be saved and preserved but with a new, as yet undetermined, purpose. Key goals of an improved main library include:

- The basement and sub-basement space are not suitable for the Louisiana Collection
- The land available to add on to the building is inadequate—forcing any addition to be inefficient and expensive
- The building structure was not designed to support the code-required load capacity of a library.
- The buildings systems, over 40 years old, are completely worn-out.
- The cost to renovate and add on to the building is approximately \$500,000 more than building new.
- There is no adjacent land to provide the critically important parking for an urban library to be customer friendly.

The new Main Library will house the world-renowned Louisiana Division, NOPL administrative offices, and core collection, serving the residents, businesses, and government agencies in the Central Business District (CBD), French Quarter, Warehouse District, and adjacent neighborhoods. This plan recommends that construction of a new, secure, above-ground archival facility for the Louisiana Division be constructed in central New Orleans. Given the vulnerability of the collection, now housed below ground, it is imperative that construction begin as soon as possible but no later than 2010. This archival facility would be the first phase of the completely new Main Library, to be under construction by no later than 2016. By phasing the project, the at-risk collection can be housed in a safe environment as soon as possible. The first phase of the Louisiana Collection will require a total of \$28,853,563. The second phase, the remainder of the Main Library, will require \$84,950,193. Construction of both phases is projected to cost \$113,803,156 (in 2008 dollars). An allocation of \$3,000,000 is also recommended for new materials in the Main Library. The cost of phasing the work is included in these dollar amounts.

Branch libraries

Described below, in alphabetical order, is a summary of the recommendations for repair and renovation of existing branches and for construction of new branches.

Algiers Regional

Replace with new Regional prototype branch by 2010-2012.

Alvar Street (Bywater)

Already renovated, this small branch can continue to serve Bywater and adjacent neighborhoods until recovery warrants a new, larger branch.

Carrollton

A new Regional prototype—one of three with Algiers and East New Orleans—to be located in the Carrollton Recovery Zone (vicinity of Carrollton Avenue and I-10) and started by 2012.

Central City

A Storefront prototype to be located in the Recovery Zone along Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. and opened by 2010-2012.

Children's Resource Center (Uptown)

Complete exterior repairs to this small historic branch and maintain use until about 2016, when it should be replaced by new Downriver and Upriver branches and become available for new purposes.

Cita Dennis Hubbell (Algiers Point)

Repair structure immediately and maintain use until 2020. This small branch will be replaced at that time with a new Neighborhood prototype branch in the vicinity to better serve Algiers Point and adjacent areas. The Cita Dennis Hubbell Branch will be available for a new purpose. A Neighborhood prototype to replace the existing historic Cita Dennis Hubbell Branch by 2022.

Downriver

A Community prototype branch to be established by 2020 in the Uptown area downriver of Napoleon Avenue. This branch will replace a portion of the service provided by the Milton Latter branch.

East New Orleans

Replace with new District prototype branch by 2014, in the general vicinity of I-10 and Read Blvd. This building will be expanded to a Regional type by 2022.

Martin Luther King (Lower Ninth Ward)

Already renovated, maintain use as a community branch serving the neighborhood and the charter school in which it is housed.

Mid-City

Maintain this Storefront branch, one of six temporary branches, until 2012, when its services can be replaced by the larger Carrollton Regional branch and a new Smith branch in Lakeview.

Milton Latter

Complete exterior repairs immediately and maintain present use until 2025. Repurpose and renovate for greater use as a center for Library support organizations, community meetings, and cultural programs. Replace with two new Community branch prototypes in 2025-2030. (See Downriver and Upriver.)

Nix

This small branch will be very difficult to renovate to meet current standards. Replace after 2016 with Rosa Keller Neighborhood branch and Carrollton Regional branch, and after 2020 by new Downriver and Upriver branches.

Nora Navra

This small heavily damaged branch will be replaced by services of the Pontilly, new Norman Mayer, and Treme branches.

Norman Mayer (Gentilly)

This heavily-damaged branch on a small site should be replaced soon by a Storefront prototype and eventually by a larger Neighborhood prototype by 2014.

Pontilly

A District prototype branch to be established by 2012 in the general vicinity Elysian Fields Avenue and Robert E. Lee Blvd. This branch will support recovery of the Gentilly community and will serve Lakeview, Treme, and East New Orleans while their branches are being built.

Robert E. Smith (Lakeview)

Maintain modular or Storefront branch until replaced by 2018 with a new Community prototype branch.

Rosa Keller (Broadmoor)

Renovate and reopen 2010-2012. Note: Consistent application of this Master Plan's standards and principles would call for replacement of this under-sized, significantly damaged branch. The recommendation to renovate is made in view of the Rosa Keller branch's central position in the neighborhood's recovery plan and the commitment of public and private funds to implement this plan.

Tremé

Establish a Storefront branch by 2010 in the St. Bernard Recovery Zone. Replace by 2022 with a Community prototype branch.

Upriver

A Community prototype branch to be established by about 2020 in the Uptown area upriver of Henry Clay Avenue. This branch will replace a portion of the service provided by the Milton Latter branch.