

Would an expanded building be on the present site or in a new location?

The City Council directed the Library Board to examine the current site and explore other downtown sites, since the library serves as a strong anchor to Northfield's historic downtown. The Board looked at nine other downtown and near-downtown sites, only to find that other possible sites had even more limitations and costs than the current site without the visibility and historical significance of the Carnegie building.

Why not leave the current library as is and open a satellite or branch library?

Branch libraries become economically affordable in communities over 60,000 people. Even Rochester, which is five times Northfield's size, has only one library with a bookmobile to serve local neighborhoods. For the foreseeable future a Northfield branch would be an expensive duplication of collection, staff, telecommunications and facility costs, requiring a significant increase in the library's annual operating budget.

Why do we need more library space in Northfield? We have college libraries and school libraries – aren't they enough?
It is true that Northfield is very rich in libraries. But the colleges' academic collections and services focus on the curriculum needs of each institution; the school libraries provide curricular support for students between the ages of 5 and 18. Only the public library is equipped to serve all ages and interests.



Who pays for library services?

Northfield residents pay about 81% of the library's operating costs. About 19% of the operating costs are paid by Rice County as a reimbursement for services provided to county residents. This amount is based on the use of county residents who account for 23% of our total circulation.

What has been happening with a possible library expansion? All we seem to be hearing about right now is the inadequacies of the Safety Center.

Based on the significant problems with space for programs, resources and technology that the current library is facing, the City Council hired Rohlif and Associates to study space and program needs. The resulting "Rohlif Report" identified "best practices" and recommended a building program to address the current and future needs of our community for library space. The full Rohlif report can be found on the library's website at <http://northfieldmn.info>.

Another study by MS&R Architects explored the feasibility of expanding the current library building, based on the space recommended in the Rohlif report. That study, also on the library's website, found that the historic Carnegie building can be expanded to accommodate a modern public library well into the 21st century.

The Library Board is planning a private capital campaign to augment public funds for the library addition. In 2010 the community will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Carnegie building, and the Board looks forward to the community support needed to expand the 1910 building, with its handsome 1985 addition, to serve the community for another 100 years.

What is the current population of the library's service area? What is it projected to be in 20 years?

We currently serve about 30,000 people in the City of Northfield, including the college students, and in the surrounding townships and towns of Lonsdale, Dundas and Webster. The State Demographer estimates that the population of Northfield and northern Rice County in 2030 may approach 40,000 people.

Why do you include the college students in your population projection? Don't they mostly use the college libraries?

They are residents of our city and many vote here. While the students use their college libraries for academic research and study, they often use the public li-



brary as an off-campus destination and as a place to pick up popular materials.

Is it true that for every item you add to the collection you have to take one out?

By actively “weeding out” library materials that are outdated or less-used, the staff is able to create some space for growing areas of the collection – children’s materials, adult fiction, books on tape and CD, and DVDs. The library is very intensively used. In 2008, despite having the smallest facility, Northfield Public Library and Booker users together checked out more items than any other SELCO library in the southeastern Minnesota region (except for Rochester, population 100,000). Northfield users also borrowed more items from other SELCO Libraries than users from any other library in the region. With the projected population in 20 years we will need about 31,000 sq. ft, which is 19,000 sq. ft. more than we now use.

With the increasing use of the Internet, why do we need to

expand the library at all? Can't people get all the information they need on the Internet?

Our library provides a community gathering place and a source for self-education and entertainment as well as a hub of information. Librarians are experts at searching for information and linking people to community resources. The library offers computers and free high-speed Internet access to those who otherwise do not have access. The library computers and wireless connectivity are also used extensively by many who have computer access at home or work, but are seeking faster service or specialized databases. Library electronic resources are authoritative sources that are accessible to the community at all hours of the day and from locations around the world.

Will an expanded library require more staff? Can't the library save some annual operating expenses by using more volunteers?

The library staff greatly appreciates the many hours currently donated by volunteers willing to reshelve materials, deliver books and DVDs to homebound patrons, read stories aloud to children, and support the library through the Friends of the Library organization. In fact, volunteer hours total more than one full-time position, a significant savings. However, there are many more tasks and responsibilities that can be handled only by the professional staff. The expanded library will be designed to be more efficient so that current staffing levels will remain the same.



Northfield Public Library

Frequently asked questions
about our community's need for
more library space