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# american libraries

APRIL 2010

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

American Libraries

Digital  
Supplement

Spring 2010

## Spotlight: Buildings Get **GREENER**

### PLUS

- Low-Cost Remodeling
- Self-Preservation & the Construction Budget

Cambridge Public Library





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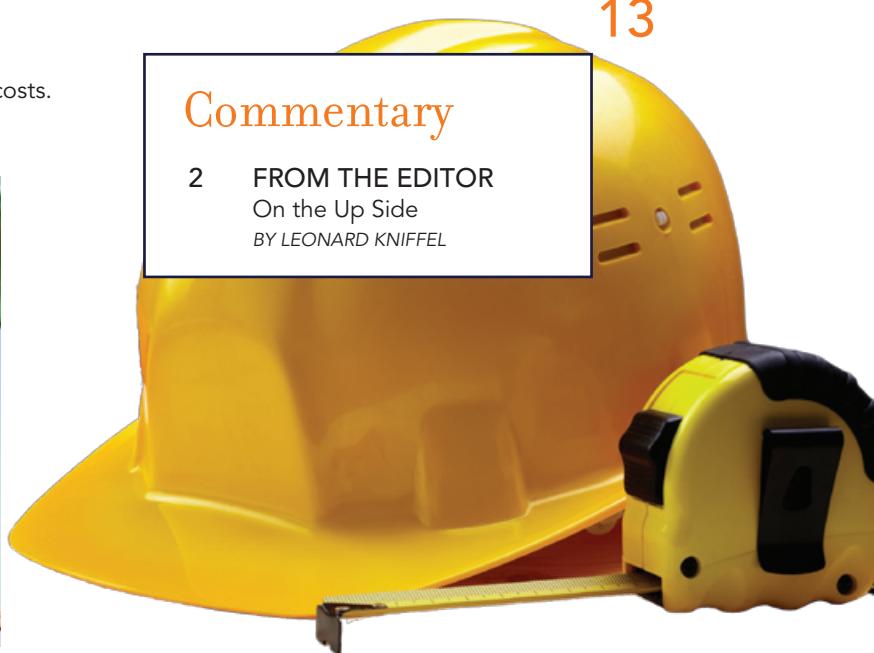
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## On the Up Side

by Leonard Kniffel

**D**espite the abysmal economic outlook for libraries in California and elsewhere across the country, many library construction and renovation projects funded during better financial times came to fruition over the past year. We're pleased to be able to showcase more of these facilities in this digital supplement to the April print issue of *American Libraries* and to the new facilities-themed series of photo essays available on the *AL* website.

The 12 library buildings highlighted in this Library Design Showcase are notable for their environmentally friendly design. The trend toward environmentally sensitive construction has grown dramatically in the past several years, and most new construction is

### When the going gets tough, the public gets going—to the library.

showing efforts in this area, but these buildings are among the greenest of the more than 85 submitted to *AL*'s 2010 showcase. In this supplement, you can see more examples of green features, including collections of libraries using natural light to reduce energy costs and libraries

with special attention paid to their landscape choices.

Along with the showcase, this digital issue of *AL* also includes extra features that we could not squeeze into the April print issue. In "Remodeling on a Budget," writer, trainer, and consultant Paul Signorelli highlights some California projects that show how a low-cost approach can still pay big returns. Library budgets being what they are in the Golden State, construction that is already underway will need all the cost-saving tips librarians can muster.

In "Librarians, Self-Preservation, and the Construction Budget," building consultant Jeannette Woodward cautions that cost overruns, finger-pointing, and bad publicity are often the unexpected downside of an otherwise exciting construction or renovation project.

Two shorter features in this issue highlight specific aspects of building and construction. In "A Circulation Renovation Cuts Expenses," interior designer Sally Anglemyer explains how some of the pressure librarians are feeling to reduce staffing levels can be alleviated by automated checkout. While nobody relishes the idea of automating anybody out of a job, many libraries have no choice but to make some very tough decisions about staffing. In "A Brilliant New Chapter," Eric Wills of *Preservation* magazine shows how residents of Walsenburg, Colorado, converted an old high school building into a state-of-the-art, ecofriendly public library.

A bonus feature, "Grow Your Own Librarian," by Kathy Anderson, an editor for LYRASIS, the nation's largest regional membership organization serving libraries and information professionals, explains how a Mississippi program turns paraprofessionals into professionals.

The libraries showcased in this digital supplement are inspiring and offer further proof that when the going gets tough, the public gets going—to the library. And all *AL* current content is also available to you online, comment-enabled. Visit [americanlibrariesmagazine.org](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org). ■

# american libraries

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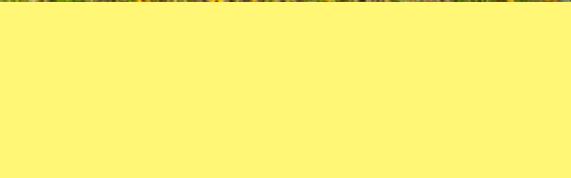
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# GREEN BEACONS

The trend toward environmentally sensitive construction has grown dramatically in the past several years. These 12 buildings are among the greenest submitted to *American Libraries'* 2010 Library Design Showcase. You can see more examples of green features, including collections of libraries using natural light to reduce energy costs and libraries with special attention paid to their landscape choices, at [americanlibrariesmagazine.org/librarydesign10](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/librarydesign10).



## GAIL BORDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Rakow branch of the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin, Illinois, achieved LEED Gold certification, with a geoexchange-based HVAC system, low-flow water use fixtures, and solar controls to reduce energy consumption of the lighting and mechanical systems.

### New Construction

Architect: Engberg Anderson, Inc.  
[engberganderson.com](http://engberganderson.com)  
Size: 9,796 sq. ft.  
Cost: \$3.9 million  
Photo: Daniel Kabara Photography

The metal-clad skin of the new Appaloosa branch is the first U.S. commercial application of the Vari-Cool iridescent coating from PPG Industries, which consists of mica chips in a clear base that create shifting colors depending on the angle of view, while reflecting infrared light. A convective cavity separates the panels from the building so heat can disperse before reaching the insulation. The building has been submitted for LEED Gold certification; additional green features include native vegetation and cacti and trees salvaged from the old lot, oversized ductwork to slow air flow and lower energy consumption, locally produced building materials, and a photovoltaic array on the roof.

### New Construction

Architect: DWL Architects + Planners, Inc./Douglas Sydnor Architect and Associates  
[dwlarchitects.com/dsydnorarchitect.com](http://dwlarchitects.com/dsydnorarchitect.com)  
Size: 21,242 sq. ft.  
Cost: \$7.3 million  
Photo: Bill Timmerman



## SCOTTSDALE (ARIZ.) PUBLIC LIBRARY



## POUDRE RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

Poudre River Public Library District's Council Tree Library in Fort Collins, Colorado, is certified LEED Platinum by the Green Building Council. Elements contributing to the rating include a minimum of 50% Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood products; recycled materials in decorative plastic panels, chairs, and ceiling grids; low-emitting paints, adhesives, carpets, and coatings; and efficient lighting fixtures and mechanical systems.

### New Construction

Architect: Aller-Lingle-Massey Architects and

studiotrope design collective

[aller-lingle-massey.com/studiotrope.com](http://aller-lingle-massey.com/studiotrope.com)

Size: 16,600 sq. ft.

Cost: \$6.2 million

Photo: John Robledo

## HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The renovation of Houston Public Library's Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research has been submitted for LEED gold certification. The project preserved the historical structure of the 1917 former home; maintained the original clay tile structure; added a lighting system that senses the amount of natural light and adjusts interior lights accordingly; built recycling, collection, and storage areas into the millwork; reduced water consumption by 50% with an efficient irrigation system; and landscaped to provide habitat and foster biodiversity.

### Renovation

Architect: Glassman Shoemake Maldonado Architects

[gsmarchitects.net](http://gsmarchitects.net)

Size: 11,853 sq. ft.

Cost: \$7 million

Photo: Eric Hester, Darnart





## GOUCHER COLLEGE ATHENAEUM

The Goucher College Athenaeum in Baltimore has two green roofs, a rain garden that collects rain runoff from the rooftops and that is planted with vegetation to attract butterflies, a grassy meadow with plants chosen to increase the area's biodiversity, a sloping great lawn that serves as a natural amphitheater, and a terrace planted with a grid of honey locust trees.

### New Construction

Architect: RMJM

[rmjm.com](http://rmjm.com)

Size: 103,000 sq. ft.

Cost: \$47.5 million

Photo: Jeffrey Tryon/RMJM



## GWINNETT COUNTY (GA.) PUBLIC LIBRARY

Major building components at Gwinnett County (Ga.) Public Library's Hamilton Mill branch were selected for their environmental attributes, including brick made from recycled materials and a reflective metal roof. The building is situated to take advantage of natural light while minimizing the amount of harsh direct sunlight that enters the space, and the site features bioswales that remove pollution from runoff water, native landscaping, and pervious paving that allows rainwater to seep into the ground through pavement.

### New Construction

Architect: Precision Planning, Inc.

[ppi.us](http://ppi.us)

Size: 20,805 sq. ft.

Cost: \$7.4 million

Photo: Michael Casey

A combination of clerestories, a canted multilevel ceiling, window walls, transparent rooms, and translucent end panels help light the Great River Regional Library's Saint Cloud (Minn.) Public Library, saving an estimated \$51,000 in energy costs annually in the 118,025-square-foot building. All service points are located along the daylight axis to aid in orientation and navigation.

*New Construction*

Architect: Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd.

[msrltd.com](http://msrltd.com)

Size: 118,025 sq. ft.

Cost: \$23 million

Photo: Lara Swimmer

## DARIEN (CONN.) LIBRARY

Darien (Conn.) Library is certified LEED Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council. Notable green features include construction from heavy materials that provide high thermal mass; low-maintenance exterior materials including brick, slate, aluminum-clad windows, and copper flashings and gutters; extensive daylighting in occupied spaces; an efficient HVAC system; and biofiltration of stormwater.

*New Construction*

Architect: Peter Gisolfi Associates

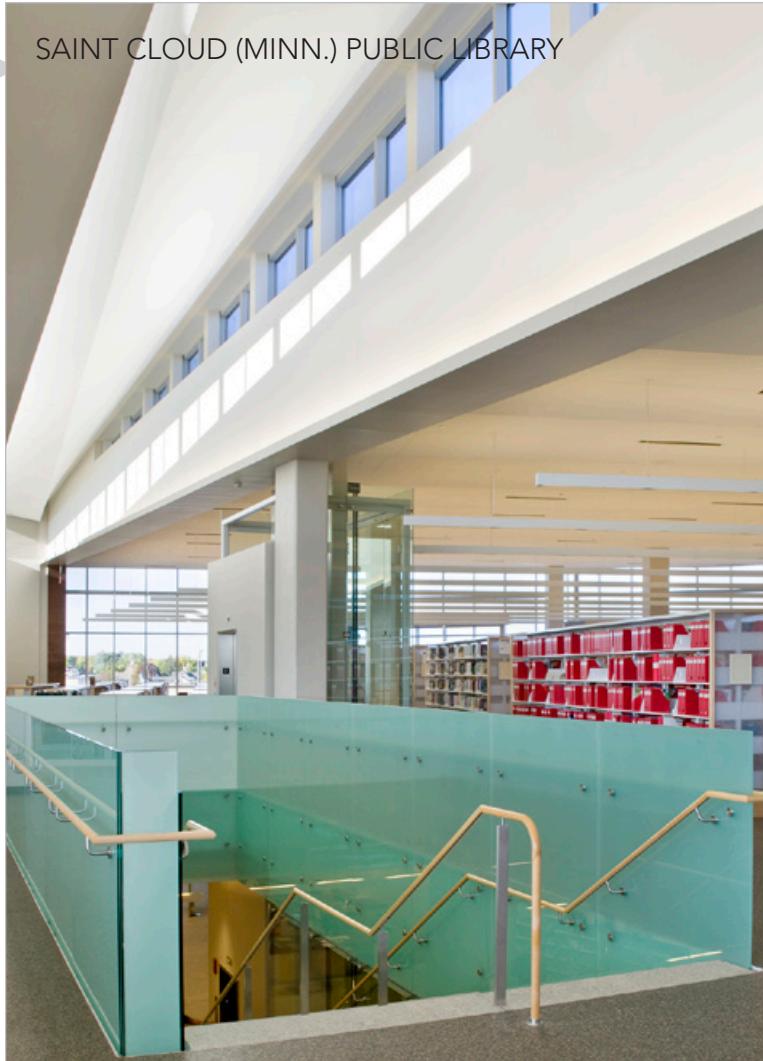
[petergisolfiassociates.com](http://petergisolfiassociates.com)

Size: 57,000 sq. ft.

Cost: \$17 million

Photo: Robert Mintzes, LEED AP

## SAINT CLOUD (MINN.) PUBLIC LIBRARY





## GEORGE SCHOOL

A balcony, designed as a quiet study area, surrounds the skylight in the Anderson Library at the George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Designed to be consistent with the simple Quaker aesthetic of its community, the library anticipates earning LEED Gold certification, with features that include a vegetative roof, geothermal heating and cooling, and rain gardens.

### New Construction

Architect: Bowie Gridley

[bowie-gridley.com](http://bowie-gridley.com)

Size: 26,400 sq. ft. (for entire building)

Cost: \$12.5 million (for entire building)

Photo: William Tenenbaum

## BELOIT (WIS.) PUBLIC LIBRARY



Beloit Public Library reclaimed an abandoned 58,000-square-foot department store on the edge of downtown for its new central library, which gave it a building bigger than its previous facility and bigger than downtown could otherwise accommodate. A \$7-million project opened up large portions of the building, and re-clad large portions in cast stone to break down the big-box-store appearance. Additional features include energy-efficient lighting, low-water-consumption plumbing fixtures, and an ice-storage cooling system. This system saves cooling costs by making ice during off-peak hours for energy consumption, which it uses to cool the building during operating hours without the expense of running large chillers.

### Renovation

Architect: Engberg Anderson, Inc.

[engberganderson.com](http://engberganderson.com)

Size: 58,000 sq. ft.

Cost: \$7 million

Photo: Daniel Kabara Photography

## LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

Los Angeles Public Library anticipates that its new Silver Lake branch will achieve LEED Gold certification. The building incorporates photovoltaic cells in the skylight system and most of the concealed roof areas; rapid-growing bamboo was used for custom casework and flooring, and materials and systems were selected to reduce fluorocarbon and toxic vapor emissions.

### New Construction

Architect: M2A Milofsky, Michali, and Cox Architects

m2a-architects.com

Size: 13,600 sq. ft.

Cost: \$16.4 million

Photo: Tom Bonner Photography



Sacramento County (Calif.) Public Library's Valley Hi/North Laguna Library's overall site layout radiates from a prominently placed coast live oak tree. The building's V-shaped roof funnels rainwater through a river rock basin and around the live oak to a bioswale, while two more bioswales clean runoff from the parking lot and the public street. Landscape plantings consist of native and drought-tolerant plants, which contributed to a 50% reduction in water consumption for irrigation.

### New Construction

Architect: Noll and Tam Architects

nollandtam.com

Size: 20,300 sq. ft.

Cost: \$18 million

Photo: David Wakely

## SACRAMENTO COUNTY (CALIF.) PUBLIC LIBRARY



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Lara Swimmer Photography

# Librarians, Self-Preservation, Construction Budget

and the

By Jeannette Woodward

Be prepared for cost  
overruns, finger-pointing,  
and bad publicity



april 2010

[americanlibrariesmagazine.org](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org)

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Money, money, money! Of course, money is a subject that occupies many of a librarian's waking thoughts and occasional nightmares. However, money issues on a construction project can become so numerous and so stress-producing that you may feel tempted to sign up for the Foreign Legion or flee to Timbuktu.

If you're embarking on your first library construction project, you're likely a neophyte when it comes to reading blueprints. No matter how diligently you study the plans, you will almost inevitably fail to recognize problems that your contractor will insist are clearly indicated. There are also a number of vital necessities that the architects solemnly promised to include but somehow forgot. This means that as construction on the new library progresses, change orders will become the scourge of your existence. You will discover that assumptions any 10-year-old could be expected to take for granted have eluded your building professionals. To be honest, it is sometimes your own fault for having failed to ask enough questions or spend sufficient time digesting the information you've been given. Change orders almost always cost money unless you can clearly establish that you made your needs known in advance (usually in writing) and your request was ignored.

There is probably no way of avoiding change orders altogether, but they can usually be minimized. In addition, better-written documentation of your requirements may mean that the library need not pay for all change orders. Don't trust yourself to catch every problem: Ask the library staff to review floor plans and imagine themselves performing their usual tasks in the new spaces. Request extra copies of the blueprints, but be prepared to pay for them. The relatively minor cost of extra sets of plans will be more than repaid by savings on change orders later. Ask staff to think about the locations of closets, positioning of light switches, and placement of doors. Each person could be made responsible for identifying potential problems in his or her assigned area.

## Getting the numbers right

Libraries rarely cost precisely what we expect. Since there are thousands of variables (e.g., the price of steel, the condition of the soil, labor disputes), numbers will keep changing throughout the life of the project. The problem is that library boards, government agencies, and the news media,

as well as taxpayers, have all been told that the library will cost a given sum. Sometimes that number is specified in a sales-tax resolution or bond election. The city council or the county commission has been assured that this amount will be needed and no more.

Politicians get elected by promising to control costs and save taxpayers' money. If they have not been prepared for cost increases or have not approved any additional funds in advance, there's a good chance

that the library may be blamed for fiscal irresponsibility—for "library," read "library director." Of course, the library board has the final word in monetary decisions, but it is often assumed that the director is the one responsible. Newspapers may be willing to run upbeat articles extolling the wonderful new library on page 10, but you can bet that the story accusing library officials of fiscal mismanagement will be right there on the front page.

Many librarians have discovered that no one on the project is really keeping track of each and every unanticipated cost. Even a project watchdog or manager hired by the library may be unclear about who's paying for a change order. The contract itself may not clearly spell out which costs are fixed and which can be adjusted by the contractor; for example, a limited selection of wall treatments or flooring materials might be included in the contract, but so-called premium selections cost extra.

Because library directors' reputations can be irreparably damaged by such misunderstandings, it's in their interest to become the best source of accurate information. Unfortunately, this means becoming something of a broken record, asking again and again "Will this cost extra?" and "Will this increase the cost to the library?" Each time it becomes clear that something must be done differently or that more materials or labor will be needed, you will need to find out who's paying for it. It's best to expect that contractors will interpret contractual clauses in the way that's most advantageous to themselves. That means that you will need to practically commit to memory the relevant sections. Fuzzy phrases should be discussed and clarified in written communication.

Library construction projects need to start out with an understanding between library participants and local government officials. Among the most contentious subjects is the authority to make financial commitments. Again and again, it will be learned that something will cost more than anticipated. Must the increase be officially

approved? Can it be authorized by the library director without board input? Can it be authorized by the library board without city or county input? Is the library director authorized to make monetary commitments up to but not exceeding a given amount? For smaller cost increases, it is usually possible to spend a little more on one thing and cut back on another;

eventually, however, such changes will put a project over budget. Neither local government agencies nor taxpayers react well to unexpected cost overruns, so it is essential that a plan be in place to sound early warning bells.

When you were a child, you probably played the game "musical chairs." Each time the music stopped, everyone rushed to take a seat, but one person was left standing without a chair. When building projects go over budget, everyone rushes to escape blame. While the library board and government agencies maneuver to protect themselves, the one person left standing is often the library director; no one is so intimately involved in the project or so publicly visible.

## Preparing for conflict

Occasionally, even with the most efficient project management, there is simply no way to complete a library building under budget. If the worst happens, library directors should realize that they could be left holding the bag. To protect themselves, they should be able to produce written documents, including correspondence with local officials, minutes of library board and city council meetings, and other evidence that procedures were followed, officials kept informed, and expenditures authorized by the appropriate persons. I emphasize the word *written* here because casual conversations provide little support. When bureaucrats' jobs are at stake, they may conveniently forget that they were made aware of problems or unofficially agreed to changes.

Since contractors are probably keeping track of additional charges on spreadsheets, it's a good idea for library directors to maintain project spreadsheets of their own that include as much description as needed to clarify each and every unexpected expenditure. At frequent intervals, compare your figures with your contractor's and reconcile any differences. Ask your project manager for input, and you may even want to be sure that other building professionals agree with your understanding. Once you're sure that your figures are correct, share them with your board and other oversight groups when it's appropriate to do so. In my experience, building professionals tend to overlook a variety of costs when the money will not be going di-

**It's best to expect that contractors will interpret contractual clauses in the way that's most advantageous to themselves.**

rectly to their firm. This occurs less frequently with the design-build delivery system where architects, engineers, and contractors all work under the umbrella of the same business entity. However, the problem is never completely absent.

If it looks as if the project will go over budget, begin taking action immediately. Find out what your options are. What chance is there that additional funding will be approved? How might the project be pared down without doing major damage to the future library program? Then decide how best to present this information to those who must make the final decision. Since you knew from the start that your building might cost more than expected, you should have a plan in the back of your head to deal with this eventuality. Of course, you want to believe that every inch of space is vital and must not be sacrificed. However, to survive the ordeal with a minimum of conflict and with your reputation intact, concessions need to be made. You will need to see the project as the public might. What will really matter to them?

Remember that building projects cause tempers to flare and nerves to fray. It is not even unusual for heads to roll in such a highly charged environment, and you certainly do not want to place your own head in danger. You will have to balance your determination to build the perfect library with your instincts for self-preservation. When the last carpenter has taken his lunchbox and departed, you can also bid adieu to the architect and contractor. If your superior diplomatic skills failed you and you nearly came to blows, you need never speak to them again. Your job, however, should be just as secure as the day you took on the project. In fact, you should have established such a good working relationship with your superiors that they now understand far more about the library and its needs. ■



JEANNETTE WOODWARD is a principal of Wind River Library and Nonprofit Consulting ([windriverconsulting.com](http://windriverconsulting.com)). This article is excerpted from the second edition of her book *Countdown to a New Library: Managing the Building Project*, to be published by ALA Editions in April. Her other books include *Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library* (ALA Editions, 2009), *What Every Librarian Should Know about Electronic Privacy* (*Libraries Unlimited*, 2007), and *Nonprofit Essentials: Managing Technology* (Wiley, 2006).



Monica Birrer, director of the library district in Walsenburg, Colorado, says, "None of us thought we would end up with such a beautiful space." Studiotrope architects turned an old high school into a state-of-the-art public library.

# A Brilliant New Chapter

Residents converted a Colorado high school into a state-of-the-art, ecofriendly library

by Eric Wills



**J**oseph Montalbano still remembers the day nearly five years ago when he first visited the old high school in Walsenburg, a once-thriving coal mining town in southern Colorado. The building—designed in the Collegiate Gothic style by Isaac Rapp, a leading southwestern architect in the early 1900s—sat vacant and threatened with demolition. Preservationists and area residents, many of whom had attended classes in the three-story, red-brick structure, had hatched an ambitious plan to save it. The town's library needed more space: The cramped 1950s house that had served as the local branch was no longer adequate. Why not transform the old school into the new library?

Montalbano, a principal at Studiotrope, a Denver architecture firm, took a tour that day with Monica Birrer, the



director of the library district. After he had walked past antiquated systems and crumbling concrete windowsills, Birrer asked him if such a project was possible. "I told her, 'Absolutely,'" Montalbano recalls. "And I drove back to Denver asking myself, 'Why did I say that?' If you had seen the building that day, the shape it was in, knowing how little money they had—that was an insane thing to say."

The library district had planned to spend just \$450,000 on an addition for the existing branch. Converting the high school building would cost more than \$3.5 million, not to mention the cost of purchasing the building from the school board. But Montalbano's initial optimism proved prophetic.

The library district hired him and began fundraising, securing a variety of grants. For instance, the Colorado State Historical Fund, administered by the Colorado Historical Society, contributed more than \$800,000, not only



helping to purchase the building but also paying for masonry work and other projects. The historical fund also gave a grant to install replicas of the original windows, which had been torn out in the 1980s and replaced with aluminum substitutes.

The grants from the historical fund came with a stipulation that Montalbano maintain the integrity of the building according to the Secretary of the Interior's historic preservation guidelines. One of the largest challenges was configuring new heating and cooling systems. In the end, an ecofriendly geothermal system, which operates using groundwater, proved the least-intrusive option. Other green features incorporated into the renovation included recycled rubber flooring and a fireplace hearth and chimney fashioned from leftover blackboards.

The project could not have succeeded without the citizens of Walsenburg (population 4,200), who passed a

\$1.75-million bond issue. "This was a totally community-based project," says Mark Rodman, the former director of Colorado Preservation, Inc., a nonprofit group that helped save the building from demolition. "If not for the people, that school would not be standing here today."

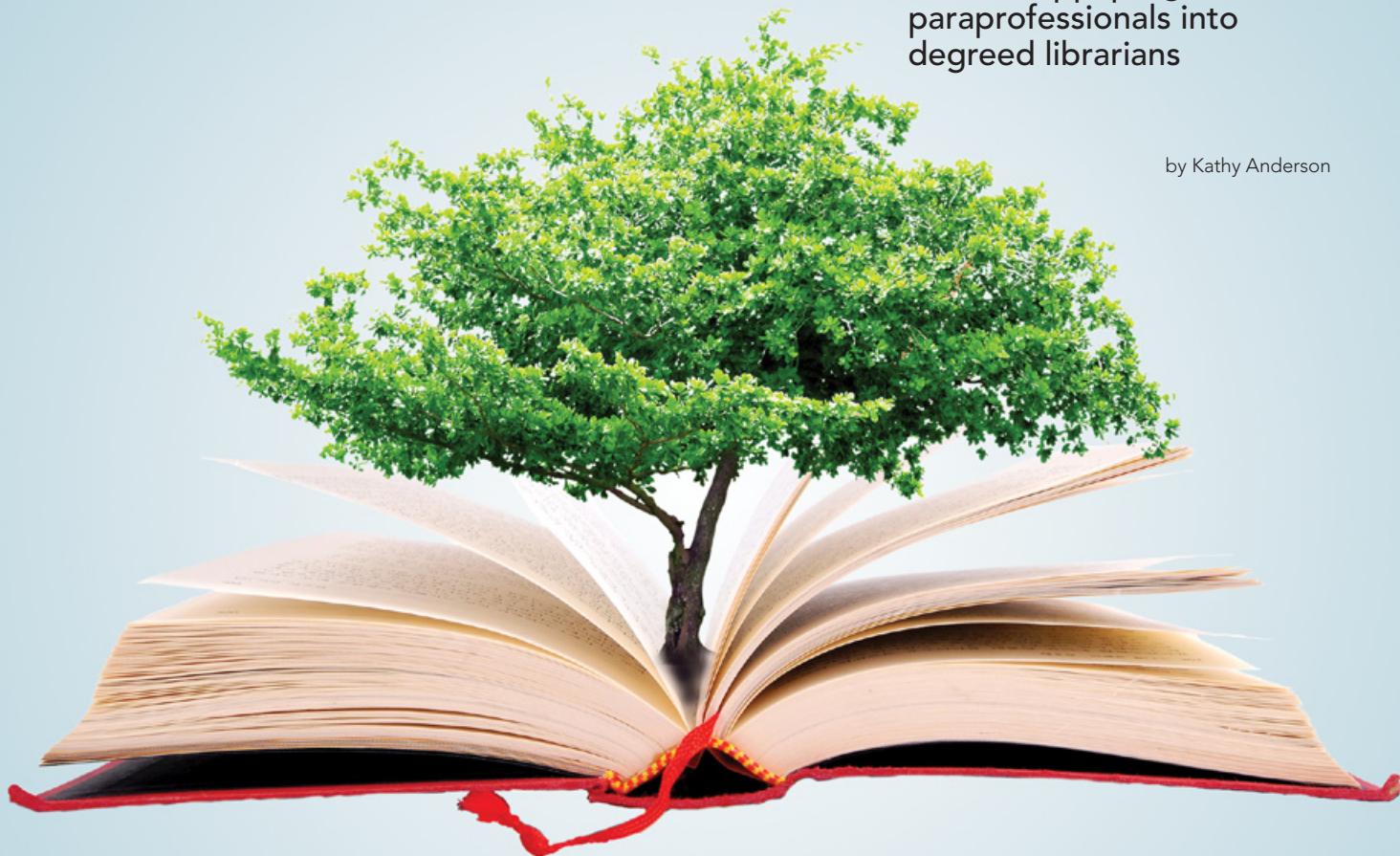
At the grand opening last summer, the community was, by all accounts, wowed by its gleaming new library. Some work does remain: The upper two floors still need to be finished; the library district hopes to attract education- or art-based groups to take over that space. But already Birrer hopes that the new library can become a transformational place, where different generations can gather and grow. "We'd like to be the catalyst for new things in this beautiful old space," she says. ■

**AUTHOR ERIC WILLS** wrote this article for the April 2010 issue of *Preservation magazine*, published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is reprinted with permission.

# GROW YOUR OWN LIBRARIAN

A Mississippi program turns  
paraprofessionals into  
degreed librarians

by Kathy Anderson



**I**n 2004, in response to the difficulties of recruiting professionals to work in public libraries in the state, the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) embarked on an innovative program to improve public library services and “grow their own” librarians. Their solution was to create an intensive Librarianship Institute that not only immerses participants in the principles and tools of public librarianship but may also motivate them to return to school for professional degrees.

Librarianship 101 Institutes, one of the skills-development programs that MLC partially funds with Library Services and Technology Act funds, are held annually in Jackson. The curriculum and the experience of attending the in-residence, four-day workshop are designed to develop the knowledge base of public library staff and motivate them to acquire skills for personal fulfillment and career enhancement. By every measure, the institutes are a rousing success: More applicants clamor to attend than there are spots available, with attendance limited to 30 paraprofessionals per institute.

The curriculum includes the history and philosophy of librarianship; governance and funding of public libraries; “the library picture” in Mississippi; collection development, including information access and intellectual freedom; cataloging; customer service; resource sharing and reference services; readers’ advisory services; library trends; and library 2.0.

MLC Executive Director Sharman Bridges Smith explains, “We felt it was really important to bring people together for a concentrated time period to focus on the core courses of librarianship.” She sees the institutes as “making an investment in the very talented paraprofessionals across the state doing professional library work.” In Mississippi, as in many other states, there are hundreds of small, rural public library branches, often staffed by one or two paraprofessionals.

Participants are selected through a process of nomination and application, with library directors recommending staff members. The recommendation addresses why the individual is an asset to public library service, what particular skills the individual has, and why the individual is a possible candidate for furthering a career in library science. Applicants write about the challenges and successes of their library employment and how participation will impact their contribution to their library and community.

To develop and manage the institutes, MLC contracted with Lyrasis (formerly Solinet), the regional library membership organization, for administrative and consulting support, including curriculum design, aid in the application and selection process, pre- and post-assessment testing, evaluation, report-writing, and other services.

Nettie Moore, from the M. R. Davis Public Library in Southaven, attended the first Librarianship 101 Institute, where she gained much practical information and emerged with a better sense of how to work within the library system. Moore also received valuable confirmation of what she already knew: “When I heard ‘reference interview’ I thought what are they talking about? And then I found out I had been doing it the whole time; I just didn’t know there was a term for it.”

Beyond the practical knowledge and philosophical grounding that participants gain is a more profound experience of connection to the library community. MLC Development Services Division Director Jennifer Walker explains, “Many of our participants come from very small towns, where they are the only one who does what they do, so it’s a really powerful experience to connect with others in similar libraries across the state.” In 2008, 85.7% of participants rated “the opportunity to meet, interact, and share ideas with peers” as one of the most valuable aspects of the institute, topping 76.2% for “learning specific librarianship skills.”

Smith has attended every day of every institute, and she says that what participants come to realize is that “what they do is part of a much larger set of circumstances that can really influence the future of their communities. That’s empowerment.” She tells attendees that her own attendance at the institutes is “like being plugged up to a charger” and that it is a “true reminder of why we do what we do.”

With each class of participants who return to their library, a ripple effect of change has accompanied them as they put their new knowledge and skills into practice. “Directors report a night-and-day change, with their staff returning to their libraries with entirely different attitudes,” said Smith. “They get involved, they start planning, they seek opportunities to improve service.”

The 26 directors surveyed after the 2008 Librarianship 101 Institute gave a unanimous “Yes” to the question, “Have you seen any change in the employee’s on-the-job performance since the institute?” Specific changes included: “helped form a Friends Group”; “confidence building”; “more comfortable with technology”; “reference skills improved”; “became better supervisor”; “tackled weeding project.” Attendees have accepted new responsibilities,

Participants in the second annual Librarianship 201 Institute, held February 8-12, 2010.

sought growth opportunities by attending additional classes and workshops, and implemented their new knowledge of library processes and practices.

The bonding between participants does not stop after they return to their libraries. Every year at the Mississippi Library Association Annual Conference, alumni hold a working meeting where they network, share success stories, and continue their training in librarianship through presentations and workshops.

On a statewide level, the institutes have increased participation at conferences, meetings, and other activities, as well as facilitating more communication between the library commission and the state's libraries. "It's wonderful now when I visit a library and someone jumps up from behind the circulation desk to hug me, still talking about what a difference the institute made for them, six years later," said Smith. She reports that participants ask more questions, share more of their needs and ideas, and generally are more comfortable communicating with MLC staff.

The institutes have a remarkable success rate in "growing their own": Out of 150 library workers who have participated, MLC estimates that 15–18 have gone on to attend library school for their MLS/MLIS degrees, and others are now working on their undergraduate degrees in preparation to attend library school. In 2008 survey results, over 38% of participants said that attendance inspired them to enroll in a class to pursue a degree. "The number of people who decided to go back and get their master's degrees is much greater than we ever anticipated," noted Smith.

After attending the institute, Corey Vinson, a library assistant at Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library, received an MLIS degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in December 2009. Vinson called his experience at the institute "very inspiring." He appreciated the practical information he learned there, but also came away with a "stronger feeling about what an important service it is that we provide in libraries and what a positive thing it is to be a part of," with his experience helping him decide to make a career as a librarian.

## An intensive follow-up

Almost immediately after the first Librarianship 101 Institute ended, participants asked MLC to develop a follow-up workshop. In 2007, MLC's Walker wrote a successful grant proposal to the Institute of Museum and Library Services for Librarianship 201 Institutes, resulting in an award of a \$100,000 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Grant, which will fund Librarianship 201 Institutes for three years, through 2011. The first Librarianship 201 Institute was held in February 2009 in Jackson, and the second in February 2010.

Librarianship 201 is an intensive five-day workshop that covers fewer topics than 101, but focuses more deeply on



selected core concepts and best practices. Topics include building relationships with community groups, understanding one's role in the library, and programming for adults. In addition to seminar-style learning, attendees participate in lab activities designed to put theoretical concepts into practice. Nationally renowned speakers present on library topics during the institute. Eligible participants include alumni of Librarianship 101 Institutes, mid-level public library staff, and newly degreed MLS/MLIS librarians.

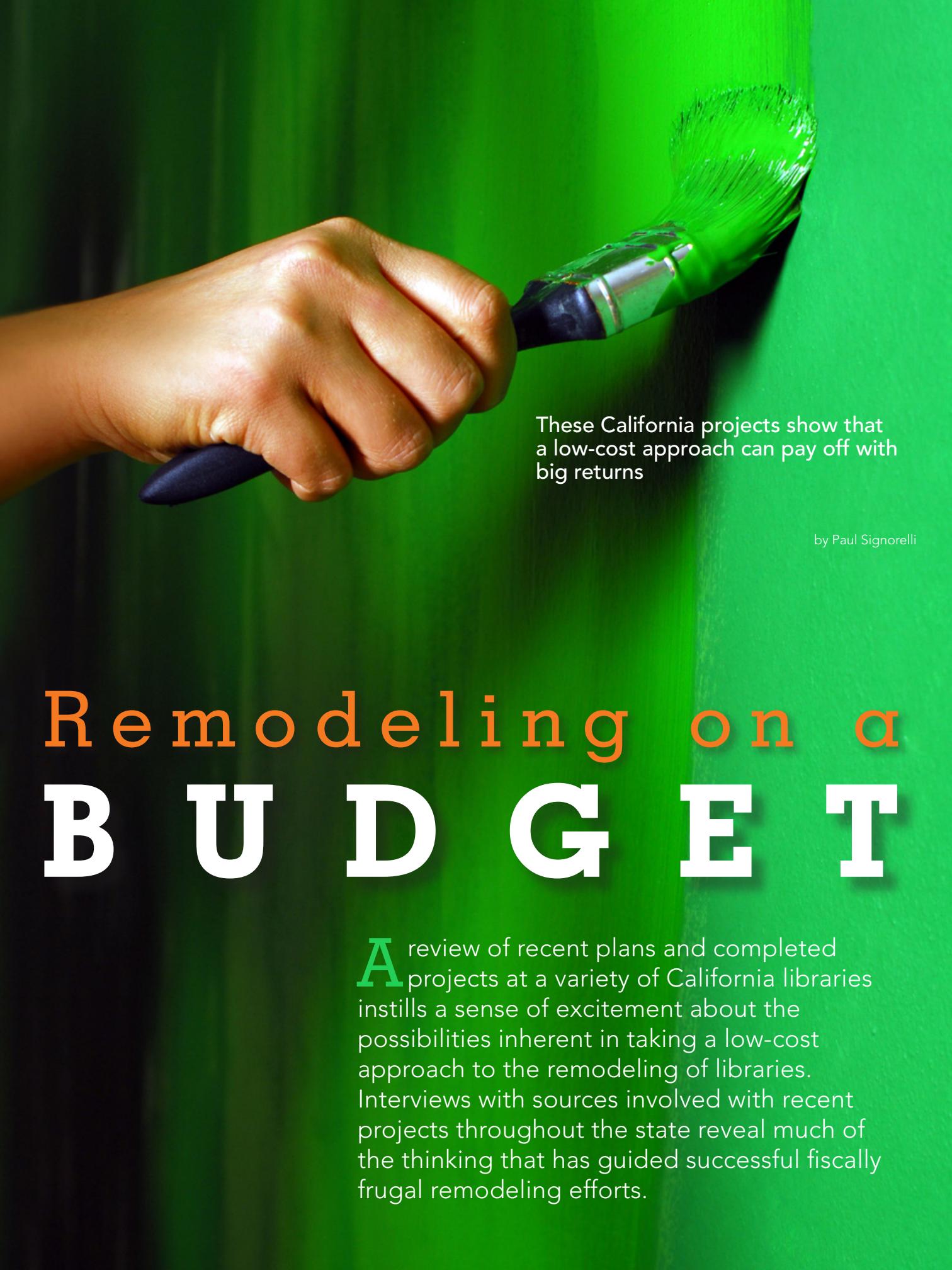
Nettie Moore, a participant in both Librarianship 101 and the first Librarianship 201 Institute, said the follow-up gave her "strength and confidence to step out and do things I really didn't realize I was capable of doing." She said that Librarianship 101 was "where I learned about tools and terminology" and Librarianship 201 taught her "different ethics, different ways to work with people, and how to improve myself to be a better library employee."

Lynn Shurden, a library consultant for MLC and one of the creators of the original Librarianship 101 Institute, saw firsthand the difference that the institutes have made: "One of the things that worked really well was participants coming back and leading staff training for other staff members on what they learned, a train-the-trainer approach." Shurden has observed that participation "has made a lot of difference on a local level." Currently director of the Bolivar County Library System in Cleveland, she recognizes the excitement of learning in her staff who participated. "When you see eyes light up and you see people realizing that they can do more and are happy to do more, it's very rewarding."

Reflecting on the improvement in the quality of public library service created by the Librarianship Institutes, Smith said, "For me, this program is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. The institutes are making a difference." ■



KATHY ANDERSON is a writer and editor for LYRASIS.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a paintbrush, applying a vibrant green paint to a surface. The brush is angled upwards, creating a smooth, curved stroke. The background is a solid, bright green.

These California projects show that  
a low-cost approach can pay off with  
big returns

by Paul Signorelli

# Remodeling on a BUDGET

A review of recent plans and completed projects at a variety of California libraries instills a sense of excitement about the possibilities inherent in taking a low-cost approach to the remodeling of libraries. Interviews with sources involved with recent projects throughout the state reveal much of the thinking that has guided successful fiscally frugal remodeling efforts.



A renovation project at Contra Costa County Library's Pittsburg branch began with removal of a dead wisteria at the building's entrance. After that, concrete was broken up in preparation for installation of an ADA-compliant ramp.



Linda Demmers, for example, has served as a consultant on projects as elaborate as the information commons in the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Library at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and the Learning Commons, Technology Center, and Library at the University of Santa Clara in the San Francisco Bay Area. Demmers consistently seeks ways to adapt what she has learned to

meet the needs of clients with fewer resources. She acknowledges that low-cost remodeling can involve as little as repainting an area with attractive colors or adding new, vibrant signage. “Low cost” can also be a relative term, depending on an organization’s financial resources; one academic library had planned to pursue a \$30-million project to create an entirely new building, but is now planning to spend considerably less—approximately \$1 million—to remodel an existing building. Developing an overall project description—the building program—helps those with limited resources to divide projects into manageable pieces while not losing the overall cohesiveness a master plan provides.

Success, says Demmers, begins by not concentrating solely on existing problems: “Start thinking about tomorrow’s problems and don’t make everything so specific.” An example is avoiding niches created specifically for a piece of equipment such as a photocopy machine or some other existing feature that may have already disappeared. “I had an architect recently who tried to design a circ desk with slots for date-due cards,” she notes.

Demmers also recommends looking for ways to upgrade existing spaces by improving signage; adding interior finishes such as painting, carpeting, or items that can be placed on existing walls or columns; and eliminating outmoded services to provide space for functions that will attract users back into areas they have abandoned. Examples of such visual improvements include a project at Anaheim Central Library incorporating clouds painted on a ceiling, the full-scale figure of a giraffe, and colorful carpeting installed in the children’s library. The City of Orange Main Library added attractive ceiling decorations to hide unattractive light fixtures.

## Zero-cost remodeling

Darcel Jones, a community library manager for the Contra Costa County Library system in the San Francisco Bay Area, actually oversaw a “zero-cost” remodeling project for the system’s Pinole Library, one in which no new equipment was purchased and no demolition or construction was needed. It was inspired by her efforts to bring the branch

into compliance with the system's strategic plan. "We had to change the layout of the library, beyond changing a few chairs around, to provide space for general reading and a separate area for adults and seniors to relax during the after-school hours."

The overall structure provided by the strategic plan was a mandate to create a service model in which library users can complete 80% of what they want to accomplish independently, faster, and with privacy—a self-service model—so staff can dedicate time to assisting users with the remaining 20% of their endeavors.

Jones and her staff met to discuss their concerns, which included a new-book area that was too small, a poorly located newspaper and periodicals area, insufficient space to accommodate the Friends of the Library bookselling operation, and conflicts caused by teens' desires to have a social area where they could talk and adults' desire for a quieter space. They decided that a well-designed program to weed the reference collection and recapture space would be at the heart of their efforts. Furthermore, the weeding didn't discard the underutilized reference books: Although approximately 75% of the collection was weeded, 60% simply moved into circulation, so that it went into the hands of library users rather than taking up shelf space. This released approximately 25% of the space in the building to support other services.

"The changes were dramatic [and] Pinole is still a work in progress," Jones says. "I'm currently writing a proposal to have a single-service workstation . . . another self-service checkout machine, and another public computer. At the end, I want the library service model to be in compliance with the county's strategic plan."

What made the project successful, notes Jones, were engagement on the part of staff and other stakeholders; support from members of library administration; a focus on trying to resolve conflicts that had been voiced by users; and a recognition that remodeling is part of a continuing process, not a one-time project to be completed and then forgotten.

## Designing for disabilities

As members of library staff consider low-cost projects involving the introduction of new furniture, carpet, or signs, they can easily accommodate the needs of library



Other improvements to the Pittsburg branch's entryway were the removal of dry rot and mold, the replacement of the awning, and power-washing. The final photo shows the newly refurbished entrance.

users who have disabilities, says library consultant Rhea Joyce Rubin. “Users and potential users with disabilities must be included in the planning process,” she urges, adding that “Signage is important to create a sense of welcome. I have had members of focus groups of people with disabilities go on at some length about their appreciation of signs as simple as, ‘Let us know if we can help you find or reach things.’ Another example is floor coverings. It is essential that floor coverings are not slippery and yet not so plush that wheelchairs and scooters have trouble moving.”

“Furniture is another example,” Rubin continues. “I’m all for pretty, but functionality is more important. To meet the demands of most people, it is necessary to have multiple styles of furniture: some chairs with arms and some without, some with standard legs and some with sled legs that can be pushed under and away from a table more easily, some upholstered with cushions and some bare. Each of these variations speaks to a specific need.”

Some adaptations designed for one purpose can ultimately serve another, notes Rubin. Standing internet stations, designed to encourage people to use computer workstations quickly and then move on so others can take their place, are comfortable for library users who have back problems; choice of various colors of paint rather than monochromatic color schemes can help “older adults and people with vision problems [who] would walk into the walls or walk into doors because they couldn’t distinguish the difference between the floor carpet color and the wall or door color. Using different palettes in a different part of the library is a good idea . . . and is especially important for people with disabilities,” she suggests.

Other projects underway include one that Demmers is

currently working on with architect Rick D’Amato and interior designer Chris Lentz—both with the Irvine, California-based LPA Inc. architecture firm—remodeling the County of Los Angeles Public Library’s Malibu Library. The project involves phased work within a building that was originally completed in 1963 and has just under 13,000 square feet of space. The goal is to create a community space that attracts 30 to 40% more people per year than are currently visiting the building.

“The Malibu remodel is finding space by removing a four-person circ desk and two-person reference desk [and replacing them with] one customer-service station,” Demmers explains. An unused circulation collection is being removed to add “more comfortable seating and a dedicated children’s space.”

“One thing that is really special about Malibu is their connection to their history and to their community,” D’Amato notes. He and Lentz are proposing low-cost alterations that will incorporate that sense of connection into everything that is done, such as creating an abstract version of a lighthouse within the building as a reference to a local home that was built in the shape of a lighthouse. To create connections to the area’s equestrian past, a community meeting room will include colors and materials suggestive of stables without trying to literally re-create a stable within the library. Wall-sized photography is also being incorporated into the project. “It’s very inexpensive to do that, to blow up photographs and put them on an entire wall,” D’Amato says. “What we’re doing is treating them like wallpaper. They’re done on vinyl; you can take an entire wall and create an image.”

“The whole point is, if you have a goal or a story or a theme, it helps to drive the decisions,” Lentz adds. “You’re not just decorating the space. There’s a meaning behind it, and it means something to the community. . . . There are things that we want to highlight, so you play up the special features of the building.”

At a cost of \$5 million, another project that D’Amato and Lentz are working on, the Santa Fe Springs Library, is far from low-cost; but a glance at the plans provides ideas for anyone interested in how they can adapt an existing space to meet the changing needs of library users while building flexibility and a sense of library as place into the remodeled space. “Their whole library is going to revolve around a coffee house,” D’Amato notes.

That does not mean that tradi-



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As part of its renovation, Pittsburg received "gently used" chairs from another Contra Costa County branch that had gotten a brand-new building and furniture.

tional and new uses are secondary: With a circular space in the center of the building dedicated to the coffee shop, a variety of open spaces providing various services wrap around that space: main book collections; a children's area; a young adult area; computer terminals grouped together in an area close to study and literacy rooms; an information desk that is nearly as centrally located as the coffee shop; a reading/quiet area somewhat removed from the coffee shop; a community room; and a staff area. Space adjacent to the building includes an outdoor reading garden. It doesn't take much imagination to see how a library with a smaller budget than is available for the Santa Fe Springs project could rearrange existing spaces both inside and outside a building to create a central focus and specially grouped spaces to meet its own needs.

A final example of a project with almost no cost was recently completed in the Main Library in San Francisco, where the solid white walls of the Fisher Children's Center gained some color: Pale pink and pale green shades drawing from what exists in the carpet have brightened up one side of the center, and a combination of pale blue and pale peach-orange is fulfilling a similar function on the other side: "That's it—just a couple of gallons of paint," Center Manager Loretta Dowell notes. "People marvel at the space and say it's warm." Paperback racks that had been removed have been brought back so that audiobooks can be displayed face out—an addition that augments an earlier decision to arrange all the Harry Potter books, in a variety of languages, into a display area that facilitates access to and use of the entire collection.

"It's about creating a welcoming atmosphere to help John Doe and Jane Doe find what they want," says Dowell. "Before, the room looked sterile or institutionalized; now, it welcomes you with open arms."

Seeing remodeling as a process rather than an isolated event leads to decisions that draw from an existing building's strengths and create the possibility that changes will lay the foundations for additional successful renovations.

Having a framework within which the project is developed—an organizational strategic plan, a building program that provides the opportunity to complete changes in a series of low-cost phases rather than in one more expensive endeavor, a theme that is used throughout the remod-



eling effort, or a decision to create a strong central project around which other elements of the remodeling plan are designed—can result in attractive remodeling projects that respond to the needs of library users and staff. ■



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# A Circulation Renovation Cuts Expenses

Self-service checkout and return reduces staffing costs

by Sally Anglemeyer

**W**ith public funding becoming less available throughout the country, libraries are looking for ways to trim their current and future budgets. One library is using popular new technology to reduce staff costs, one of the biggest items in any library's budget: The St. Joseph County Public Library in South Bend, Indiana, recently renovated the circulation department at its Main Library to make many of the functions self-service.

The library's architect, Arkos Design of Niles, Michigan, worked closely with the staff to determine how patrons navigated the library as they returned, browsed, and withdrew materials. Several key functions were located at the existing main entrance: Books were returned at a desk that also had an area for patron registration and other interactions; books were checked out at a circulation desk with staff workstations behind the desks that were adjacent to windows near the entrance. The library also wanted a more prominent location for holds and browsing of new books, which were not easily accessible to patrons previously. The library's wish list for the main lobby also included a vending café.

The library wanted to eliminate the large service desks that required significant staffing and to provide automated services for returns and checkout that would be more efficient for patrons. A new, smaller "concierge" desk would be created to resolve all patron issues not related to the circulation of books. The desk would be within view of circulation functions to provide assistance when necessary, but the emphasis would be on self-service.

The library had been using self-checkout stations for about 10 years, but in the past the machines were always a part of an enlarged circulation desk. This created a tendency for patrons to continue to rely on the nearby staff to check out materials, which consumed a significant portion of staff time. However, with self-service becoming more popular at banks and grocery stores, and with many patrons already using self-check at the existing circulation desks, the library felt the time was right to move to full-time self-check. The stations were placed in prominent locations that supplemented the patron traffic patterns. Design features, lighting, and details were aimed at drawing the patrons to the units instead of the desk.

The newest feature, and the most costly, was the implementation of an automatic book return system. This feature allows patrons to place their books on a machine that automatically checks them in; it then transfers the

materials to a conveying system that moves them to a particular cart. Additional staff time is saved in sorting returned books to carts dedicated to specific departments. The machine is a design feature in itself, as it was placed behind a glass enclosure that complemented the building design to allow patrons to watch the materials being sorted.

The \$351,809 cost of the renovation cost was boosted to \$1,000,466 once the equipment was added. However, the changes allow the library to operate with fewer staff. Although the library has not yet needed to release any staff members, as they leave on their own accord they are not replaced. After 10 months, the library reports that self-checkout usage is at 85%; software enhancements in the next six months are expected to increase that figure to 95%.

Other benefits from the changes are a larger patron lounge area near the windows, which was previously occupied by staff workstations that were moved to a more private office area adjacent to the auto-sorting machine. A small vending café, stocked and maintained by a local vending company, was created in an underused study carrel alcove; this provides additional revenue without requiring staff time or leasing of library space by an outside vendor. New books and holds are now located more prominently along normal patron traffic patterns. ■



Custom illuminated fabric features highlight the new self-checkout stations to encourage use. Book return machines are located just inside the main entrance, and auto-sorting equipment is located inside the glass enclosure for patron viewing.



SALLY ANGLEMYER, ASID, is a nationally certified interior designer at Arkos Design in Niles, Michigan, with over 12 years of library design experience.

喂

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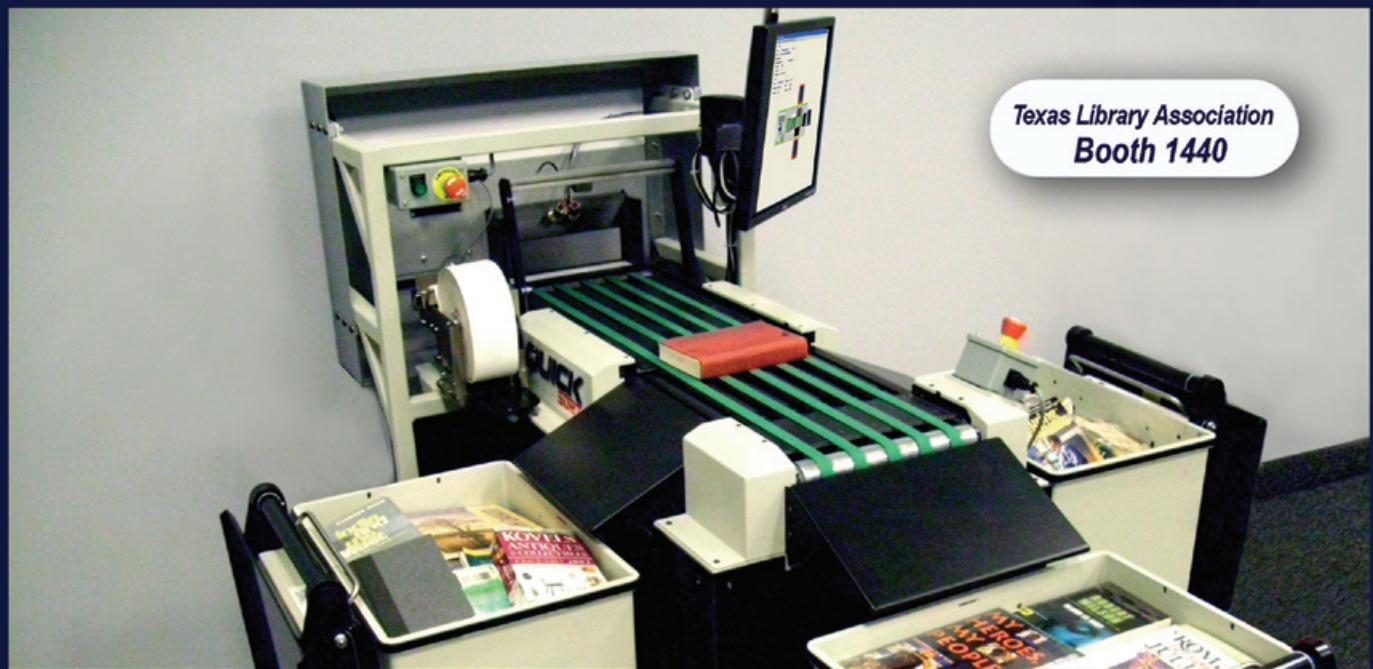
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