



**RAVENA COEYMANS SELKIRK
COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

FINAL REPORT



MAY, 2012

INTRODUCTION

In mid-August 2011, CSArch | Architecture Engineering Construction Management and Lushington Associates were engaged by the RCS Community Library to assist it in planning for its future. Working closely with the library board of directors and its professional staff, the consultants analyzed the existing spaces and operation of the library, developed a proposed space-use program to reflect the goals of the library for serving its patrons, and created several concept designs to illustrate how that vision might take shape. This report documents those findings.

BACKGROUND

The RCS Community Library is an independent, 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving the residents of the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Central School District. A mix of residential hamlets, farmland, and some heavy industry, its service area includes the southern part of the Town of Bethlehem (Selkirk, South Bethlehem, and part of Glenmont), the Town of Coeymans, and the southeastern corner of the Town of New Scotland (Feura Bush), all in Albany County, plus the riverside hamlet of New Baltimore in the Town of New Baltimore, in Greene County. Within the district, the Village of Ravena is the only incorporated municipality. Many of its residents travel outside of the district for employment, shopping, services, and specialized medical care.

Total population in Census 2010 was 14,064. The northern half of the district, in the Town of Bethlehem, is projected to develop residentially between 2010 and 2040, especially along the Route 9W corridor in Selkirk. The southern part of the district (Town of Coeymans) currently has the largest population concentration, but its population is aging and slowly shrinking. This area is known for its limestone, which supplies the local cement and construction industries but inhibits to some degree residential development. The school-age population for the district is projected to continue a slow but steady decline; however, the above noted development in the Town of Bethlehem may reverse that.

THE RCS COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Prior to the chartering of the RCS Community Library in 1994, the only areas served by and supporting of a public library were the Village of Ravena (by state charter in 1956), and the Town of Coeymans (by service contract). The RCS Community Library has built its services and collection upon the base created by its predecessor, the Ravena Free Library,

The library's loan collection includes print books, audio books, graphic novels, videos, music CDs, and magazines. E-books and audio books in many formats can be downloaded. There are currently 5 public access computers in the library. They have Internet access; games; and word processing, spreadsheet and PowerPoint software.

The library computers can be used to retrieve medical information, magazine and newspaper articles, encyclopedias, literary criticism, practice exams, telephone directories, and other current information from subscription databases. The library also offers wireless Internet access.

The library is a member of the Upper Hudson Library System, which encompasses the public libraries of Albany and Rensselaer Counties. Through UHLS, its patrons can use the Inter-Library Loan program to access materials from other types of libraries in the Capital Region and from

libraries across the country.

User data from the RCS library shows changes in the use of the library. These changes include increases in book circulation, as well as increased circulation of audiovisual media such as DVDs, and the beginning of circulation of downloadable texts and audio material.

Circulation has grown from 16,000 in 1994 to over 50,000 in 2011. Book circulation has grown by about 20% during the last 10 years, while video and sound recording circulation has increased by 300%. Downloads are a small percentage of circulation, but increasing quickly. At present, the library circulates over 35,000 books and over 20,000 non-print items each year.

The library logged over 10,000 on-site computer sessions last year. Patron use of personal wireless computers has increased steadily. The library also has developed a website, www.rcscommunitylibrary.org, and Facebook, Google+, and Twitter presences for distributing information about new acquisitions and programs. Approximately 1,000 people visit the library website each month.

Following is some statistical data comparing library circulation and use of services for 2001 and 2011:

CIRCULATION	2001	2011	Difference	% Change
Adult fiction Books	10,046	12,698	2,652	26%
Adult nonfiction Books	4,310	5,064	754	17%
Adult Book Total	14,356	17,762	3,406	24%
Juvenile fiction Books	10,986	13,238	2,252	20%
Juvenile nonfiction Books	2,169	1,354	-815	-38%
Juvenile Book Total	14,223	14,592	369	3%
Adult Videos	2,056	8,147	6,091	296%
Juvenile Videos	865	4,890	4,025	465%
Adult Audio Books	1,369	3,151	1,782	130%
Juvenile AV	282	462	180	64%
Music CDs and Audios	637	2,348	1,711	269%
Periodicals, incl. microfilm	80	28	-52	-65%
Misc./ Kits	49	135	86	176%
Mixed/ Non-Print Total	5,338	19,161	13,823	259%
CIRCULATION TOTAL	33,917	51,515	17,598	52%

SERVICES	2001	2011	Difference	% Change
Reference Queries	2,037	5,717	3,680	181%
IL Loan Request Items Received	2,462	10,312	7,850	319%
IL Loan Items Sent Out	1,476	5,743	4,267	289%
Computer Users	5,523	10,772	5,249	95%
SERVICES TOTAL	11,498	32,544	21,046	183%

PROGRAMS	2001	2011	Difference	% Change
People Attending	2533	3921	1388	55%
# Program Sessions	134	342	208	155%

These changes suggest that the design of the library should allow for physical growth to accommodate increased demands upon the collections, services and programs, while locating electronic media and computer workstations as the visible centerpiece of the library.

LIBRARY USERS

An attempt was made to determine the places of residence of library users. A small, older sampling of data indicates the following, on a percentage basis:

Ravena	32%
Selkirk	16%
New Baltimore	13%
South Bethlehem	4%
Feura Bush	2%
Other	33%

Updated monitoring of this data is recommended. The apparent preponderance of users from the southern part of the district raises questions about the visibility and ease of access to the current facility for patrons from the northern part, especially in light of the projected growth in population there.

In 2007 a community survey was conducted to determine user preferences for facility improvement. Over 500 residents participated, and evaluated three long term options:

Remain as is. 12% prefer that the Library facility stay as is. 11% accepted it as second choice. 30% consider it the least desirable option.

Move to a new location. 25% prefer that the Library expand in a new building or more centralized location. 20% made it their second choice. 17% consider it the least desirable option.

Expand at our current location. 42% prefer that the Library expand at its current location. 14% made it their second choice. 3% said it was their least favored option.

It is interesting to note that in the over 500 responses, only 376 people (68% of total survey respondents) expressed a first choice. Just 249 people expressed a second choice, and 297 people (80% of those expressing a first choice) indicated their least favored option. The trustees and staff read the results this way:

Most residents (67% of survey respondents) are ready for some expansion.

And while 12% wanted no change, **30% consider no-change the least acceptable option.**

Many people (54%) like the current location, in part, possibly, because they value the continued use of the former school building. Expansion in the building has more support (42%) than relocation (25%) and no-change (12%) combined. A hearty 15% of survey respondents walk to the library, whereas 8% find its location inconvenient. **These results seem to support the idea of evaluating the potential for both expansion at the existing site and planning a future in a different location.**

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



This overview of the library gives a good sense of just how crowded it is.

The RCS Community Library has been in its current location for the last 15 years. Originally constructed in 1923 as the “Ravena Public Grade and High School,” the solidly built brick, steel and concrete structure served in that capacity, and then as the Ravena Elementary School for decades, until it was retired from education use. Purchased by the Village of Ravena, it was converted to office space for the village, the village court, and space for various tenants, including a small historical museum and the library. Initially occupying the original “Assembly Hall and Gymnasium,” the library has more recently expanded to include the use of one former classroom on the first floor as a multi-use area for children’s programs and meetings. This space is not contiguous with the rest of the library, nor is it accessible to the handicapped except by going outside and re-entering through the courtroom at the opposite end of the building.



The view from the circulation desk towards the public computing and children's areas.



There is space for only 5 public-use computers.

The library space has lofty ceilings, but very little natural light. The large skylights that originally illuminated the room have been roofed over for decades. The fluorescent fixtures that were recently installed provide adequate levels of light and are very energy efficient, but the lamps are unshielded and can cause uncomfortable glare. Heating is provided by the building's central system, and keeps the space fairly comfortable in winter. A small rooftop unit dedicated to the library provides cooling; its efficacy is marginal. There is a wireless network that extends out into the parking lot, but a dearth of electrical outlets makes charging a laptop difficult.



Behind the circulation desk is the staff work space: no space, no storage, no privacy!

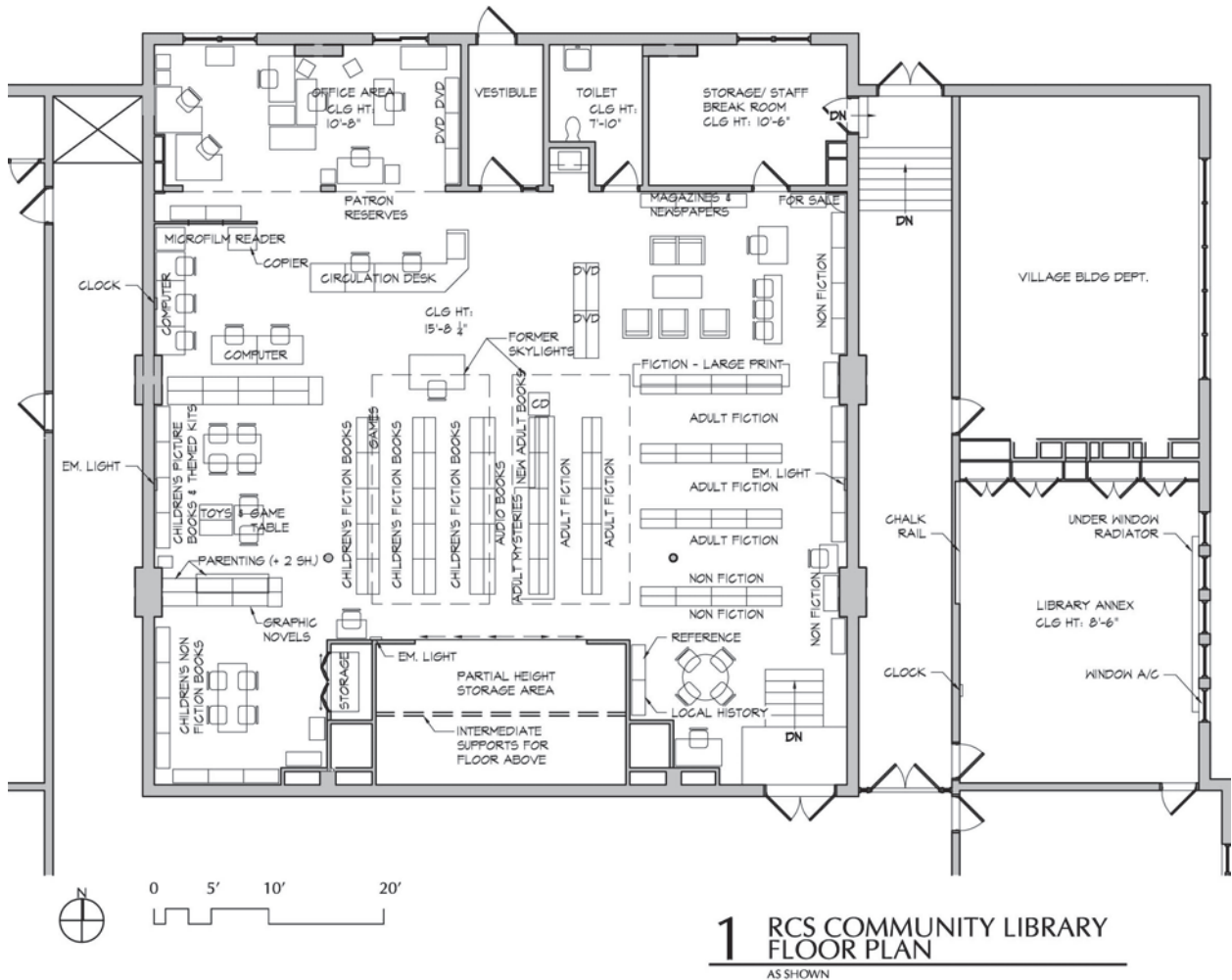


The "Library Annex" is a former classroom adapted for multiple uses as a program and meeting room. It is small, limiting occupancy, and is remote from the library, making it difficult to access and supervise.

While the combined square footage of just over 4,100 has served the library well, the layout and space constraints significantly limit the library's ability to deliver essential library services to its community. The most notable deficiencies are as follows:

- No clearly defined, separate areas for children and adults
- No space for teen services

- No quiet study facilities
- Inadequate space for the collections
- Inadequate leisure reading space
- Not enough computers
- Insufficient staff and customer service space
- No private staff office space
- No secure, appropriate storage for supplies, equipment and local history materials
- Undersized program space, remote from the rest of the library
- Inadequate toilet facilities (1 single occupant room to serve both public and staff)



Another consideration is the location of the library. Situated and entered from the rear of the former school, which is set back a good distance from the street, the library is virtually invisible to the casual passer by. While it is very accessible to the adjacent residential neighborhood, this location has been a difficult-to-find and inconvenient location for residents of the library district from outside the Village of Ravenna. There is adequate parking available, except for those times when the Village Court is in session; then, parking is extremely difficult to find. A more visible and conveniently situated location along a major route of travel would greatly benefit the library.

A PROGRAM FOR MOVING FORWARD

Working with the professional staff and trustees of the RCS Community Library, Lushington Associates developed a proposed program for spaces and room sizes to best serve the library's patrons into the future. It is based upon how the library is now organized and run, and attempts to anticipate the current trends and patterns of use and growth into the future, using guidelines from the American Library Association.

Following is a chart that compares current spaces/functions and their size or capacity with those proposed. Most are self-explanatory; however, a detailed inventory of each space and its programmatic requirements are attached as an appendix to this report. "Non-assignable" represents a factor that adds to net functional areas the additional space required to have a fully functioning facility – walls, mechanical equipment spaces, toilet rooms, janitor closets, and storage for non-library maintenance supplies and equipment. A "shelf" equals one three-foot-long section of 9 or 10 inch deep book shelving. Areas are given in square feet.

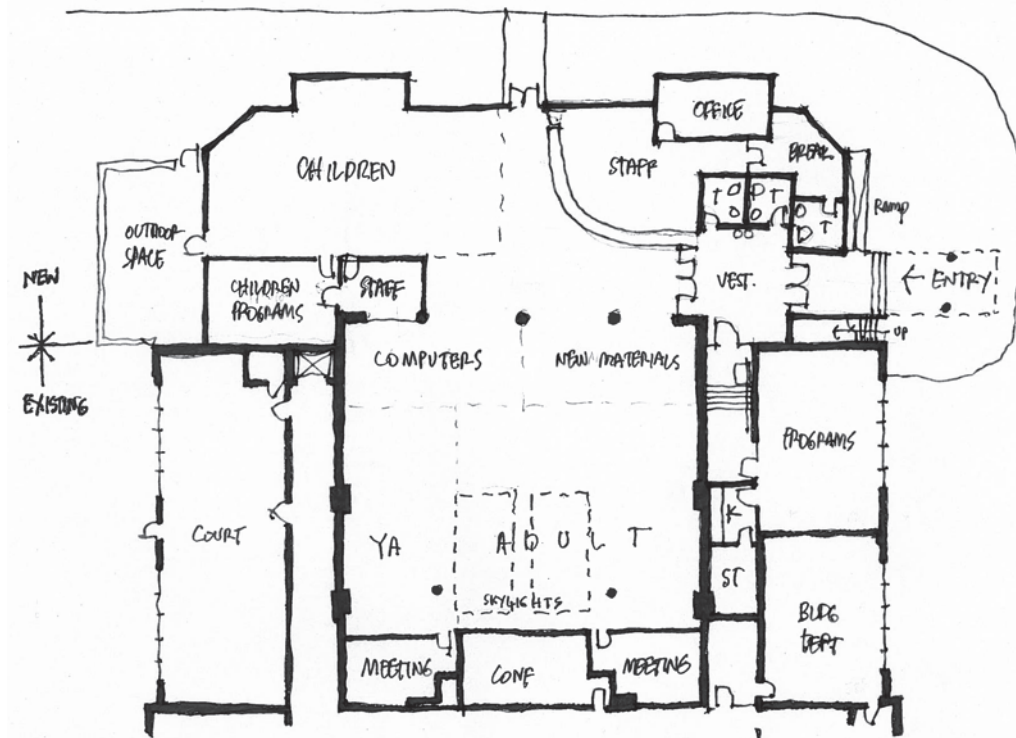
Functional Areas	Existing Shelves	Proposed Shelves	Existing Seats	Proposed Seats	Existing Area	Proposed Area	Electronic Wk Stations
Adults							
New Materials	5	10	1	4		240	
DVD/CD	17	30				75	
Large print	20	40		1		140	
Audio Books	20	30				75	
Ref/Local History	10	20	5	4		170	1
Computers WS			5	10		400	10
Magazines/News	15	15	9	6		248	
FIC/NF/Mysteries	387	510		12		1695	
Adult Totals	474	655	20	37	1564	3043	11
Young adult	30	50	0	8	0	445	3
Children's							
Computers			0	6		340	3
Pic/E/AV Media	64	85	6	4		320	
Fiction	60	100		2		250	
Non Fiction/Ref	49	70	4	4		315	
Parenting	8	12		4		150	
Storage						200	
Children's Totals	176	267	10	14	890	1575	3
Programs							
Large/Kit/Stor			*35	*50	588	1000	1
Group study				*8		240	
Program Total					588	1240	1
Staff							
Cust Service					232	400	3
Admin. work	7	15	2	3		200	2
Staff work	12	24	5	6	234	300	6
Staff break				4	216	220	
Materials storage		25				50	
Records Storage	2	10				60	
Staff Total					682	1230	11

Functional Areas	Existing Shelves	Proposed Shelves	Existing Seats	Proposed Seats	Existing Area	Proposed Area	Electronic Wk Stations
Library total	680	972	30	59	3724	7533	(public) 18 (staff) 11
Non Assignable					<u>400</u>	<u>2260</u>	
Grand Total					4124	9792	

* not in totals

It is interesting to note that the proposed program more than doubles the area of the existing facility, nearly doubles the number of seats available, and more than triples the number of computer work stations available for public use. Utilizing this program, the architect developed several alternative design concepts for review and critique by the library staff, trustees, masterplan committee and library consultant.

The first series of options evaluated was an expansion of the existing library through construction of an addition in the parking area north of the library. This option went through several iterations, which ranged from a minimal addition of new space to facilitate some of the needed improvements to a major addition (illustrated below) to double the size of the existing library. While this approach could provide the needed additional space and many of the organizational changes desired to better serve library patrons, it was judged not feasible, partly because of the impact of the addition upon available parking, partly because of the need to continue using the undersized and difficult to access and supervise program space, and also because of the complicated legal and political issues which would of necessity accompany such an expansion.



Plan for expanding the RCS Community Library into the existing parking area to the north.

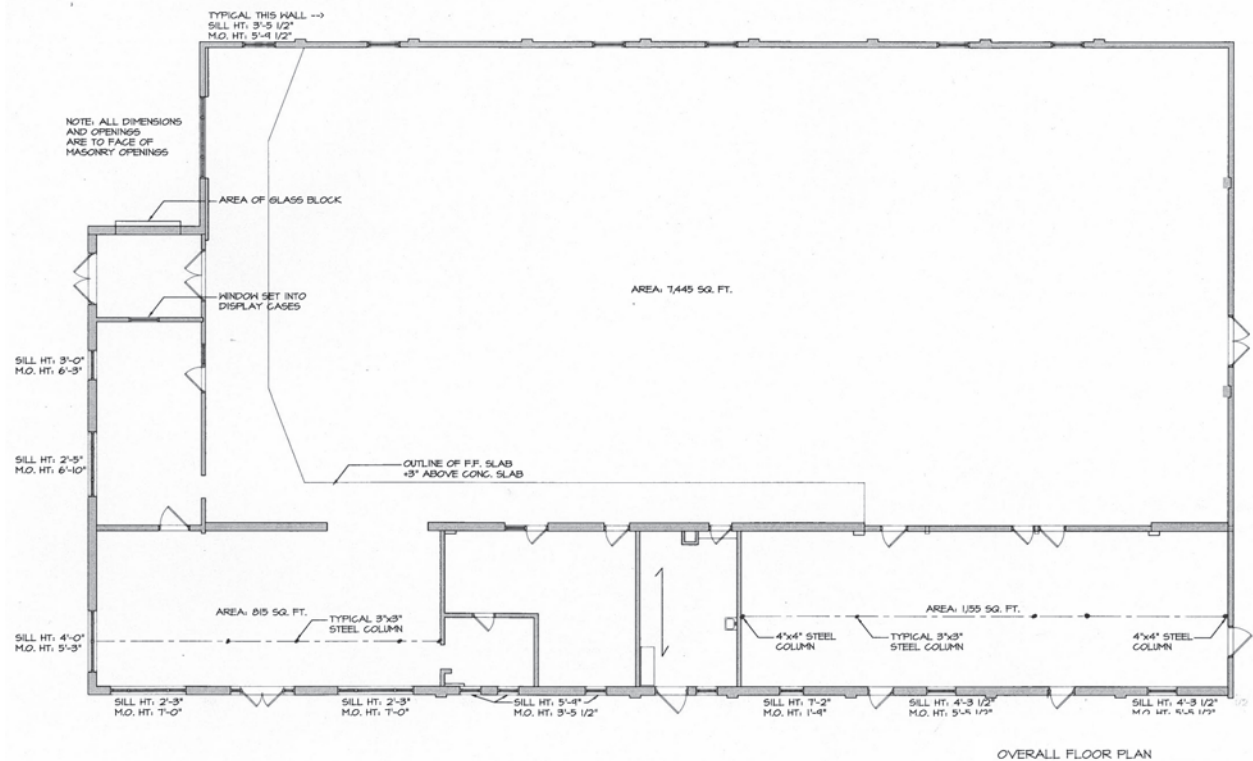
A second set of design alternatives was developed for converting the former Knights of Columbus Hall at 95 Main Street in Ravenna into a library facility. This 10,400 square foot, one-story structure is visually prominent on a heavily traveled street, is of appropriate size, has space for off-street parking, and is available for lease or purchase.



The former Knights of Columbus Hall viewed from the south side of Main Street in Ravenna. It has load-bearing masonry walls and wood truss main roof structure.



View from the east showing site area available for parking.



Floor plan of the existing K of C Hall

Having served as a roller skating rink, a temporary elementary classroom building, and finally as the Knights of Columbus Hall, this structure is ready for a new use. Following the collapse in 1986 of the main roof and western wall under a heavy snow load, the building was rebuilt to the layout it has today (shown above). There is a series of smaller rooms along the south and east sides of the building, and a large, main space with a gabled roof that occupies the northwest corner.

The south and southern end of the east facades, closest to the street, have a stone veneer and newer, vinyl-clad windows. The west, north, and northern end of the east facades are painted concrete block with original steel framed windows and hollow metal doors. The low-slope roof over the smaller rooms is an adhered membrane, while the gable roof is shingled. Both roofs are ready for replacement, as are the older doors and windows.

There is a 400 amp electrical service, plus village water and sanitary sewer service to the building. The structure appears sound, but the structural capacity of the roofs must be checked to confirm compliance with current building codes, and to evaluate the potential to remove the steel columns and beam which are now in place to brace the lower roof framing near mid-span. The majority of the finishes, and the electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems must be completely replaced. In one sense this is a definite advantage of this property: as it must be completely renewed, the new components and systems can be designed specifically to best suit the functions of the library.

The Plan for a New Library

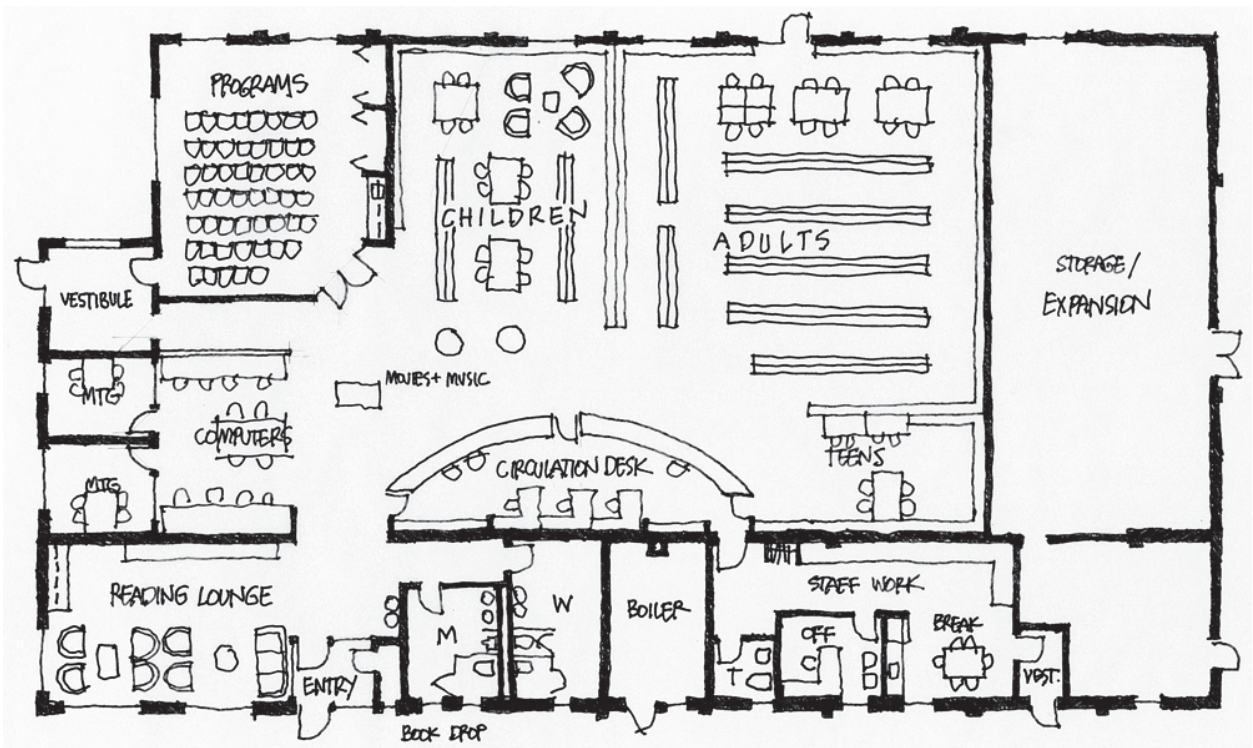
The concept plan (shown below) is designed to utilize the spaces of the existing building as closely as possible yet provide the organization and control necessary for a smoothly functioning library. Initially, the library will occupy approximately 80% of the building, with the remainder reserved

for future expansion and storage. The library can be entered both from the parking area and from the sidewalk along Main Street. A book drop is located adjacent to the entry from the parking to provide convenient after hours access for patrons as well as to the staff who service it.

The main space of the building becomes a large reading room, with areas for different age groups defined by freestanding book stack units. These will step up in height as they approach the exterior walls so that there is a sense of openness and unity, yet there is visual and acoustic privacy within each area. Each group has its own computers, comfortable seating, and study tables and chairs. New windows will be installed to provide visual relief, views of the outside, and natural light.

The circulation desk is centrally located so as to have visual supervision of, and be easily accessible from, virtually all the public spaces. It will be top lit by skylights or roof windows to emphasize its location. Between the circulation desk and the collection areas is a zone of space that can be used for the display of popular circulating materials like movies and music, as well as rotating exhibits of special interest. This zone also includes the ten public-access computers. Staff office, work, and break spaces are located in the low roofed area behind the circulation desk, and have a separate entry from the parking lot. A dedicated staff toilet room is also provided.

On the Main Street frontage, spaces of high visibility and use are located – the program room, study / tutoring rooms, and what is called the “reading lounge” – in order to convey to passers-by the activity and excitement going on inside. The program room accommodates up to 50 people. It has a small kitchenette and storage closets for program materials and supplies. There are two small rooms for tutoring, small group study, or meetings. They are glass fronted to provide visual supervision from the library. The reading lounge provides comfortable seating, and access to magazines, newspapers, and coffee. It is envisioned as a “community living room” and it situated where conversation will not disturb those in the collections or computer areas. Adjacent to this space are the public toilets and drinking fountains.



Concept floor plan for the new RCS Library. Main Street is on the left.

The cost to renovate and furnish the Knights of Columbus Hall as the new home of the RCS Community Library is estimated to be in the \$1 million to \$1.25 million dollar range, based upon the project being publically bid at prevailing wage rates. This range reflects the potential variation in the systems, finishes, and furniture ultimately selected, and does not reflect the potential savings available through landlord-funded improvements and grants that may be awarded.