

July 10, 2012

Dear Monique:

We'd like to thank you and Dawn for meeting with us in May and are very pleased about the change to have Main house 135,000 items. Here are some comments on various issues that arose at the meeting:

- 1) **Problems in Shelving Plans:** Common library bookcases, including ones previously chosen by Group 4, cannot physically hold eight shelves of Adult Fiction, as Group 4 is specifying, with the books spine-out. We also found problems with Group 4's specifications calling for seven shelves high in Adult Non-Fiction. Details are attached.
- 2) **36" Aisles are Legal:** Although we heard you say that aisles wider than 36" between ranges are required, we've met with city building officials and consulted a federal ADA authority, who all assert that 36" is legal. We refer you to building inspectors Robert Dunbar and George Hoyt of the City of Palo Alto Planning Department and Earlene R. Sesker, Accessibility Specialist at the U.S. Access Board (ta@access-board.gov). Also, please see the attached letter from PAN member and wheelchair-user Joe Villareal about the waste created by aisles wider than 36".
- 3) **Unsubstantiated Circulation Rate Increases:** The numbers supplied by Group 4 for the Walnut Creek and Lafayette libraries actually suggest Main's AF + ANF circulation rates will not increase, so Group 4's reliance on these rates doubling remains unsupported by any evidence. Details are attached. As you know, our Downtown and College Terrace branches have also seen no rise in circulation rates after renovation.
- 4) **Higher Costs for Basement Storage:** Placing books in Main's basement raises operating costs at a time when our libraries are short on funds. We recommend these costs be quantified so that alternatives can be properly weighed.
- 5) **Outstanding Questions:** We have not yet received information from you concerning:
 - a. Why most copies of many high-demand titles are assigned to Downtown.
 - b. Which branch gets credit when an item assigned to one is borrowed at another.
- 6) **Capacity vs. Collection:** Please clarify if the 135,000 target will be Main's actual collection size upon reopening and going forward, or simply its capacity. We seek assurance that Main collection will not be reduced following the remodel.

We would like to discuss the above with you at our meeting on Monday. We also look forward to seeing the revised plans and accompanying spreadsheet.

Thank you very much,

Betsy Allyn
Sheri Furman
Jeff Levinsky
Elaine Meyer
Doug Moran
Enid Pearson

Problems in Shelving Plans: Adult Fiction

Typical 84" library bookcases cannot physically hold 8 shelves of hardback fiction with their spines out. Here's why:

Hardback fiction books are typically 9.5" tall. Shelves in Palo Alto and other library bookcases are 0.75" thick, so one book and its shelf require 10.25". Bookcases in Palo Alto and other libraries allow shelves only at 1" vertical intervals. Hence, we assume that the fiction shelves would be spaced at least 11" apart. But 8 shelves at 11" each total 88", exceeding the height of the 84" bookcases Group 4 has specified.

Even 90" bookcases don't work well because the base adds about 3.5". For the new shelves at the Downtown Library, the second shelf's undersurface needs to be at 14.25" from the ground for a 9.5" book to fit onto the first shelf. Adding another 7 shelves at 11" each comes to 91.25". In other words, 8 such shelves cannot fit into a 90" bookcase either.

One might omit the canopy and let books on the top shelf rise above 90". However, that puts the top shelf at 81" (6' 9"), which is not accessible to shorter people.

While thinner shelves or different shelf spacing options may be available, these would likely increase the cost of the bookcases. Turning entire shelves spine-up is another possibility, but it hardly makes the collection more inviting.

We recommend you try actual shelf arrangements before plans are finalized. For this, you might use one of Main's existing 90" bookcases, which allows you to simulate an 84" bookcase as well. This experiment will make it easier to determine whether patrons and library staff can easily access the books in the various possible configurations. Note that 11" vertical spacing leaves only $\frac{3}{4}$ " of space above each book, making it harder to retrieve books and the collection less inviting than at present.

Problems in Shelving Plans: Adult Non-Fiction Shelving

The Milpitas Library designed by Group 4 has difficulty housing 7 shelves of adult non-fiction in 90" bookcases, so we're surprised at plans to put 7 shelves of ANF into even shorter (84") bookcases at Main.

To clarify the difficulties, we ran experiments using 25,291 ANF books purchased over the last five years by Palo Alto. We chose this sample because the dimensions of these books were readily available online. While the sample covers only about half of the expected capacity for Main's ANF shelves and also represent titles from all Palo Alto adult collections instead of just Main, we believe it is quite representative. We sorted the books into call number order, split them between 1,806 shelves (the approximate number specified by Group 4), obtained the maximum book height for each shelf, and determined how many shelves would then fit into the bookcases.

Using standard 90" bookcases, 6.5 shelves fit into each bookcase on average. This assumes that the tallest book on any shelf would have only $\frac{1}{2}$ " of free space above it. We note that there are

currently 6.2 shelves in the 90” ANF bookcases at Main, suggesting staff have gotten reasonably close to the optimal configuration.

With 84” bookcases, only 6.0 shelves fit on average. Intuitively this makes sense: with a bookcase that’s 6” shorter, you lose about one-half of a 12” shelf.

Unfortunately, neither of these comes close to the average of 7 shelves that Group 4 proposes to house in 84” bookcases for Main’s ANF. It appears instead that using 90” bookcases and planning for just 6.2 to 6.5 shelves is prudent.

Unsubstantiated Circulation Rate Increases

We appreciate receiving the additional information from Dawn regarding the circulation rates at the Walnut Creek and Lafayette libraries. Here are those details:

Lafayette			
	Owned	On Shelf	Pct on shelf
Sci fi/ss	1870	1522	81.39%
Myst	3882	3155	81.27%
FIC	7865	6056	77.00%
Total Adult Fiction	13617	10733	78.82%
Bio	2067	1686	81.57%
000-999	18458	13843	75.00%
Total Adult Nonfiction	20525	15529	75.66%
Walnut Creek			
	Owned	On Shelf	Pct on shelf
Sci fi/ss	1722	1365	79.27%
Myst	4247	3284	77.33%
FIC	9722	7498	77.12%
Total Adult Fiction	15691	12147	77.41%
Bio	2497	2055	82.30%
000-999	20989	15804	75.30%
Total Adult Nonfiction	23486	17859	76.04%

The information we received fails to note that the two Contra Costa libraries have far smaller adult fiction and non-fiction collections than Main. Here are the numbers:

	Palo Alto Main Library	Walnut Creek Library	Lafayette Library
Total AF + ANF	89,907	39,177	34,142

This means that people visiting Main have more than twice as many adult fiction and non-fiction books to choose among, which of course is a valuable benefit. It means those books can represent a wider diversity of perspectives and approaches to a topic and thus provide more specialized and detailed treatment of topics.

To be fair, the three libraries serve somewhat different-sized populations who differ somewhat in their library usage. We can account for that by normalizing by annual circulation:

	Palo Alto Main Library	Walnut Creek Library	Lafayette Library
2010-2011 Annual Circulation	545,722	509,271	452,768
Total AF + ANF normalized by 2010-2011 Annual Circulation	0.165	0.077	0.075

The above shows that even after normalizing by circulation, Main has more than twice as many adult fiction and non-fiction titles available. It is thus no surprise that for AF and ANF, the average volume at Main has approximately half the circulation rate of a volume at Walnut Creek and Lafayette. Rather, **that's exactly what you would expect**, based upon the vastly different sizes of those collections. There is hence no basis for claiming that Main's AF and ANF circulation rates are "low" and should "correct themselves" after building renovation.

Here's one way to think about it. Suppose the collection in say the Lafayette library doubled in size. Of course, circulation at the library might then rise somewhat but normalize that increase away. The average number of checkouts per volume in the library would invariably fall by half. It would match that at Main.

Another problem in relying on the Walnut Creek and Lafayette examples is the absence of any explanation of how the Main Library would come to have their circulation rates. That is, it's not enough to offer other libraries with different AF and ANF circulation rates as proof that Main will somehow switch to those rates. Instead, one must show that (a) there exist libraries comparable to Main that (b) once changed in the ways proposed for Main then (c) doubled their AF and ANF circulation rates. Since Walnut Creek and Lafayette currently have far smaller AF and ANF collections than Main, they aren't comparable libraries in the first place and thus aren't relevant.

As noted in our May meeting, the library could decide that if Group 4's projections of doubled circulation rates turn out to be wrong and the rates don't change, the extra books might simply be allowed to occupy the 15% of slack shelf space specified in the plans. Unfortunately, this will cause AF shelves to be 99% full and ANF shelves to be 96% full, creating enormous problems and frustrating both patrons and library staff.¹

We urge you to continue to use Main's current AF and ANF circulation rates for planning, given the lack of any evidence that a change will occur.

¹The calculations are:

$$\text{Resulting Shelf Fullness} = \frac{\text{Percent On Shelf Currently} \times \text{Planned Shelf Fullness}}{\text{Percent On Shelf If Circulation Had Doubled}}$$

$$\text{AF: Will have 99\% Full Shelves} = \frac{87\% \times 85\%}{75\%}$$

$$\text{ANF: Will have 96\% Full Shelves} = \frac{90\% \times 85\%}{80\%}$$

June 19, 2012

To Whom It May Concern,

I want to express complete support for NOT widening the aisles at the Main Library from 36" to 42", especially in the name of doing it for better wheelchair accessibility.

Speaking as a wheelchair user and having discussed it with several friends, also wheelchair users, I can categorically state that widening the aisles from 36" to 42" in no way helps us better navigate the aisles.

My apartment, which was build to ADA standards, has doorways that are 36" wide. This provides ample passage for my motorized wheelchair. Extending the aisle to 42" adds no value since 60" are required for a turning radius.

Moreover, the consequential loss of approximately 342 sq. ft. is an unnecessary loss of floor space that could be better utilized for more shelving.

Valued at \$810 per square foot, this loss of shelving space will cost Palo Alto \$262,440, not an inconsequential amount of money.

Widening the aisles is unnecessary for wheelchair access and a costly waste of shelf space.

Sincerely,

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