

Hammel, Green and Abrahamson (HGA) Report

Milltown Public Library

Existing Building Observations

February 12, 2013

The existing Milltown Library is approximately 3,100 square feet in a one-story building with a partial basement along Main Street in Milltown, WI. The building has retail frontage on Main Street with good visibility from the street. The site does not have dedicated parking for the library and relies on street parking for patrons.

Collection areas

The book collection for the library is concentrated in the front 2/3rds of the building as this area of the building is slab on grade and can structurally accommodate the floor loading capacity of 150 lbs / sf for shelves. The back portion of the library has a basement area below and the floor cannot accommodate the weight of shelves. Therefore light weight items: computers, study rooms, break area and seating, etc. are organized in this area of the library. The aisle width for the shelving is too narrow for two customers to browse comfortably for books without interrupting each other and does not meet current ADA standards for clearance.

Much of the collection is not as visible as optimal. The narrowness of the aisle width contributes to limited visibility as well as the density of the collection. The shelving is filled to capacity with all areas being used to its limit. Bottom shelves are also full which increases the difficulty for patron browsing of the collection. Because of the density of the collection, there is limited area for book display. In particular, the Adult non-fiction and Teen collections lack visibility. The collections are well-weeded and are at capacity. There is no room to add to any of the book collections.

The Children's area is located immediately inside the front door. There is a limited amount area designated for both Children's collection as well as the play area. In addition, a portion of this area consists of a small raised platform in the front window. This area does not meet ADA requirements for accessibility and does not have a handrail to define or enclose the platform area. Children's collection areas are highly active areas. When this level of high activity is combined with the activity inherent to a primary entry and exit of the library means, a conflict of activities often occurs. Customers often have to walk around children when entering or exiting the library. There is a concern that children may playfully run out onto the sidewalk due to the adjacency to an exterior door or that little fingers may be pinched in an opening or closing door. It seems an alternative location would be better.

The Teen area, although small, is flexible and well used. There is a bin of material "holds" that impedes access to the Teen collection area and accessibility to both the Holds and the Teen area is compromised. The area is too small to support a desirable collection size, dedicated computers or group study spaces required by today's collaborative education.

Computer area

The computer area while small is a favorite well-used place in the library. The computer zone is divided into two areas divided by the low screen wall. The screen wall provides a quieter focused space for computer work while the computers in the front lend themselves to shorter term use. More computers are needed.

Meeting areas

Meeting space within the existing library is limited. There are several café tables located at the front of the library that accommodate a limited number of patrons. A storage room near the back of the building has been converted to a small meeting / study room. This room is often used for tutoring. Larger meeting or gathering needs are accommodated by moving display carts and furnishings to transform the area near the computers. Staff time is required to re-arrange furniture and set up additional chairs. If a large event is held at the library, it takes over the entirety of the space. The library has placed the DVD collection on moveable shelving so that it can be rolled out of the way in the case of a large meeting or event. While the idea of flexible space is important, it is equally important to be able to accommodate a variety of activities without dominating the entire library.

Lighting

Lighting in the library, although not ideal, is considered adequate. Natural daylight is only at the front of the building. The remainder of the building relies on lay-in 2x4 fluorescent lighting with prismatic lens. The lighting in the area of the stacks is poor as fixture placement is located for general purposes and not specific to the shelving layout. The light levels at the base shelf are lower than optimal which makes titles difficult to read.

Staff space & work area

The Staff space and work area in the existing library is extremely limited and congested. The service desk is centrally located within the library, providing good sightlines throughout the majority of the public space. There is direct access to the workroom from the service desk. The area behind the service desk is, however, narrow and no longer sized to accommodate the functions and storage required in this area. The visibility at one of the service points is obscured by a column and becomes an item which the public and staff must “work around”. The staff has organized this space well and work flow is an efficient as possible given the space constraints.

The staff workroom is insufficient. In addition to sorting and processing materials, this area also serves as the library director’s office/ desk. This area provides access to the stairs to the basement, so navigating the crowded work room while avoiding the stairs can be dangerous. A long work-counter flanks both sides of the room. However, due to the limited size of the workroom, tasks must be carefully scheduled and sequenced to avoid spatial conflicts. One task at a time monopolizes the workroom. Storage within the work room has been maximized but the storage available is still inadequate.

In addition to the work room function, this space also functions as the network closet, housing equipment which has been recently relocated to avoid roof leaks.

The staff break area consists of a small table and countertop with sink at the back of the library within the public area of the building. This coffee area and table is often used by customers therefore, no truly separate off desk area is available for staff.

Storage

There is a limited amount of available, dry storage in the basement of the building. The storage in the basement is set on pallets raised up off the basement floor to avoid the moisture and dampness. The stairs to the basement are steep and do not meet code. The area is inaccessible and does not meet current ADA standards.

Friends of the Library

Friends of the Library has a small cart of items for sale items located within the stacks. Storage in the basement for the annual book sale is limited. The annual book sale is always scheduled for summer so the book sorting and preparations which occur in the basement can be accomplished without people being too cold.

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