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## Something for everyone Patrons, library staff benefit from many new features

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The features incorporated into the new downtown Wooster library -- the main library of the Wayne County Public Library system -- are still very much a novelty.

Staff members who have been taking guests on tours of the new building have been eager to point these features out, and visitors have heard about them from a slightly different angle, depending upon the tour guide.

Assistant Director Jennifer Shatzer recently guided a visitor through the building, highlighting several areas of interest -- starting with exterior lockers for after-hours book pickup on the south side of the library.

Patrons calling for reserve items will be given a code to punch in, giving them the opportunity to collect a book or other library materials even when the building isn't open.

Staff members touring libraries in preparation for designing this one saw self-service lockers demonstrated at the library in North Ridgeville, Shatzer said.

Shatzer is especially pleased with the circulation workroom, where "everything is coming into one location."

"We're hoping it is going to improve efficiency," she said.

The new book drop, which allows dozens of books to slip through a depository leading to a "book closet" inside is a major boon to that process, according to Shatzer.

There are a separate book and audio drop. "We'll let the room fill up with (those returned items)," Shatzer said, adding, "I think this is going to get used a lot, even for people coming into the library."

She has been called on holidays and other hours when the former main library wasn't open to clear the outside book container, because books were "falling out of (it)."

Shatzer said personnel anticipate hearing, "I'd like fries with that," when a patron uses another new feature -- the drive-through customer service window.

"If they call us ahead of time, (their library materials) will be ready," she said.

Accommodations also have been made for receiving and sending out interlibrary loans, she said, including an overhang to keep the delivery driver out of inclement weather.

These amenities are important because "our circulation keeps going up," she said.

The elevator also is convenient, offering a public and staff entrance.

The old main library will still receive the bulk of new materials, however, Shatzer said, because they'll be checked in there.

"(Librarians) are always processing ... nonstop," Shatzer said.

Moving to the checkout area, Shatzer noted five self-check machines, with which librarians were scheduled to "practice" during the week of training following the move and preceding Saturday's opening.

On the wall behind the circulation desk is what Shatzer described as a "fancy" screen for PowerPoint presentations and announcements.

"We're going big-time," Shatzer said.

Part of self-help efficiency will include an area to the left of the Liberty Street entrance, where Express (popular) and new items will be available. Patrons may pick up their own self-serve holds and check them out.

No staff intervention will be offered "unless (patrons) want it or need help," Shatzer said, freeing up librarians for other tasks.

Also on the first floor is a lounge area for relaxing and reading newspapers and a Friends of the Library alcove just inside the Liberty Street entrance where coffee or beverages may be served and where mugs and Cat's Meow replicas of the new library will be available for purchase.

A donor wall and display cubes are located in that area.

The large first floor conference room has two screens, "and we'll be able to set it up movie (theater)-style. "We've got movie licensing for almost all of our branches, too," Shatzer said.

"The brains of the library" are located in the "technology closet," she said.

Coordinator Dave Tenney worked to get technology up and running. It includes security cameras throughout the building, cordless phones with infinite range and Tablet PCs.

"It's a new trend -- roaming librarians," Tenney said.

They'll be able to offer assistance "right in the stacks with the patrons," Shatzer said.

"(The technology) is going to be really cool once we know how it works," Tenney quipped.

Orange, green and blue circular shelving and highlights mark the beginning of the children's area, where "now we have a whole computer lab for kids," Shatzer said, equipped with limited Internet access and "sites we choose for school and recreation."

"There are lots of study areas, and the room in the very back is a family room," she said.

As a patron progresses through the department, juvenile fiction and nonfiction are in the front, nestling "little kids in the very back."

"This is the corner for the smallest patrons," library Director Greg Lubelski said, "snuggled (far away) from the entrance."

The decor is "generic, fun and colorful," Shatzer said.

It's almost like the pattern on a Spirograph, architect Dan Meehan said.

But nothing about the decor locks in a specific theme.

"There is a lot going on;" however, Meehan said, "that brings the space together ... and ties together color themes, forms and shapes."

"As you look around, there is lots of detail," he said.

"We didn't want a theme because you get tired of themes," Shatzer said. "We like to do our own decorating," selecting a new focus for each summer reading program and for other special events.

The staff worked with Meehan and his interior decorator, Shatzer said, who is "big into colors and shapes."

The expansive storytime room for children may be divided into two sections and incorporates a parent's book collection to

be perused while they wait for their children.

That space, like other areas in the library, can be described in one word, Lubelski said -- "flexible. It can be reorganized very easily."

The children's area is four times bigger in the new library than it was in the Larwill Street library, Lubelski said.

On the second floor is a "big magazine collection ... and a special interest alcove," Shatzer said.

The latter, a browsing area, will be "changed out quite frequently," featuring books devoted to a variety of topics and related presentations on a monitor.

A parallel alcove constitutes a business section, where patrons "can come and do business research," she said. Computers may be hooked up to give presentations on the television monitor.

The stacks of books in the adult department on the second floor are periodically "cut out" with a shelf and also have a walkway down the middle to break up the impact of row upon row of books.

The bottom shelf of each row is tilted so that patrons may more easily see the book titles. "It makes a huge difference," Shatzer said.

Teens have their own area on the second floor.

"Everything is off-kilter to make it interesting and fun," she said, adding, they, like the younger children, will have limited Internet access and chosen sites to use on their computers.

"We're looking forward to doing more programs with teens," Shatzer said. "We have a lot of teens who want to hang out at the library."

For adults as well, "there are lots of comfortable places to sit and read (on the second floor)," Lubelski said.

Wireless Internet access will be available throughout the library.

One of the unique features of the library is a display gallery spanning much of the south portion, just inside the parking lot entrance, of the building.

Library staff plan many special displays -- four of them will debut with the opening of the library Saturday -- in cases that will accommodate all kinds and sizes of exhibits. One is especially deep and could even hold a motorcycle, Lubelski said.

Throughout the library will be "face-out displays," many of them at the end of rows of books, enticing patrons with the covers of books.

"Whatever you put on an end cap gets checked out," Shatzer said.

The CDs also are arranged in special cabinetry; and along with offering videos, DVDs and books on tape, the library will debut technology called "play-aways," which Shatzer said are like "little I-pods" with headsets.

"Each one is an individual title," Shatzer said, emphasizing, "it's a whole new world out there."

Part of the new world of the up-to-date library is more deliberate attention paid to accommodating the special needs population.

Residents with handicaps participated in focus groups before the library was designed, alerting library trustees, staff and the architect to features that are or aren't helpful, Lubelski said.

For instance, a restroom rail that disabled patrons say actually gets in their way will "lift up" in the Liberty Street library, he said.

Meehan said, "It's a little more practical approach; it's a simple thing, (but) it's now a new standard (for Meehan Architects)

from working with (the Wooster) group."

Those features that are helpful have been incorporated in the Liberty Street library, Lubelski said. In fact, "The architect went above and beyond (making sure special needs were addressed)."

Even the view from the second floor wasn't overlooked; it is accentuated by the window treatments.

The Wayne County Courthouse is highlighted in the library's north tower. When it is lit up at night, it is especially lovely, Shatzer said.

Overall, Lubelski said, the plan into which an array of library constituents offered input "worked out pretty much the way it was laid out."

That plan includes infrastructure and landscaping.

"Climate control is everything," Lubelski said.

Each area will have its own heating and cooling control, according to Steven Wolfe, the new facilities coordinator.

"It's a very impressive system, and at the same time, very efficient," Lubelski said.

Wolfe calls special features "way cool." One is a treated walkway on which dirt and snow can be kicked off people's shoes before residue gets tracked into the building.

The library joins the Wayne Center for the Arts; the American Red Cross building, now under construction; the United Way of Wayne and Holmes Counties and the Wayne County Health Department in a "community campus," with "lots of landscaping, greenspace ... and types of lighting to model (the downtown Wooster) Streetscape," Lubelski said.

One of the exterior highlights is a walkway of commemorative bricks, about 800 of them, purchased by residents and embedded in the Liberty Street entrance.

The building is "energy efficient, handicap accessible, great for families and attractive on the outside," Lubelski said in a summary of what makes the new library an asset.

"It's the type of building I think people will want to explore."

"A lot of people were involved (in the process); a lot of thought (went into the design)," Lubelski said. "We had a great architect, and I don't think we ever felt like we had a conflict (between him and the board or library administration)."

Dunlop and Johnston's goal was to "make good on the commitment we made from Day 1," Randy Spencer said, commending a "great team of contractors" and "getting them in the building when they (were) supposed to be," with "wonderful support from the architect's office."

Meehan expressed "how much of a pleasure this project has been," praising the library staff and construction manager Ted Bogner as "good folks to work with. I wish all of our projects were like this."

The total construction program not only finished ahead of schedule, it was also completed under budget, Bogner said, noting the program was comprised of several bidding phases -- building shell and site work; furniture, fixtures, and equipment; and landscaping.

"Although each of our contractors obviously went 'above and beyond' to better a tight and exacting schedule by nine days, there are two firms who ultimately had to set the pace," Bogner said in a memo.

"We would be remiss, indeed, if we did not single out G.E. Baker Construction Co. (site work) and Dunlop and Johnston (building shell; general trades) for special mention," according to Bogner. "These two contractors put the 'pedal to the metal' ...."

Brochures distributed by the library administration at the beginning of the project described the new library as the "right size" -- 45,000 square feet -- with handicap accessibility, new technology, extra space, large meeting rooms and parking for

at least 120 cars. These features were delivered.

It also was pledged to be built at "a reasonable cost" -- \$10 million, funded by \$3 million in the library's building and repair fund, private donations, grants and a 0.25-mill, 20-year bond issue approved by voters in November 2005.

Bogner plans to provide figures showing the project was brought in under budget to the board of trustees in July.

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