

## **Considerations When Planning, Remodeling or Relocating a Church Library**

**1. Define your Vision!** This is the big picture – the dream. A vision statement is one to four sentences that articulate a picture of what your church library could look like.

**2. State your Mission!** A mission statement focuses on how you generally hope to achieve your vision. If you have not designed a mission statement, *now is the time*, because everything you change or hope to change about your library will either enable or disable your mission to be accomplished! If your priority is to move ahead, then construct the mission statement carefully but quickly. You can always fine tune it next year.

*NOTE: If you would like to examine copies of sample mission statements from other libraries, let me know.*

### **3. Ask basic and important questions of clarification:**

#### **a. Whom do you serve?**

Is it your desire to have people of all ages and abilities to have full access to and be enriched by your library materials? If so, then design your space accordingly.

- Ask someone with a disability to go through your current library and make suggestions for how a new space might be designed. Can someone with a walker or wheel chair maneuver through the aisles and doorway of the current or new library?
- Invite children, youth and adults into the library and ask them for suggestions on how to make the space user friendly. Would they use tables and chairs? Bean bags? Books on traditional shelves or in modular, moveable boxes? Computer? DVD player and TV?
- Consider the height of your shelves. To be safe, everything must be in reach of an average size adult without standing on a stepstool. Remember to have lower shelves in the children's area.
- Anything else?

#### **b. What do you offer?**

Is your library for checking out books and materials **only** or will the space be used in a variety of ways?

- Some church libraries may design space for all or any of the following: story telling, a VCR/DVD for small group video viewing, one or more computers for use with curriculum software or bible games, a table for committee meetings.
- What kind of space do your materials/resources require?
- Imagine new activities and services that you may want to offer in the future. What kind of space might you need?
- Anything else?

**c. Evaluate each current space and furniture item and ask “what purpose does this have?” “How does this space, item help us to accomplish our mission?”**

Example – I have been in a church library that had three large bulletin boards. The librarian did not want to spend much time keeping these three spaces fresh and inviting, so as a result they looked faded and out-of-date. My suggestion: keep one for highlighting new materials or seasonal promotions and take the other two down. Use the newly acquired wall space for more shelves, for posters, or invite artistic expression and a mural designed by children from your congregation.

**d. Other suggestions...**

Invite someone from outside of your congregation to come in, look around and ask questions and offer suggestions regarding your space. You may want to ask a public or school librarian, or one who has just remodeled or moved their library.

Persuade “the powers that be” to place the church library in a high traffic, high visibility area. My belief is: the farther distance the church library is from the hub of activity in your church, the less it will get used.

Request that the librarian or member of the library committee be placed on the building/remodeling committee.

If you have not undergone a thorough weeding of the library, now is the time for it! I am confident in my weeding skills and am available to come to your church to get the job done. You supply the courage and the boxes and some brownies. ☺

Include space in any new designs for easy-access display of resources, seasonal items, and library promotion. (Please, not another bulletin board!) Perhaps a simple shelf outside the library door, or a bookcase on wheels (so you can roll it around church).

Consider the move into your new space as an opportunity to fine tune library policies, such as circulation procedures, selection policies and gifts and donation policies. Do not be afraid to say what your library is and is not. Refer to Vision and Mission statements. Example: “We are not a depository for old Sunday School material and stuffed owls!”

Remember, your new space does not have to be a carbon copy of the old space so dream big and ask some creative thinkers to offer their ideas.

Ask: “What is the broader mission/purpose of our congregation? How does that determine our ministry as a church library?” Example: If your church has recently adopted an emphasis on outreach, how will your church library provide resources for outreach as well as model outreach and hospitality? Does your congregation have a ministry to the elderly? To those recovering from addictions? How can you support these ministries?

Define what is unique about what you have to offer and then toot your horn!. If your church is near other libraries (college, public, etc.), promote your library for its distinct features.

**4. Look to the future!**

Dream and imagine – you don’t have to make **all** the decisions now, but do record your dreams so that you can go back to them in two years and determine when they can be implemented. Is this the time to get your card catalog on a database? How much time do you want to spend on outdated patterns of library management? You may want to rethink purchasing certain kinds of materials - like video cassettes – they are gradually becoming obsolete. Can you let go of certain items and collections in the library in order to make room for new, appealing materials? What about space for 1-2 computers? Can you imagine becoming a resource center instead of a library? What might that look like?

The above suggestions as well as additional handouts on mission statements, selection policies and weeding procedures for church libraries are available from:

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The following additional questions and suggestions are from Paul Hawkins, a South Central Kansas Library System Consultant. Paul says, “I’d be glad to look over any *preliminary* plans and offer suggestions at no charge.” He may be reached at: South Central KS Library System 901 North Main Street, Hutchinson, KS 67501 800-234-0529, Ext. 113

List the various functions such as shelving, reading at tables, etc. that will take place in the church library space.

How much space in square feet will be needed for each function? Which functions are most important? Prioritize the functions. Which functions are likely to expand and which ones could decrease? Consider factors for expansion and contraction. Allocate square feet by function into the proposed square feet for the expanded or new library space.

How many linear feet of shelving will be needed for books and other materials?  
Rule of thumb: Adult books equal 8 - 12 volumes per foot; children's books equal 10 - 14; remember to fill shelves only 2/3 full to allow for expansion. Allow shelf space and an area for display of books and other materials.

Consider shelving and viewing areas for special formats such as videotapes and audiocassettes.

Is lighting adequate and compatible with the arrangement of shelving and reading areas? Are there plenty of electrical, cable and other telecommunications outlets?

Do you plan to continue to use a card catalog?

Do you plan on using one or more computer terminals? Wire accordingly now, rather than later.