

# Why Does the Library Need to Do Anything?

Skaneateles Library Board Meeting

November 12th, 2019



## Overview:

1. How did we get here?
2. Facts, history and background
3. Community needs, current realities and what could be
4. Next steps

The library has been looking at space and accessibility needs, expansion options and possible relocation at various times over the last several decades. As early as the 1950s, lack of space was noted as an issue. After the Sphinx was annexed in 1987 for the children's room, progress stalled.

Several times during the 1990s and early 2000s, surveys and studies were conducted to assess the community's needs. Architects and consultants were hired to provide expert opinions and recommendations. But a decision on the best path forward was never reached by the board.

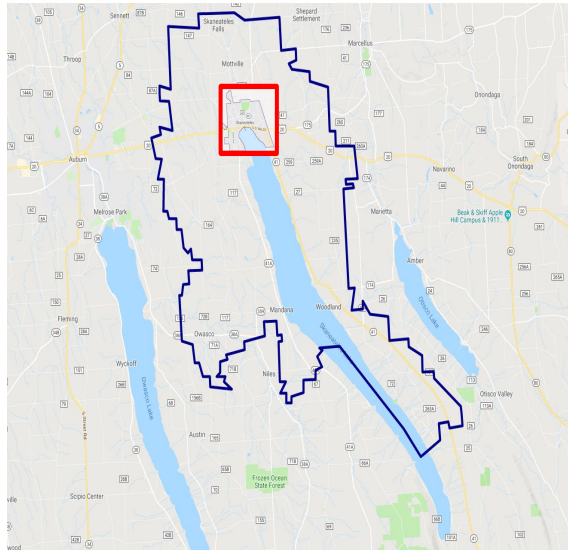
We've spent the last several years working on the library's future; our current process began in early 2015.

We plan to decide by the end of 2019 whether to renovate and expand in place or build a new library on another site.

Basics: The library serves, and receives funding from, those in the village—and well beyond.

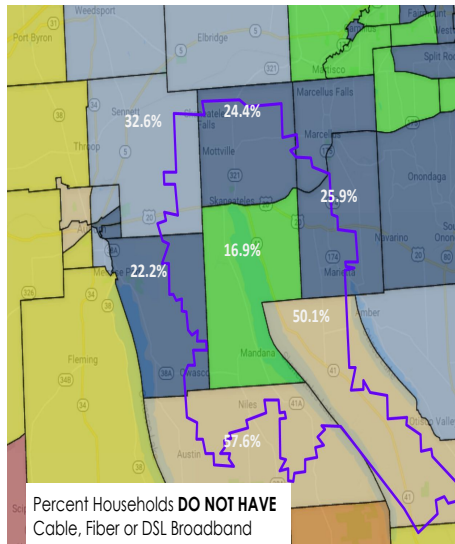
**Did you know?**  
**72%** of school district 9000 residents **live outside the village limits.**

Source: 2010 US Census, 2017 ACS



In 2016, district residents voted to provide an annual levy of \$350,000 to support library operations. This includes people living in Mottville, Owasco, Sennett, Skaneateles Falls, Spafford and the town and village of Skaneateles.

Basics: We serve the connected—and disconnected.



**Did you know?**  
Many households  
in our school  
district  
**do not have  
internet at home.**

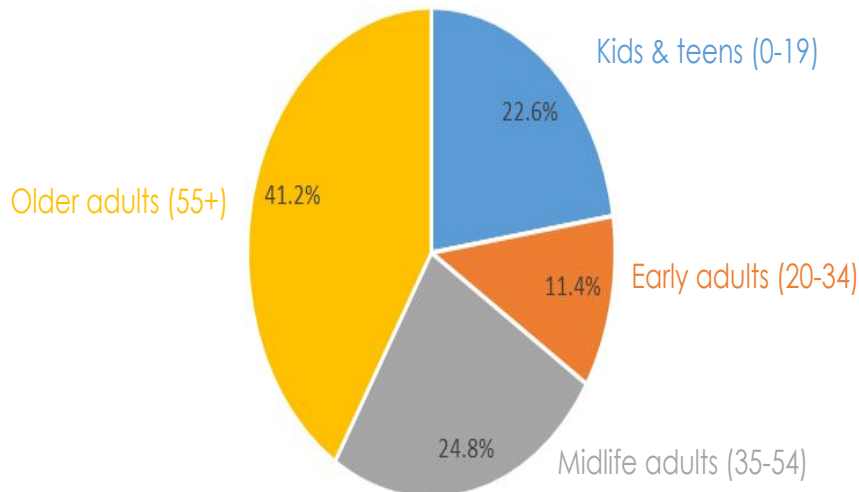
Source: National Digital Inclusion Alliance, 2017 ACS

Faster broadband internet is limited in the more rural areas.

Internet isn't available at all in some areas, even though it's a necessary tool to complete tasks that are part of modern life, including many homework assignments.

The library provides access to the internet for everyone in our service area, as well as access to high quality information only available in "for pay" databases.

Basics: We serve the young—and the young at heart.



Source: 2010 US Census, 2017 ACS

According to 2010 census data and estimates from the 2017 American Community Survey, there are 8,999 full time residents living in the Skaneateles Central School District. 64% of district households have 1-2 people, and the 55+ segment is growing. We see an influx of seniors and families from May thru October.

### **What about the school libraries?**

Each school building has a library with collections and services specific to those grades; they are not meant to serve all the educational and recreational needs of students, but primarily to support the curriculum.

All school-aged kids make up 18% of our total population and they have access to school libraries during the school day. School libraries are not available outside of school hours or during holidays and summer break. We work closely with school librarians to serve students and share resources; our wonderful school libraries are a part of the education system and the school day, but they do not replace the public library - not even for the students they serve.

4% are under the age of 5 and getting ready for kindergarten. Babies, toddlers and preschoolers (and their caregivers) need our library to help kids develop the literacy and social skills they need to be successful in

school.

# Basics: Use of library services and spaces keeps growing.

## Over the last 4 years:



CHECKOUTS **UP** 19% OVERALL  
→ physical items: 6% increase  
→ e-content: 117% increase



BUILDING VISITS **UP** 13%



MEETING ROOM USE **UP** 295%  
→ 19 uses in 2016-17  
→ 75 uses in 2018-19



PROGRAM ATTENDANCE **UP** 58%  
PROGRAMS OFFERED **UP** 146%



COMPUTER USE **UP** 5%\*

*\*Library computers only - doesn't count the many people who bring their own laptops and use our wifi!*

Use of library resources, both physical and digital, has continued to go up year after year. With community support we've expanded our open hours and offerings with new collections, digital services and programs for all ages.

*Note: Statistics cover October thru September 2015-16 to 2018-19.*

## Our Mission

To inspire learning, enrich lives and connect our community.

## Our Vision

To be the cultural and informational hub of a vibrant, thriving community by creating spaces and experiences ...



The board developed this mission and vision in 2013 and reaffirmed them as the basis of our work when the Long Range Plan for 2020-2025 was approved in September 2019. These pictures provide examples of how a facility that helps fulfill our mission and vision might function, but in our current state we're unable to fulfill either.

*Note:* All pictures in this presentation are **examples of space utilization, layout and flexibility ONLY**. They are not representations of what we will do or what a renovated or new facility would look like. The style and decor of a building and its spaces can be anything - traditional, transitional, historic, etc.



# How have libraries evolved over the past 100+ years?



Who remembers having to look up sources in the card catalog?

We have generations of people using the library for whom this is as ancient as using a typewriter and who don't remember life before the internet or smart phones. So it would make sense that things have changed at the library, too...

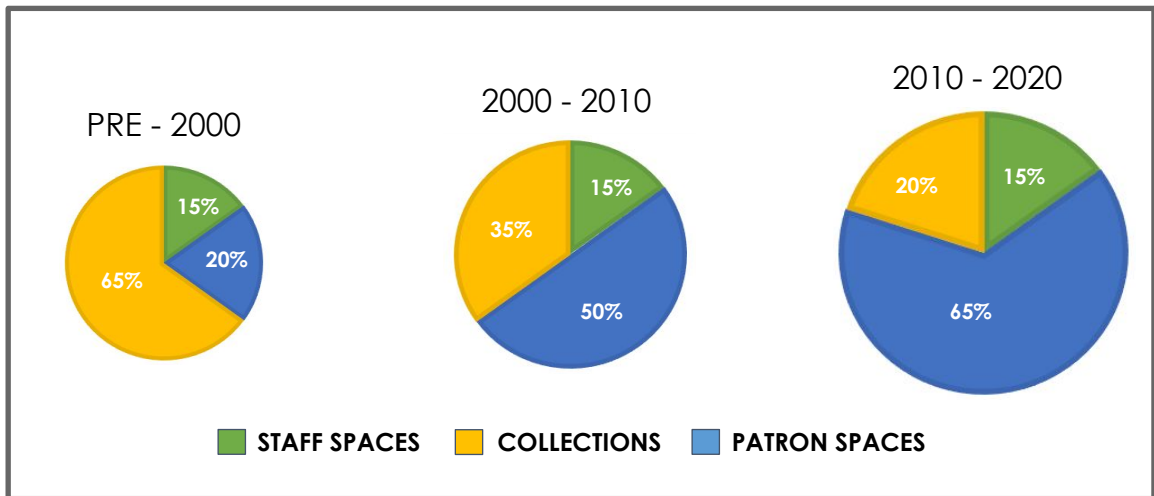
# Book Repository to Community Hub



When our library was built in 1890, it was designed to house books. In many cases patrons didn't even get books themselves - the librarian did. Now, it's a place to connect the community versus just a place to check out books and leave.

Libraries have evolved from a place built for books to a place for people to meet, work, be entertained, access technology and, of course, study and read.

# Book Repository to Community Hub



Library buildings have changed as the ways that people use them have changed. Libraries built or renovated during these periods have grown in total size, but they've also changed how they use space.

Collection space has changed as some materials are no longer needed. We don't buy and keep the large reference collections and encyclopedias that we used to, but now we buy kits and gadgets that can take up a lot of shelf or wall space.

Are the books and other items we have now used? Absolutely! *Of the approximately 23,000 physical items in our building, 92% have been checked out during the last 3 years.* The items that haven't are generally things like local history (some of which can't circulate), some non-fiction items that we keep for research and school projects and a few classics.

When libraries have added space over the last couple decades, they're generally adding space for people - meeting rooms, study spaces, more variety in tables and seating, hands-on learning areas for young children, etc.

# Book Repository to Community Hub






Place to check out books → and meeting destination  
→ and work space with wifi  
→ and access to technology  
→ comfortable place to read for all

A lot of community members love the history and charm of the library building. We do, too, but it was designed for a different time and use.

As demands on libraries have changed, we haven't lost our original purpose. We still prioritize our collection and we value our role as the place to check out books and do research.

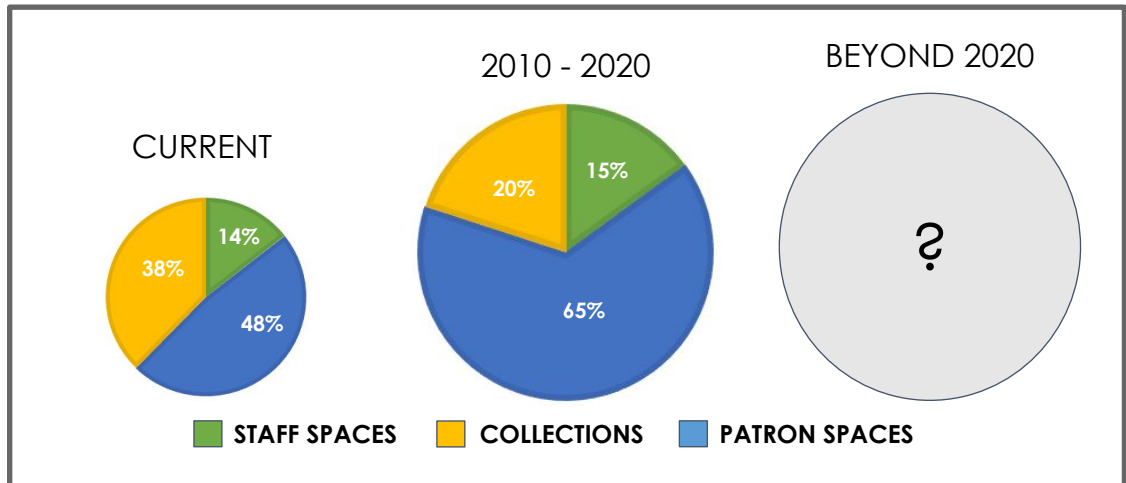
But on top of that original mandate, the community needs so much more from us now. Places to meet, work and study (alone or in groups). Places to access and learn about technology (and the people to help you navigate the digital world). Places for our youngest patrons to develop reading, thinking and social skills. Places for all of us to engage with friends and neighbors.

Libraries used to be built just for books - now they're built for people!

			 <small>July 4, 1990, Melissa Oberbauer</small> <small>Beverly White, left, of White and White Antiques and Interiors, hangs the swags over the windows in Library Hall, as Table Linings, a director at the Shawneelee Library, oversees the project. Photo: Charles Clark.</small>	
<b>1890</b> (129 years ago)	<b>1980</b> (39 years ago)	<b>1987</b> (32 years ago)	<b>1990</b> (29 years ago)	<b>2020</b>
<b>Library Building Dedication</b>  The dedication included a 1.5 hour speech by Melvil Dewey (the creator of the Dewey Decimal System).	<b>Kitchen Installed</b>  This space next to Library Hall was originally storage, and it's still used that way today. Now it pulls double duty as both!	<b>Sphinx annexed for Kids' Room</b>  Prior to this the kids' collection was housed in the back of the library where adult nonfiction is now.	<b>Library Hall Redecorated</b>  The carpeting, drapes and chairs we still use today were added to Library Hall. The tables are much older.	<b>What will the future bring?</b>

Our building opened nearly 130 years ago, and not much has changed over that time. When the Sphinx was annexed for the children's room in 1987, we added about 375 square feet of space.

## So, what's next?



The current library space is 6,651 square feet. This doesn't include the Barrow Gallery, which is used exclusively to display Barrow's works. Barrow paintings not currently on display are stored in the library's Silence Room upstairs.

So how big should the library be? A needs assessment conducted by library staff in 2017 indicated we need a **minimum** of 14,000 to 16,000 square feet. Current guidelines and best practices recommend 1.5 to 2 square feet per person served. For our 9,000 school district residents, that suggests a range of 13,500 to 18,000 square feet.

Ultimately, the optimal size of a library for our community will depend on several factors, including the size and terrain of the site, how efficient and flexible the layout can be and whether we have space for future expansion.

# Change is inevitable.

We haven't kept pace ...  
and must also anticipate for the future.

**Spoiler Alert: FLEXIBILITY IS THE KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY.**

We can't predict what library services our community will need 20, 50 or 100 years from now. The best way to plan for change is to design for flexibility.

Flexible spaces allow us to respond to needs more easily; instead of knocking down walls, we can change furniture and other interior elements to reallocate space as needed.

## How do we stack up?

our space &  
collections

vs.

comparable libraries

our library

vs.

community needs

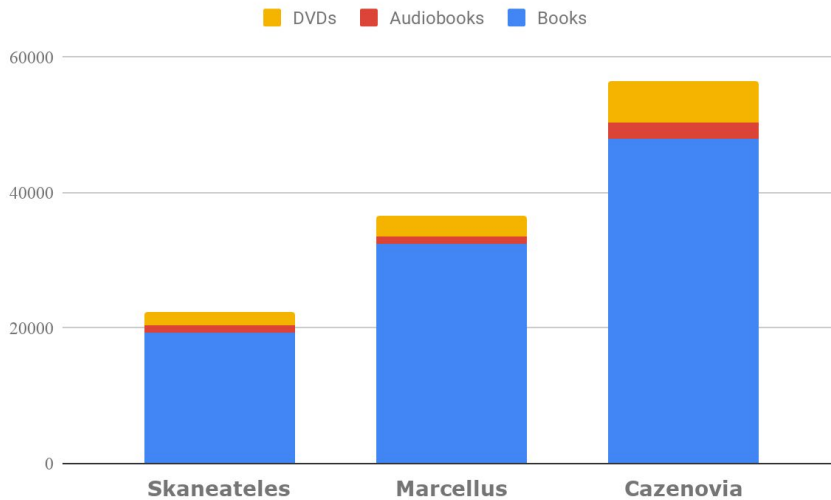


To evaluate how we're doing and plan for the future, we can examine:

- what similar communities are doing and
- how well we meet the needs our community has expressed.



# We are smaller than our neighbors ...



<b>Skaneateles</b> Population = 7,200 (9,000) Building sq. ft. = 6,651
<b>Marcellus</b> Population = 6,210 (10,000) Building sq. ft. = 10,500
<b>Cazenovia</b> Population = 7,086 (9,000) Building sq. ft. = 14,000

Population = town (school district)  
Source: 2018 ILS data

We've looked at lots of library data and we think Marcellus and Cazenovia make good comparisons for discussion. The communities are similar in size and quality and most of our residents are familiar with them.

This slide shows our current physical collection compared to Marcellus and Cazenovia. For each library we've noted the building's current size, as well as the population of the town and school district. In each case, school district residents provide funding to their local library.

Cazenovia renovated and built an addition in 1996, and Marcellus built a new building in a new location in 2008. Cazenovia is currently planning another expansion; Marcellus recently added more parking and is planning to create another much-needed small meeting space.

... so are the aisles between our stacks.



*The following slides show side-by-side comparisons of our space vs. examples of the same space in other libraries.*

It's not just our second floor that's inaccessible; it's the whole building beyond the front door.

Our shelves are much too narrow and many dead-end at the wall. They're totally inadequate for people with mobility issues, walkers/wheelchairs, vision issues and those who can't stretch or bend. To create accessible shelving in the main library without adding more space, we'd need to remove about half the shelves (which means half the adult and teen collections).

# Poor accessibility inside, out and around



Most people can probably agree that we need an elevator, but that's not nearly enough to solve our accessibility problems or create enough usable, comfortable space for patrons.

Having enough shelf space to adequately hold the collection (without jamming the shelves full of books, which makes it difficult to see them and can cause damage), enough open space to allow people to freely move around and shelving and furniture that can be moved when needed helps to improve accessibility.

## **What about parking?**

Because of our location on a corner, the curb cuts necessary for handicapped parking spaces are not very close to the door. There's currently one handicapped space in front of Pomodoro, and it's not uncommon for patrons to use the staff lot on State Street if they need to, can't find parking or are just running in to pick up or drop off.

Remember that 72% of school district residents do not live in the village, so they must drive to get here (and many village residents do not or can not walk to the library). Some people have told us that parking isn't an issue for them; no one has their own parking in the village, and the library doesn't need it either. They find a spot on the street or use the

municipal lot, and are able to walk from there.

But others have said that traffic, lack of dedicated parking and crossing busy streets discourages them from using our library - especially those with mobility issues and young children, and especially in the summer and winter.

How easily are you able to access the library? What about your family, friends and neighbors?

# Kids and family spaces cramped and uninviting



The children's room is too small to hold a right-sized collection to serve babies, toddlers, preschoolers and early-grade children. There's little room to read or play; one family can fill up the room.

An ideal children's area would have space for each age group with appropriate shelving for board books, picture books, easy readers, chapter books and fiction/non-fiction for kids. Face-out shelving is especially important for kids who aren't yet reading, so they can still engage with and be inspired by the collection.

Kids and their caregivers need plenty of space to spread out and play! Cozy nooks for reading, kid-sized activity tables, chairs for parents, etc.

## Storage is in a wet, hazardous space



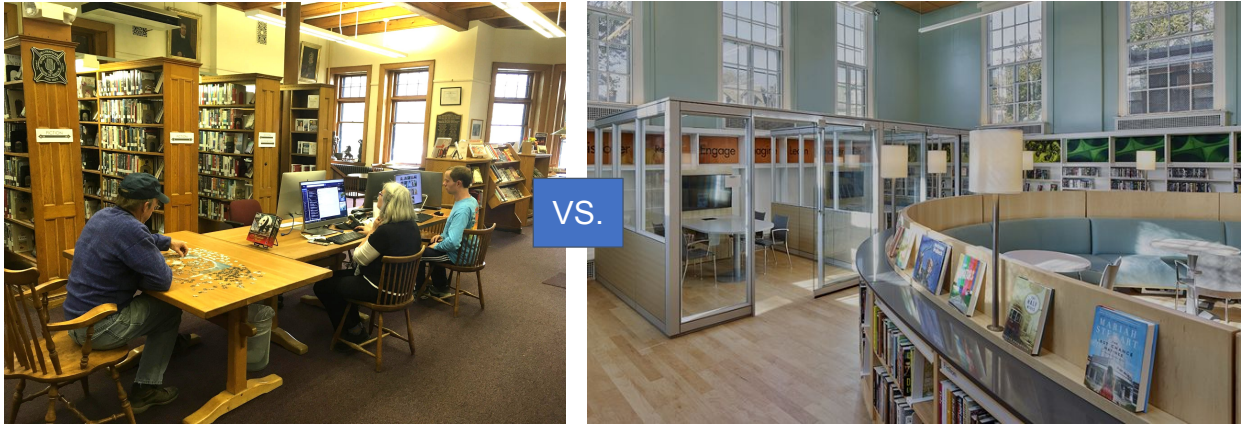
Our basement is our primary storage area. The floor is uneven and has several tripping hazards. The ceiling is low and covered in pipes.

The basement sits below the water table, so it's always damp, but when it rains or the snow melts, there is standing water.

For the summer book sale, which is the library's biggest fundraiser, we collect donated books most of the year and we have some very dedicated volunteers who sort those books year round. All the storage and sorting happens in the basement.

Ample storage - that's safe, clean and dry - is essential for our staff and volunteers.

# No quiet, private work and study spaces



Privacy is very difficult to achieve in our library. People using our computers have little privacy; anyone can see what they're working on.

It's also hard to have a conversation and not be overheard by (or bothersome to) the other people in the room. If you're having a meeting or studying with a group, you'll be heard by everyone else. This is an especially sensitive situation for students being tutored; they should be able to get help without everyone hearing what they're struggling with.

People have different space needs at different times. We should be able to accommodate the need for quiet and loud, solitary and social, learning and teaching.

# Not enough meeting spaces during/after hours



VS.



We're lucky that a library as small as ours has a meeting room at all! Many don't, and ours was created from the original "museum" that existed in Library Hall when the library was built.

While that room is a good size, it's the only one. Every program we have - from movies to storytimes to concerts to book clubs - takes place in one room. Groups that want to use the library to meet must compete with library programs and meetings, and a lot of furniture moving and technology set-up/take-down must happen in between.

Our community wants multiple, functional spaces that can accommodate a variety of needs. Ideally, users could access at least some of those spaces when the library is closed.



We care because our community told us these things are important.

- ❑ Accessibility inside and out
- ❑ Comfortable spaces for kids, teens and families
- ❑ Quiet work & study spaces
- ❑ *Flexible* meeting & social spaces, during/after hours
- ❑ Additional technology
- ❑ Sustainable costs
- ❑ Environmentally responsible

*While supporting the Comprehensive Plan ...*

During meetings, focus groups and feedback solicitation over the last several years, we've heard a lot from the community about what they want in their library. Our goal is to meet as many of those needs as we can, while also allowing for new and unknown future needs.

We need your help ...



... spread the word, we are long overdue!

This has been an overview of what we've been working on and why we feel that the library **MUST** do something to dramatically improve our facility. It would be irresponsible to put it off anymore.

There are many things we couldn't cover here, including all the analysis that's been done on implications of either path, the needs of the Barrow Gallery, the many iterations of extensive designs for renovating and expanding the current building in an effort to meet identified needs.

Because ...

**“Public libraries reflect the highest ideals of the communities they serve.”**

(2018 Handbook for Library Trustees of the State of New York)

Libraries are part of a community's infrastructure that we all invest in - just like schools. Even if you don't use the library, or don't use a particular service of the library, your neighbors do, and the library should be useful and accessible to all of us.

## Next Steps

1. Communicate with community members and groups - we *need your input and help*
2. Decide whether to renovate or build new; current building is retained no matter which path
3. Share background and reasons for decision while finalizing designs (renovate or new) -and- related costs
4. Raise funds for a capital project
5. Do it! It's high time ...

No matter which path we choose, there will be lots of work ahead!