

A Community Space for the Next 100 Years

BUILDING A NEW LIBRARY FOR A POST-COVID WORLD

September 2020

Have the library's plans changed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic? Ultimately, no! The pandemic has actually reinforced the need for flexible library space built for our community's current and future needs.

During the shutdown we focused on maintaining library services and planning for reopening.

The Site Committee took a break during the spring, and this summer resumed work on finding a new location for the library. We revisited our previous criteria and community needs to see if anything had changed. We learned that all of those needs are still vital, and a few of them have risen to the top of our list of priorities. And, we are committed to continued community use of our beloved current building.

The library has adjusted to life during Covid.

- ★ Librarians worked from home
- ★ Increased digital resources
- ★ Issued library cards online
- ★ Helped patrons over phone and email
- ★ Boosted WiFi to larger area around the library
- ★ Virtual programs (story times, book clubs, lectures and more!)
- ★ Curbside once allowed by NYS→ just added “by appointment”

While the library building was closed, our staff was hard at work (from their homes) maintaining and expanding services. We focused on increasing digital access and working with patrons via email and phone to answer questions and provide support. We introduced virtual programs and outdoor activities to help keep our community engaged and active through the spring and summer. We plan to continue virtual and at-home programs this fall.

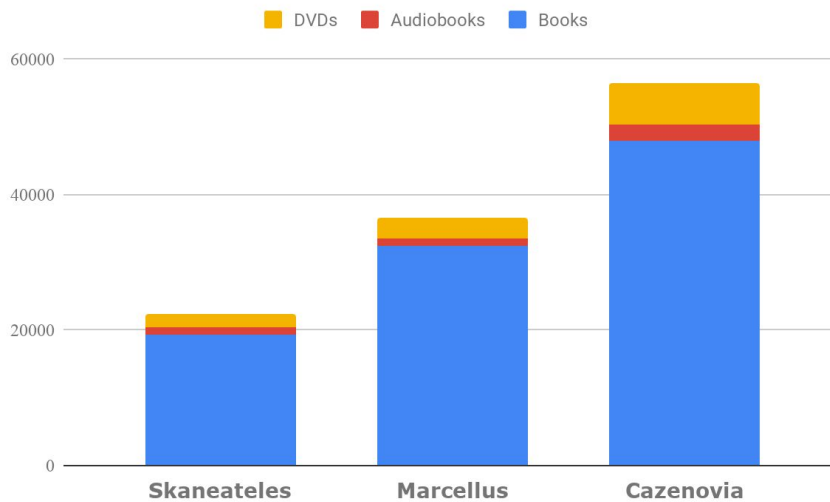
Curbside Pickup launched in mid-June (as soon as the state allowed it), and we began welcoming patrons back in the building for Express Visits to browse the collection and use our computers in late August. We'll continue to respond to patrons needs and the current health conditions as we plan for more services.

We continue to innovate and flex, but building and space challenges persist.

- ❑ No tutor rooms/areas to support school district challenges (students and parents)
- ❑ Very limited ventilation
- ❑ Social distancing difficult for staff and patrons

The limitations of our current space are even more pronounced in the current environment. We're hampered from providing more services by the building's lack of air exchange and filtration, cramped spaces and lack of tutor and small meeting rooms as well as needs to quarantine lending materials. These are additional challenges, but we will continue to look for new opportunities to help and support our community.

We are smaller *and more limited* than our neighbors



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

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

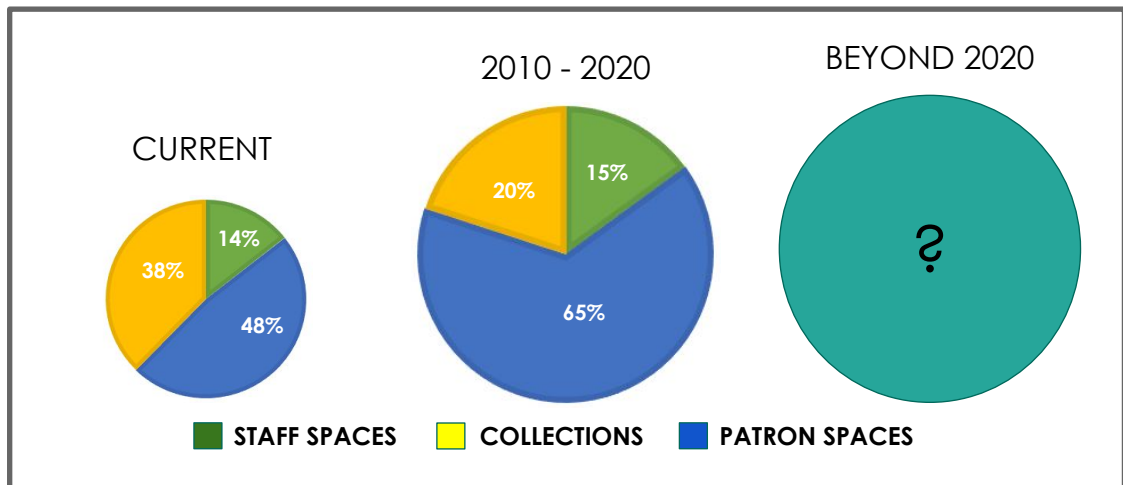
It's not just size, it's what you can do with the space you have! We've looked at lots of library data and we think Marcellus and Cazenovia make good comparisons for discussion. The communities are similar in size and quality and most of our residents are familiar with them.

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.

In addition to the amount of space, we're also focusing on the quality and flexibility of that space.

The events of 2020 make space allocation and flexibility more important than ever.



Little did we know how much 2020 events would impact our world.

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.

As we have seen, it's not just a question of how big the library should 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.

It's also a question of how flexible that space is. 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.

We have a lot of catching up to do **and must also anticipate a new future.**

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* - this is more true than ever! We can learn from our neighbors by considering the libraries they built in the last decade and what changes they're making now.

This current crisis has revealed some additional needs - such as the importance of ventilation and fresh air exchange - and prioritized others. Learning from the present to plan for the future ensures that we will have a building that can better support the community for decades to come.

Our community has already told us they want:

- 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 responsibility

When planning for the library's future, we have years of community input to consider. 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 building in the flexibility to adapt to new and unknown future needs.

Newly found needs

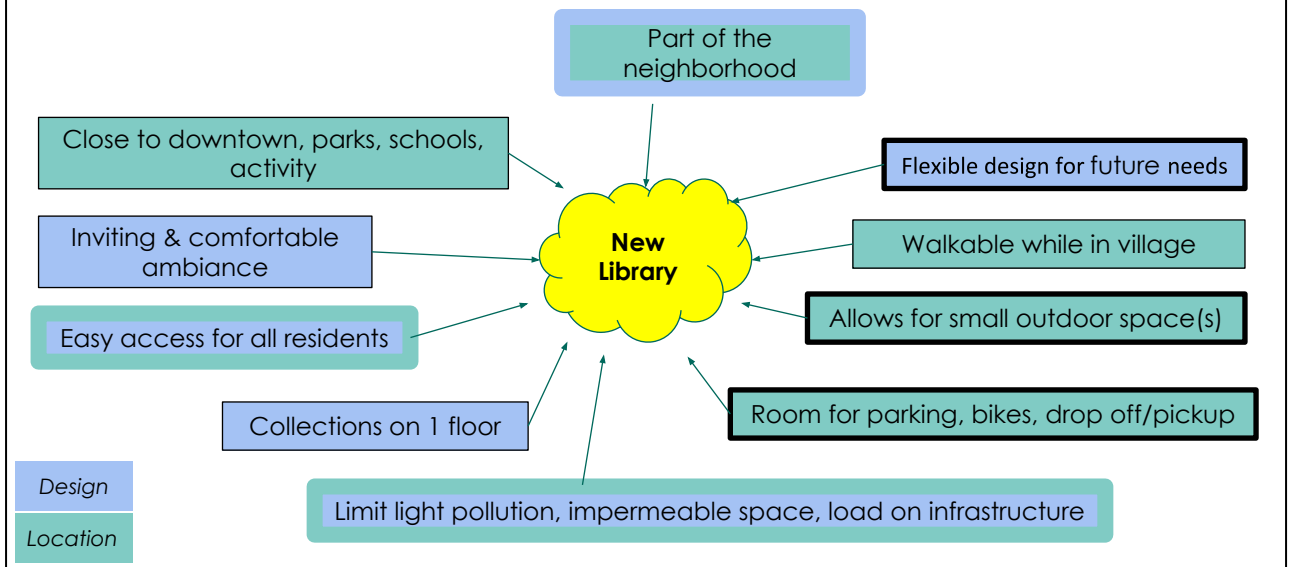
- State of the art HVAC with superior air filtration/purification
- Drive thru window
- More **flexible**, open space that can be easily partitioned/opened/repurposed as needed
- Ready community access to technology and learning opportunities in uncertain economic times

Now we're looking at the community's needs and our own building plans through a new lens. The safety precautions necessary during the coronavirus pandemic have made building health a primary concern for all of us. An HVAC system that can filter and exchange air is a necessity, as are windows that can open.

The need for flexible space is even more imperative. This is true not only for library staff and our day-to-day operations, but also for our ability to accommodate library users.

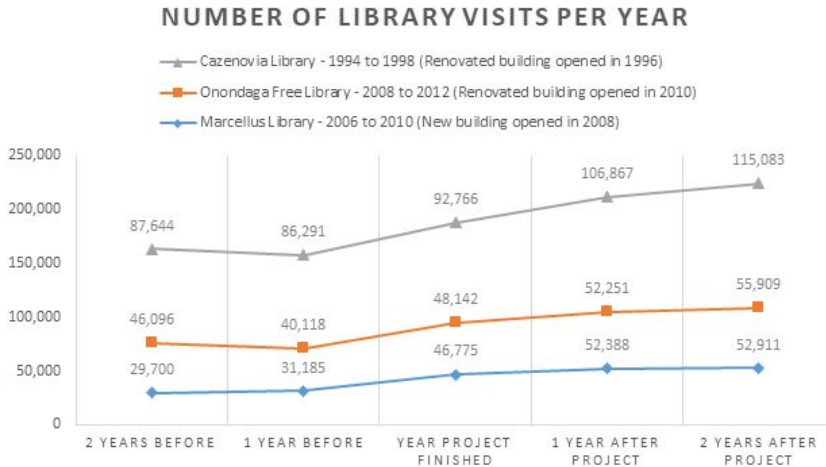
We're also considering whether the community will need more work and study spaces in the future, as more people are working from home and need a place to safely meet in person, and what other services we'll need to provide that will influence building design. For example, how would a drive thru window have impacted our ability to resume service? Being able to pick up your holds and return items without having to leave your car is a safety feature now, but it's also a great convenience that would improve service in the future. Anyone who's had to run errands with small children can appreciate being able to get what you need without having to leave the car!

These are *still* the criteria for a new library



The library board's site committee used many criteria for narrowing down location options. As we move forward with a specific site and begin work on building design, there will be many needs to incorporate. The challenge will be balancing those needs in a building that is right-sized for our community and able to meet our needs for the next 100 years.

We still expect attendance and usage to grow after a new library is built.



How will the community respond to a new building? If it is more accessible to all 9000 school district residents and better meets their needs, we expect usage to grow.

There are several libraries in our area that have completed renovations or new building projects in the past few decades. Data from the Marcellus Library, Onondaga Free Library and Cazenovia Library illustrates the effects of a building project on library usage. Of course, many variables can affect usage, and a new or renovated building is just one of many variables.

Our neighbors saw an increase in usage from 24-68% one year after a major construction project:

Marcellus (New build) - 2008 | 68% Increase Visits Year 1 after | 10,500 Present Size SF.

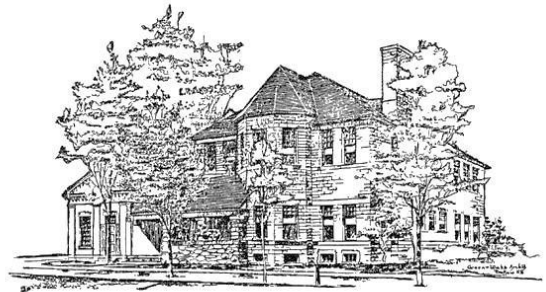
Onondaga Free (Renovation) - 2010 | 30.2% Increase Visits Year 1 after | 18,600 Present Size SF

Cazenovia (Renovation) - 1996 | 23.8% Increase Visits Year 1 after | 14,000 Present Size SF

This is still the plan for our beloved current building

Goals

- Preserve architectural ambiance (inside & out)
- Foot traffic-oriented; supports downtown
- Community use



- Barrow expands
- Organizations (e.g., Chamber, Historical Society)
- Used book store

STATUS

- *Revenue & Expenses analyzed*
- *Repairs/Improvements underway*

The current building will be retained by the library and repurposed for community use. We understand how important the history and architecture of the Genesee Street site are to the community, and we're making plans to preserve it. Construction grants to restore and improve elements of the building are in progress.

The key to this idea is that revenue generated by rents and other profitable use will cover the cost of operating the building; it must not become a drain on the library's finances. We strongly believe that plans for this location will benefit our downtown and local nonprofits. Our analysis to date supports this, and while research is ongoing, we would not have embarked on this path if it wasn't financially viable.

The Barrow Gallery will remain in its current location and expand into some of the current library space. Other interested partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society could make use of the space, and library volunteers could maintain a small used book store to service demand from visitors and locals alike.

Next steps

1. *Keep communicating with community members & groups*
2. Develop short list of possible new sites = 2
3. Decide which site to pursue (underway)
4. Maximize options for community input: design, construction, landscape, etc. → *it's the community's library*
5. Raise private and grant funds for a large capital project

What's next? We're close to selecting a site to pursue for the new building. Once that decision is made, there will be many details to handle before the location is certain. This has been a long process, and we still have a long way to go.

Remember that the library's tax levy is meant to support our daily operations. We must seek private funds and pursue grants to raise money for the new building. Initial cost estimates suggest the project could cost about \$10 million, but that will ultimately depend on the final site and building design. We'll have better numbers as the project progresses.

From need to reality



*Continue to add value to
downtown and entire community;
self supporting*

*Criteria-driven, fiscally responsible
and sustainable . . .
Right-sized for our community*

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.

The library board is committed to doing the work necessary for both a successful new building project and continued community use of our current building.

We need your support to make these improvements happen!

THANK YOU!



You can contact the library board with your thoughts by emailing feedback@skanlibrary.org.