

Overview of Facilities and Programs

In 2008, the Seattle Public Library completed the final building projects of a systemwide capital program known as “Libraries for All” (LFA). The \$290.7 million program was funded by \$196.6 million in bonds approved by the voters in 1998, \$46.8 million in private funding, \$22.6 million in bond interest earnings, \$19.1 million in other public resources, and \$5.6 million in property sale proceeds. As a result of LFA, Seattle citizens have a new Central Library. Each of the 22 branch libraries that were in the system as of 1998 has been renovated, expanded, or replaced. Four new branch libraries are open to the public in Delridge, International District/Chinatown, Northgate and South Park.

As the center of Seattle’s information network, the Library provides a vast array of resources and services to the public, including print collections, CDs and DVDs, an extensive multilingual collection, electronic databases, internet access and classes, more than 5,600 literary programs for children, teens and adults each year, 24-hour telephone reference service, services for the deaf and blind, an online catalog and web site, 23 neighborhood meeting rooms, and 12 Central Library meeting rooms.

The beautiful new buildings, refurbished collections, and improved technology made possible by the LFA program have combined with other factors to produce a 94 percent increase in circulation in the decade since the program was launched. Patron visits to the Central Library and branches (not counting visitors to the virtual library) increased 38 percent to 6.4 million in 2007. The facilities of the Seattle Public Library are among the most heavily used public buildings in the urban area.

Highlights

With the conclusion of the LFA program, the Library is determined to preserve the generous public and private sector investment that the citizens of Seattle have made in their library facilities. In 2007, the Library commissioned a building condition assessment and development of an asset management database to facilitate major maintenance and long-term capital planning. As verified by the assessment, the overall condition of Library facilities is very good.

The Central Library serves as the system headquarters and houses the automated library materials handling system, which sorts materials for all Seattle libraries. The building draws thousands of visitors each day. Special architectural features, including materials and finishes addressing green building priorities, are being put to the test. The 26 branch libraries were built in three broad timeframes. The buildings that date to the early 1900s have unique requirements as historic landmarks. Those built mid-century have different major maintenance issues, as some building components were not replaced in the recent renovations because they had not exhausted their useful lives. Finally, many of the new branches have unique design features requiring special attention.

The Library’s ongoing CIP projects address asset preservation throughout the Library system. They include:

- Roof and Structural Systems;
- Building Systems;
- Operational Efficiency Improvements;
- Safety, Security, and Access Improvements;
- Minor Capital Improvements;

- Landscape and Hardscape Restoration; and
- Preliminary Engineering and Planning.

The Library's 2009-2014 Proposed CIP includes several projects related to the LFA program. No new appropriations are sought for these projects. They are included in the proposed CIP only because the Library will complete spending previously appropriated LFA funds in early 2009.

Project Selection Process

Projection Identification: The Library assembles work items identified by its CIP Program Manager, as along with items its building maintenance workers refer to the capital program because they go beyond the scope of routine maintenance. Some work elements are generated by the library's asset management system based on a system-wide building condition assessment conducted by consultants in 2007 and from data on the anticipated useful life of building components. In addition, Library unit managers submit requests for building modifications to address programmatic priorities, improve services to the public, and facilitate staff efficiency.

Project Selection: Library division managers prioritize unit requests for submission to the Capital Program. Capital and Facilities management staff evaluate requests for feasibility and rate them on the basis of their impact on safety, building functionality, and relevance to priorities identified in the Library's Service Plan. Library management makes final decisions on the CIP proposal.

Project Budget and Scheduling: The Library develops initial project scope and budgets using general cost estimating methods that include reference to similar projects and to construction cost estimation data sources. Projects are scheduled to minimize disruption to the public and take advantage of opportunities to address logical groupings of work.

Anticipated Operating Expenses Associated with Capital Facilities Projects

The operating cost impacts of the Library's major maintenance projects are insignificant because these projects generally preserve existing facilities and do not create new operational requirements. Asset preservation work serves to contain operating expenses by keeping facilities in good working order.

In 2009, the Library will receive an additional \$34,913 of ongoing operation and maintenance funding associated with the last two newly renovated libraries that opened in 2008. This amount was established based on calculations in a "Libraries for All" fiscal note produced by the City in March 1998 and revised in April 2002.