Appendix A

PUBLIC FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

There were six focus groups, with a total of 92 participants. What follows is a summary of the responses to the questions posed and the ensuing discussions. Notes for each specific group are included in the Appendices to this building program statement.

The six groups, by “name,” were:

- Business Leaders
- Caregivers for Young Children
- Educators
- General Library Customers
- Senior Citizens
- Teens.

Reasons Why These Persons Use the Library

The Business Leaders indicated they believe the Library role has changed with access of Internet. General use of library is still to access books – regardless of age of user.

The majority of the Educator participants use the Library, or know that their students use the Library, for school and college related research, reading assignments, and the like. Those that home school also use the Library, as their time will allow, for personal reasons, e.g. research topics and recreational reading.

For Teens, the checkout books, both for recreational reading and in some cases for research and school projects. Several use the computer center and participate in teen activities and programs.

Primary usage by the General Library Customers is various library materials, e.g. books, media such as books-on-tape, CDs. Meeting room usage for programs and meetings also mentioned, as well as use of computers and research.

Seniors indicated read newspapers and magazines, use the reference collection and attending programming events and for research and stock market information.

For the outreach programs, storytimes, and reading material, and the Library’s public computer center. One Caregiver participant, a Kindergarten owner/teacher, uses the Library for its resources, and field trips, bringing large groups in when possible, not always possible due to limitation of the library facility.

Strengths of the Current Library

In the opinion of the Educators the MRRL is very responsive for programs that they are involved in. The Library brings the Renaissance Fair to the community and provides an opportunity to the children that would not normally attend this event. It has an annual Story Telling festival that is wonderful for schools and the community.

Variety of subjects and types of media, lots of events and programs, separate section for Teens, children’s area separate and in more secure area on second floor.
Much mention was made by the General Library Customers of the programs, both children’s and adult. Staff always trying to meet needs of public. Central location downtown another strength.

The Library’s book and film clubs. Interlibrary loan, public Computer Center, art gallery, and the hours of service. The Seniors also indicated that “the staff is wonderfully helpful.”

**Weaknesses of the Current Library**

A near unanimous opinion voiced by most groups is that inadequate parking is a major weakness.

The Educators indicated that shelf space is getting more and more crowded. There is no room for cozy reading.

For the Teens, the traffic back-up at front book drop.

Building is not user friendly in the Opinion of the General Library Customers. For instance, there are no breaks between the bookstack sections.

Inadequate funding mentioned by the Seniors. In addition, Library books that are not returned resulting in lost revenue and lack of publicity about homebound services.

From the Caregivers, there is not enough space for all that want to attend the various programs.

**Where Else Do You Go For Information**

Online, from home or the office, was most often mentioned.

Also mentioned were encyclopedia’s at home and telephone books.

**Why Do People Not Use the Library**

The Teens indicated that the building was not large enough. In addition, the collections are restrictive, many people do not know about the benefits the Library has to offer, it is not “cool” – they think only books, many do not like to read, find it difficult, and do not have time with all other activities.

The Seniors indicated that the inability to read, and some people often buy their own books. They also discussed intimidation -- the need to be quiet; and the possibility of incurring a fine.

Too many other priorities, according to the Caregivers. People are not academically oriented. The Library has to ignite the interest of the children and young people; get them interested in the Library; expose them to more performances, more hands on activates.

**What Do You Consider To Be Competition of the Library**

Google. However, not everything is digital. The Internet is like a huge body of water that is an inch deep.

Barnes & Noble with café.
What Physical Changes Would You Like To See In A New Library

More meeting room spaces are needed, especially those equipped for technology use; meeting rooms with satellite feed capability.

More space for middle group of children, those between Juvenile and Teen collections. More small meeting rooms. More seating areas with coaches and sofas etc. A quiet area needed, too.

An electronic café or customer shop.

Research area close to computers but with room to spread out with books, etc. More variety of music CD’s – mentioned music from other countries. Headphones so those watching TV, listening or whatever, would not disturb others.

Separate study rooms that could be reserved (cubicles) for homework and study, larger study rooms were groups or teams could meet to work on projects together.

A larger art gallery that would be a separate space.

A large fine arts section. Rooms for specific purposes such as a Media Center, theatre with a quality sound system, study rooms for students and tutors, a room for programs with a stage.

Also mentioned was more space for books, specifically space enough that there could be breaks between sections with sitting areas; a room for teens.

Ability to listen to music before checkout. More hands on crafts programs.

Should There Be a New Facility, Where Should It Be Located

Several of the Teens mentioned they wanted to keep a central location – within walking distance of school – and not at one end of town of the other. They also stated that there are sidewalks downtown and a downtown location would be on bus line (for “poor” people). The Teens want a location where they could “feel safe.”

Prison site – Library could be used as a catalyst to the start the development in that area. Along with the prison redevelopment, the East End Redevelopment Task Force is looking at the entire area from Adams Street east to Warwick Village. There may be other sites that will open up in the downtown area. The Business Leaders also mentioned a possible Library and Post Office joint venture.

The St. Mary’s Hospital expansion time frame has been moved back considerably.

The current location, or in the downtown area, was the most frequently mentioned location. Schools are close. This site has buses (Public transportation will move to new facility) and easy access for the lower income neighborhoods. This general vicinity is great. However, staying in present location will not address lack of parking.

This is the center; downtown is the “center” of town. The location downtown helps the downtown business.

Other locations the Seniors thought the Library might buy and renovate included the Baptist Building, the DNR building, and the old A&P building.
A couple of group members suggested maintaining the current site and building branch libraries, especially on the West side. Another participant mentioned that partnering with a governmental or educational entity might also be a good solution.

The Library needs to show a solid commitment for expansion to the community by making a firm commitment on a specific site. They need to choose a site. Many in the group seconded this view. A chosen site will answer many questions for the community.

**Would a Joint Use Library Be Viable in Jefferson City**

Joint use libraries are not uncommon. What seems to work best is a Community College and Public Library joint use facility. There has been less success with School/Public Library facilities.

**Should Pre-Planning for A New Building Include Graphic Presentations or A Competition**

Must do some pre-planning and spend money on architectural services if we want to get voter approval. Must sell people on why we need it and sell them on the services. Must also show them how it is going to enhance or enrich their lives. Show them what they will gain. A firm presentation is a better way to inform the public. Answers to questions are important. Location should be included in plans.

This is the “Show Me State” and thus people here need every detail to see where the money is going.

The Seniors did not express much interest in preliminary structural planning. They thought that should wait until the levy was approved.

That would be the “cart before the horse” according to some of the Caregivers. Others expressed the opinion that it would be a good idea to get drawing of new building before hand, people are very visually orientated.

**Should There Be One or More Branch Libraries**

The opinion of most focus group participants was that there should not be one or more branch libraries due to the added costs of operating multiple facilities and the potential for confusion on the part of the Library customers.

Consensus of Teens was no. Two locations would dilute the resources of the library – splitting the collection, etc. However, there were some expressions of support. A branch library at the mall and main library downtown connected with City Hall.

No, according to the Caregivers. They prefer one main building. A branch library would be a waste, would be expensive and would not provide what is needed.

**Other Comments**

Business Leaders - The Library should put an advisory group together of community member who would advise them on various issues. The Library should serve an enrichment role for those in the community and well as a resource center.

General Library Customers - There was a discussion about how there is a lack of culture in Jefferson City, and the only place you can get that is at the library via programs, book clubs, etc.
Believe that the library is on the cutting edge of libraries with its programming and they see MRRL being already where other libraries will go in years to come. The library was called the “cultural center of the community.”

Seniors - One participant thought the library needed a Science Center to attract school/tourist groups.

Caregivers - The Library is very supportive of community activities. It is an “oasis” of wonderful free resources and activities.