

FACILITIES

Commissioner's Regulation 90.2 (a) (8) requires the board to *"maintain a facility which meets community needs."* While various formulas exist for determining the appropriate size of a library, the final determination of adequacy rests in the hands of the trustees. Square footage is only one factor in deciding whether a library meets the community's expectations. Location, internal arrangement, accessibility for all patrons, environmental quality, and intangibles such as ambiance, all contribute to the overall adequacy of a library building.

According to the guidelines developed by the Division of Library Development: *"Various publications provide helpful "rules of thumb" or "standards" for the number of seats, shelving, or meeting room facilities needed by communities of varying sizes.*

Building experts would first ask the library director and board, "What are the goals and service plans of the Library?" General services' planning precedes facilities planning because it defines the users, services, and programs of the library. Once these plans are defined, the board, director and others can better decide on space needs, layout, and technical specifications...."

www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/helpful.htm#MFC

Proper maintenance of the existing library is essential if the board is to fulfill its responsibilities to the community. The library should be a pleasant and safe place to work and visit. It must be accessible to everyone in the community. This requires more than just a wheelchair ramp and ADA compliant bathrooms. Every aspect of the library's service program should be evaluated to determine if it is accessible to persons with physical or mental disabilities. This includes a well-trained staff sensitive to the needs of all library patrons. Safety and security are also paramount in any public facility and libraries are no exception. Every effort must be made to create a safe and secure environment for the staff and public.

Sometimes the library can only meet community needs by adding to, or reconstructing existing space, or building an entirely new facility. This will lead to a complex and extensive planning process that may require the board to seek the services of a consultant or library system staff. Construction plans should always be developed in the context of the library's mission and plan of service. The board should review service needs, explore alternatives, estimate costs and set priorities; all before deciding on a specific building plan to pursue. Community involvement in the planning process is crucial to its success.

Trustees must understand that the planning and implementation process for library construction will require a major effort on the part of the board, the library director and the staff; including many meetings, reports, and reviews. Travel to inspect other library buildings should be part of this process. Planning will take many months and delays should be expected. Nonetheless, in spite of all the hard work, a building program may not meet the approval of the community and necessary funding may not be readily available. In such cases the board must stay focused on the need to provide quality library service to the community and appropriate facilities for the library.

Renovation or reconstruction of existing space carries an additional set of challenges. The library may have to move to temporary facilities, which means relocating staff and materials. If the library remains open for business during construction, trustees should be sensitive to the added stress this will place on the director, staff and the library's patrons. Temporary service policies or exceptions to existing policies may be required. Excellent communication and an unusual degree of flexibility will be essential.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prescribes specific building standards to ensure access for persons with disabilities. All new construction and substantial renovations must comply with ADA requirements. Libraries with inaccessible (or even partially inaccessible) buildings must have a written plan describing how their programs and services will be delivered to customers who cannot gain access.