

THOMAS MEMORIAL LIBRARY – CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

(PHASE I REPORT)

Introduction & Assessment Methodologies

In June of 2008, the Town of Cape Elizabeth, Maine awarded a contract to Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants to conduct a “Needs Assessment” and to develop a “Design Concept for a Library Improvement Program.” This report represents the needs assessment portion of the project.

Considerable attention has been given to statistical comparisons with other libraries in Maine and with libraries in other parts of the United States (primarily in the Northeast). However, great effort has also been made to ensure that public opinion was factored into the assessment. To this end, the consultants carried out several different information gathering efforts.

Himmel & Wilson conducted nine focus groups with Cape Elizabeth residents. A total of 103 residents participated in these sessions. A majority of the focus group sessions were designed to attract groups of individuals that might view library services in unique ways. For example, one session involved middle school students while participants in another session represented the Library Foundation, Arts Commission and Historical Preservation Society.

Other focus group sessions involved business owners and elected officials, senior citizens, high school students, parents (2 sessions), members of the Library Friends’ organization, and general library users. A tenth focus group was attended by eight library staff members. The consultants also completed 15 personal interviews with Town officials and other community leaders and conducted a web-based survey of library users that attracted 683 responses (646 Cape Elizabeth residents and 37 residents of neighboring communities).

The consultants had an opportunity to provide their input into the questions asked in a telephone survey that was carried out by Critical Insights under a separate contract. The findings of the telephone survey, which included 300 residents (both library users and nonusers) was also considered in the assessment. Since it is likely that some people participated in more than one of the information gathering efforts, it is impossible to say precisely how many Cape Elizabeth residents provided input to the needs assessment process. However, a conservative estimate of 1,000 people participating yields a rate of more than 10% of the Town’s population.

Several other components were included in the assessment of the Library. Kevin Whitney, an architect with Himmel & Wilson’s architectural partner, Casaccio Architects, conducted an

appraisal of facility conditions. A three member team from OEST Associates, a South Portland based architectural/engineering firm, conducted a separate facility assessment that focused on engineering issues. The OEST team included structural, electrical, and mechanical engineers.

The consultants' technology partner, Linda Miller of LMATechwork, examined the technology used both by Library users and by Library staff. Finally, the Himmel & Wilson partners, Dr. Ethel Himmel and Mr. William Wilson examined the general condition of the Library's collection, the distribution of library resources by type, the extent of shelf loading (degree to which shelves are filled), conducted a general inventory of the library's furnishings and equipment, and observed the library services offered by the Thomas Memorial Library (TML). The Himmel & Wilson partners also assumed primary responsibility for the aggregation of the information from the various data gathering efforts and for the development of the findings presented in this report.

The purpose of the report is to create a baseline understanding of the existing situation and an appreciation for how public library services have changed and are changing in the 21st Century. This understanding is essential as the Library and the Town of Cape Elizabeth consider next steps in the evolution of library service in the community.

An extensive set of appendices to the report provide detail regarding various components of the assessment process. The first (Appendix A) provides a demographic profile of the community. The demographic reports provided are from Claritas Incorporated, a subsidiary of the Nielsen Company, and a prominent provider of demographic data to the retail sector. Appendix B offers comparisons between the Thomas Memorial Library and other libraries serving similar populations in Maine and in other parts of the nation (concentrating on libraries in the Northeast). It should be noted that comparisons use Fiscal Year 2005 data (the latest year for which national comparative data was available at the time of the compilation). Appendix C affords the reader a detailed look at the opinions expressed by focus group participants.

Appendix D provides an in-depth look at public responses captured in the web-based survey. Appendix E supplies the architects' assessment of the existing facility. Appendix F offers an assessment of the physical structure from an engineering perspective. Appendix G provides a snapshot of how technology is being used by the Library. Finally, Appendix H offers a starting point in determining the amount of space Cape Elizabeth may need to meet public demand well into the future.

Although it is not included in this report, the consultants have also drawn on the information collected by Critical Insights, a Portland-based strategic market research firm. Critical Insights implemented a statistically valid telephone survey of 300 Cape Elizabeth residents on behalf of the Library and the Town of Cape Elizabeth between October 27 and November 3, 2008. The detailed findings from this survey are provided in a separate report presented by the market research firm.

This report is structured in alignment with the presentation of data in the appendices. The only exception to this format is in regard to the telephone survey, which is summarized after the discussion of the findings from the web-based survey and before the presentation of the assessment of the Library's physical structure.

Demographics (See more information in Appendix A)

Cape Elizabeth, Maine is an extraordinary community in many ways. The median age of its residents (46.7) is considerably higher than the national median (36.7) or the median for the State of Maine (41.2). In lay terms, a median age of 46.7 means that half of the residents of Cape Elizabeth are older than 46.7 years of age.

Cape Elizabeth residents are also exceptionally well educated. More than one-quarter (26.3%) of Town residents over the age of 25 have completed a Master's, Professional, or Doctorate degree. This compares to a national rate of 8.9% and a Maine State rate of 7.9%. An additional 31.9% of Cape Elizabeth residents over the age of 25 have completed a Bachelor's degree. This compares to national and state rates of 15.8% and 14.9% respectively.

The higher level of education of Cape residents translates into greater earning power. The 2008 average household income is estimated by Claritas, Inc. to be \$ 128,042. This is 88.52% higher than the national average household income of \$ 67,918 and more than double the State of Maine average of \$ 57,928.

The percentage of Cape Elizabeth residents that are Caucasian is much higher than the national average. The ratio between females and males varies from the national norm by less than one percentage point.

All of this information is significant because numerous studies conducted over the past 25 years have concluded that there is a high correlation between age, race, educational attainment, household income and gender and public library usage. Library use tends to be higher among populations that are older, better educated, richer, "Whiter," and female. In short, on the basis of demographics alone, one would predict that the potential for public library use in Cape Elizabeth is exceptionally high. While other factors such as the size and quality of collections, distance to the library and the quality of library facilities also significantly impact library use, Cape Elizabeth is clearly the kind of community where public library service would be expected to thrive.

One final demographic factor is important to consider as the Town examines its need to expand or enhance the public library facility. Unlike many communities with which the consultants have worked, Cape Elizabeth's population is not growing. Although a case can be made that the community may see some minor growth in the next thirty years as younger families move into large homes now occupied by an older generation whose children have grown and moved

away, it is unlikely that the population will deviate much from its current level. It is anticipated that the Library's service population will remain between 8,500 and 10,000 during the entire time horizon that is being considered in this study. Therefore, Library growth will be driven by service offerings rather than by an increase in the population.

Peer Comparisons (See more information in Appendix B)

The demographic information presented above is of great interest when actual library use is considered. The consultants used statistical data gleaned from a number of different sources to compare the Thomas Memorial Library in Cape Elizabeth with sets of peer libraries in Maine and in other parts of the United States. What emerges is a picture of a library that is higher than its peers on some measures and lower than the peer libraries on others. In short, while demographics would predict exceptionally high use, the reality is that the Thomas Memorial Library in Cape Elizabeth is an "average library" in many ways.

A public library's "stock-in-trade" is its collection. The Thomas Memorial Library's collection is a bit larger (measured in holdings per capita) than most of its Maine peers; it is 21.4% smaller than its national peers. TML lags both national and Maine peers in regard to its holdings of audio materials (audio books and music) and videos (both tapes and DVDs). Although the level of professional library staff (librarians) compares favorably both with national and Maine peers, the total number of paid employees is approximately 25% lower than both the national and Maine peer sets.

The size of the TML facility lags behind both national and Maine peers; however, it should be noted that most Maine peers have somewhat larger populations than Cape Elizabeth. TML is about average when compared to Maine peers in square feet of library space per capita. At approximately 1.45 square feet per capita, TML is smaller than four of its Maine peers and larger than six of its in-state peers. Compared to national peers on square feet of library space per capita, TML is smaller than 10 of the peer libraries and larger than only two.

When TML is compared to all Maine public libraries and to all U.S. public libraries, TML exceeds both the national average and the Maine average in circulation per capita (13.13 for TML vs. a national average of 7.20 and a Maine average of 7.46) by a considerable margin; however, the Thomas Memorial Library lags behind most national peers (libraries serving communities of similar size and with somewhat similar demographic characteristics). The average circulation per capita for the national peer set was 16.38. TML's 13.13 measure was only slightly higher than the average for the peer libraries in Maine (12.85).

Collection "turnover rate" measures frequency of use. It calculates the number of times an average item in the collection is checked out in a year (total circulation/total holdings). Some materials are checked out many times and others are infrequently used. However, turnover rate offers a way to measure how well the collection meets user needs. A turnover rate under 2.0 is usually seen as an indication that a collection contains lots of "dead-wood." A rate of

over 3.0 is often taken as an indication that the collection is well-chosen in terms of meeting public demand. TML's turnover rate at 2.33 falls in between these two benchmarks. TML's rate mimics national peers (2.32) and falls short of the 2.59 turnover rate achieved by Maine peer libraries.

One of TML's lowest areas of performance is in regard to the number of visits to the library per capita. The national average for this measure is 4.75. Each Cape Elizabeth resident visits the Thomas Memorial Library an average of 4.53 times per year. The number of visits per capita for Maine peers was 8.78 per year. Among national peers, the average was 9.83 visits per capita each year.

The Thomas Memorial Library in Cape Elizabeth falls between its Maine peers and its national peers in regard to expenditures. In FY 2005, TML expended \$ 49.98 per resident to deliver public library services. The comparable figure among national peer libraries was \$ 70.24; however, the in-state peer average was only \$ 36.26 per capita. TML expenditures were also above the overall national average (\$ 31.65) and the Maine average of \$ 27.85 for FY 2005.

Nevertheless, Cape Elizabeth residents receive good value for their investment of tax dollars in TML. A number of studies nationally have demonstrated that the American people gain an excellent return on their investment in public library services. When retail costs are applied to library transactions, return on investment frequently tops \$ 5 in return for every dollar spent. The Maine State Library (MSL) provides a "value calculator" on its web site to help people determine their return on dollars invested in libraries. When MSL's value calculator is applied using TML's transactions, Cape Elizabeth residents enjoy a return on investment of \$ 9.23 for every dollar spent.

Nonetheless, the consultants also compared TML's expenditures with those of its peers. One item that emerged from this examination of TML's expenditures was that the Thomas Memorial Library expends a relatively low percentage of its budget for the purchase of materials. In FY 2005, the Library expended less than ten percent (9.44%) of its budget to purchase new materials. The average among Maine peer libraries was 9.61%. The average among national peers was 12.84%. Many libraries use 15% as the "gold standard" target for materials expenditures.

TML's percentage expended for staffing purposes in FY 2005 was 82.11%. This was the second highest among the Maine peers and the highest among the national peers. The level of this percentage does not seem to be due to inordinately high compensation levels (although TML's compensation is good when compared to most Maine libraries, it appears moderate among national peers). A contributing factor to the high staffing percentage appears to be the number of "librarians" on the staff compared to the number of lower level "production" workers. A second contributing factor is that the Thomas Memorial Library is open more hours each week than some other libraries of its size. Staffing costs are obviously related to hours of operation.

Focus Groups (See more information in Appendix C)

Although many, if not most, focus group participants expressed general satisfaction with existing library services, they also provided a long list of improvements they would like to see. Almost without exception, focus group attendees like the current location of the library. It is viewed as being centrally-located and convenient. That said, very few people reported spending much time at the library. The picture that emerged is that the library acts more as an access point for materials than it does as a center of community life.

Many people use the “Minerva” system to locate materials online. Their trips to the library are frequently solely for the purpose of picking up or returning materials. This is in stark contrast to the comfortable, inviting surroundings described by many people as being characteristic of their ideal library.

Information gathered in the focus groups underscored the “library visits per capita” information reported in the section on peer comparisons. Focus group attendees identified a number of reasons why some residents visit the library infrequently. Many noted the poor physical access to the two major collection areas. Visitors are faced with stairs (or the use of cumbersome and frequently dysfunctional “lifts) to gain access to the main adult and children’s collections.

Several people indicated that they use other libraries in the area more frequently because they are more accessible. Others cited a variety of factors that make their visits unsatisfying. Lack of quiet study spaces, the traffic bottleneck at the circulation desk, inadequate meeting facilities and the lack of comfortable areas to just sit and read were all mentioned.

Although a good number of people praised the Minerva system and the speed at which materials are available through interlibrary loan, many expressed the opinion that TML’s own collection should be expanded. In particular, individuals cited specific areas of the collection where more “in-depth” resources would be welcome.

Many focus group attendees liked the idea of the public library as a “center of community life” and indicated great appreciation for the art displays that are offered. An expansion of cultural programming of a variety of types that ranged from author visits to musical programs and expanded children’s programming was suggested. However, the inadequacy of the existing meeting space with its low ceiling and musty smell was also mentioned.

The shortcomings of offering library services from the historic school buildings were frequently mentioned; however, most focus group participants felt that it was essential that the old schoolhouses be preserved or incorporated into the design of a new or expanded facility in some way.

Several attendees broached the idea of combining school library functions with the public library. This idea tended to be divisive with proponents seeing economies and opponents raising concerns about security and conflicts in mission and purpose. What wasn't controversial was that better space should be provided for children. The existing children's area was seen as being rather dull and uninspiring.

When participants were asked to consider an expansion of the library's existing facilities, several themes emerged. There was overwhelming agreement that any new or expanded library space should be a model of environmentally-sensitive design. It was clear that focus group participants felt that any new facilities should be "green." The need to utilize highly efficient heating and lighting systems was mentioned frequently.

Preservation of green space and enhancing the idea of the "town center" concept were also cited by multiple individuals. The benefit of incorporating the Historical Preservation Society and Arts Council under one roof with the Library was broadly embraced by participants in the session that included representatives of those organizations (Arts Council, Library Foundation, Historical Preservation Society).

Web Survey (See more information in Appendix D)

Respondents to the web survey were primarily people who know the Library well. Most responses to the survey came as the result of an email with a link to the survey that was sent to registered borrowers. Again, many people expressed general satisfaction with the Library and its services. However, like the focus group participants, survey respondents suggested many improvements. In particular, survey respondents wanted larger collections (particularly larger book collections) and more cultural programming.

Introducing young children to the joy of reading was seen as an important priority for the library as was serving as a source of information that supports education and learning. Web survey respondents cited many improvements that would impact services to children and teens. These ranged from expanded collections and programming to enhanced children's and teen facilities.

The web survey also underscored several of the opinions that were raised in the focus groups. Seventy-nine percent (79.0%) of respondents indicated that they spent less than 30 minutes in the Library during their last visit. Over thirty percent (30.1%) indicated that they stayed for 15 minutes or less. Almost three-quarters of the respondents (74.7%) indicated that they checked out leisure reading, listening, or viewing materials during their last visit. Like the focus group participants, web respondents wanted programming but disliked the Library's meeting facilities.

Another important piece of information derived from the web survey was that over ninety percent (90.2%) of web survey participants said that they arrived at the library by automobile.

Only five and one-half percent (5.5%) said they walked. Just over three percent (3.2%) said they had ridden a bicycle to the library.

Telephone Survey (See separate report by Critical Insights for more information)

Like focus group participants and web survey respondents, telephone survey respondents were generally satisfied with the library services offered in Cape Elizabeth. Fifty-four percent (54%) indicated that they were “very satisfied” with the Thomas Memorial Library and an additional thirty-six percent (36%) indicated that they were “satisfied.”

A majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the Library’s hours of operation; however, of the twelve percent (12%) who said that hours were not convenient, sixty-nine percent (69%) wanted the library to be open later and twenty-seven percent (27%) felt that the Library wasn’t open enough on weekends.

Eighty percent (80%) of respondents indicated that they thought it was “important” to have a public library in Cape Elizabeth and sixty-four percent (64%) of these individuals indicated that they thought it was “very important” to have a library. Only four percent (4%) indicated that having a library in Cape Elizabeth was “not at all important.” It is important to note that these results reflect the opinions of those who do not regularly use the Library as well as those who do.

When asked to rate a series of four attributes, Town residents, even those who said they never use the Library, overwhelmingly rated each of the attributes as important. Seventy-eight percent (78%) said that it was important for the Library to be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. Seventy-five percent said it was important that the Library’s design maximizes staff efficiency. Seventy-five percent also indicated that it was important that the Library be energy efficient. Just over two-thirds (67%) said it was important that the Library use the latest technology.

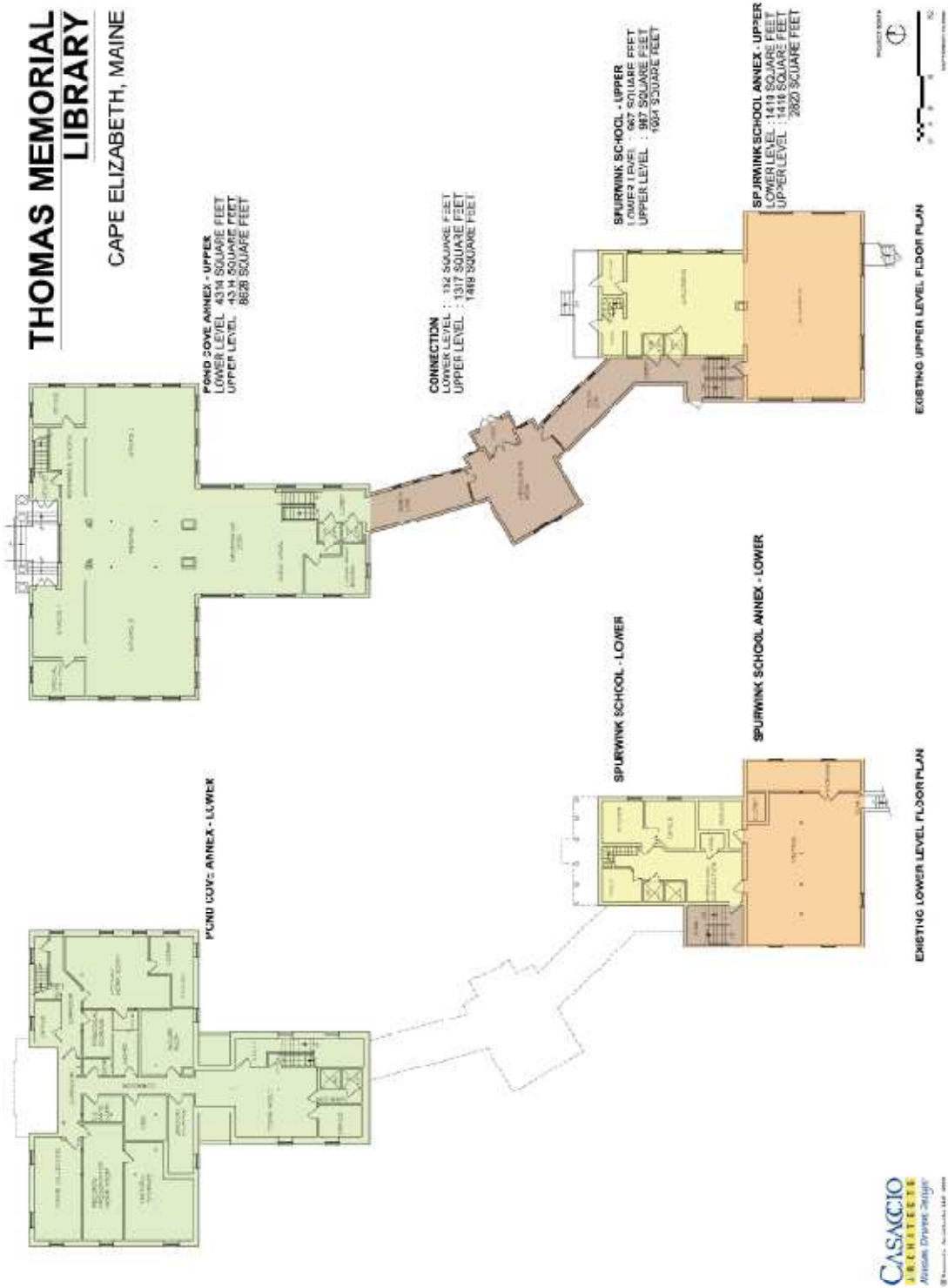
More than half of the survey respondents (52%) indicated that they would be likely to support a library expansion campaign if the Thomas Memorial Library were to document a compelling need to expand in the next five years. Fifty-five percent (55%) said that they would be “more likely” to support enhanced children’s facilities. Interestingly, respondents without children in the household were not significantly less likely to support this improvement. Fifty percent (50%) said that they would be “more likely” to support technology upgrades. Residents who use the Library at least once per week and those who have made financial contributions in the past were significantly more likely to say they would support technology upgrades.

Architectural Facility Assessment (See more information in Appendix E)

The drawing that appears on the next page identifies the various sections of the building and their approximate sizes. It will be helpful to refer to the drawing as the shortcomings of various sections of the Library facility are mentioned. The aerial photograph with the super-imposed graphics on the page that follows provides some helpful information regarding the Library's site. The pink lines identify the three Town owned parcels that are available for Library development.

THOMAS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE





SITE ANALYSIS
THOMAS MEMORIAL LIBRARY
 CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE

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The site available for Library development is relatively small. It consists of three parcels that together equal approximately 1.86 acres. A general rule of thumb would suggest that a library building site should be at least one acre for every 10,000 gross square feet (GSF) of space. This rule of thumb assumes that one quarter of each acre would house the library itself, one-quarter would be occupied by parking, one-quarter would be retained as green space and one-quarter would be available for future development. Applying this rule of thumb would support the idea that a library of approximately 18,600 GSF could be supported on the site.

While a facility of 18,000 – 20,000 GSF may be plausible on the site, the odd shape of the site, limitations imposed by traffic patterns that serve adjoining structures and the current placement of the existing library facility will present a significant challenge if a library facility approaching 20,000 GSF is considered.

Following is a summary of major deficiencies arranged by section of the building. (More detail regarding these and other deficiencies can be found in Appendix E)

Pond Cove Annex – Lower Level

- Very low ceiling heights
- Exposed pipes
- Lack of mechanical ventilation system – poor natural air circulation
- Moisture concerns
- Glare created by use of utility room type lighting
- Possibility of asbestos in mechanical room
- Electrical system at or near capacity
- Outdated/Inefficient heating system

Pond Cove Annex – Upper Level

- Accessible only by stairs or inadequate lift system
- Poor air circulation
- Original high ceiling in grand space concealed by suspended ceiling
- Damage from previous leakage problem
- No central air conditioning
- Sub-standard floor loading capacity
- Aisles between most book stacks not ADA compliant
- No restroom facilities on this level
- Odd configuration of Large Print Book room to accommodate the lift

Connector Link

- Traffic bottleneck at circulation desk
- Too many functions served in limited amount of space
- Extremes of temperature due to proximity of doors and small size of vestibule
- Grade level entrance but does not share a common floor plane with any other functional library area

- No separate delivery entrance

Spurwink School and Spurwink School Annex – Lower Level

- Very low ceiling heights
- Exposed pipes
- Lack of mechanical ventilation system – poor natural air circulation
- Significant moisture concerns (potential of mold growth)
- One restroom to serve entire wing (including meeting room)

Spurwink School and Spurwink School Annex – Upper Level

- Diminished historic character (e.g., rear wall removed, other features significantly modified)
- Inadequate floor loading capacity in annex
- Accessible only by stairs or inadequate lift system
- Lack of mechanical ventilation system
- No restroom facilities on this level
- No central air conditioning
- ADA accessible access/egress exists
- Outdated/Inefficient heating system

Engineering Facility Assessment (See more information in Appendix F)

The following assessment covers four areas:

- Structural
- Mechanical
- Electrical
- Fire Alarm System

Structural

- Original school buildings are being used to support loads larger than originally intended
- Low headroom in both basements limits the ability to reinforce or replace floors
- There is water damage in Spurwink School Annex in basement (possible structural damage and potential mold growth in wall cavity)

Mechanical

- Existing heating and control systems are at the end of their useful life and are not capable of providing the ventilation and operating efficiencies required by American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards
- Physical layout and construction of structure(s) would make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide a replacement system that would meet standards
- Plumbing facilities are functional but do not meet current standards for water usage and efficiency
- There are an inadequate number of plumbing fixtures to meet functional needs

Electrical

- Electrical system is marginally adequate for current use but is near or at capacity
- Most wiring is non-metallic sheathed cable and does not meet current National Electrical Code
- Present main disconnect switches and load (breaker) distribution panels are a known and documented fire and electrical hazard and should be replaced as soon as possible

Fire Alarm System

- Entire fire alarm system should be replaced with totally digital-addressable system in order to meet code and to comply with ADA

Technology Assessment (See more information in Appendix G)

Key Technology Assessment Findings and Observations

- Facility lacks a structured technology infrastructure (backbone connected through wiring closets in each major area)
- Technology infrastructure is visible to the public and is in many instances not secure
- Current IT infrastructure is unstructured and is inefficient to manage due to cabling being run on an as-needed basis
- Capacity into the building is good (connection to school district's T-3 via optic fiber)
- Capacity within the building is severely limited due to unstructured design
- In-house dedicated space for the management of IT is not available
- Computers and peripherals are replaced on an as-needed basis rather than on a predetermined replacement schedule
- Inadequate electrical capacity is available for expanding IT services

Recommended Actions for New/Expanded/Renovated Facilities

- Consider the installation of a structured IT infrastructure including a Main Distribution Frame (MDF) and wiring closets as part of any building renovation or expansion
- Bring incoming telecommunication services into MDF area
- Wireless with appropriate security can be considered as an option as a temporary measure
- Develop and implement a pre-determined replacement schedule for computers and peripherals
- Incorporate planning for RFID in any expansion, renovation, or new facility
- Incorporate planning for a small automated materials handling system in any expansion, renovation, or new facility
- Consider the use of receipt printers rather than date due slips
- Replace outdated/inappropriate furniture used for public and staff IT purposes with ergonomically-designed workstations that include wire management features and ergonomically –designed chairs
- Consider offering printing for Wi-Fi users
- Provide one or two workstations where two people can work together

- Consider offering self-checkout as an option
- Consider the implementation of digital signage in any expanded/renovated/new facility
- Provide at least one fully accessible (ADA) public computer workstation and one online public-access catalog terminal

Initial Space Needs Analysis (See more information in Appendix H)

The initial space needs analysis spreadsheet that appears in Appendix H is the first draft of an effort that will continue well into the conceptual phase of this project. It is an effort to quantify space needs based on the assignment of standard space allocations for a wide variety of functions and pieces of equipment. The spreadsheet is a dynamic, interactive tool that will be used as a point of departure in determining the long term space needs of the Thomas Memorial Library.

The “Existing Space Need” column is an effort to determine the current space deficit. This iteration of the spreadsheet shows that the existing library facility is too small to support current furnishings and services if no space was allocated for non-library purposes. In fact, some space is currently allocated to the Historic Preservation Society.

An efficiency factor of 70% has been applied to the existing building(s) in the initial spreadsheet. The building efficiency factor reflects the amount of space that is not available for functional purposes. A considerable amount of space included in the gross square footage of the existing Thomas Memorial Library facility (14,851 GSF) is not available for library functional purposes. The space occupied by stairways, other vertical transportation (elevators, or in this instance lifts), restrooms, corridors, mechanical rooms, etc. are necessary. However, they are not included in the calculation of functional spaces. Wall thicknesses represent space that must be built but that does serve a functional (service) purpose. For example, an office that has a floor dimension of 10' x 12' contains 120 SF of functional space. However, the office is defined by walls that must be factored into construction costs but are not included in the 120 SF. Because the Thomas Memorial Library is composed of several different buildings with many pre-existing walls, the building is at best 80% efficient. Much space is lost to corridors, stairways and to space utilization that is based on existing conditions rather than on specific needs. As a point of departure, the spreadsheet assumes the reuse of 6,200 GSF of existing space and calculates what might be needed in the future. In fact, it is possible that more than 5,000 GSF of space will be reused in any expansion scenario.

The figures shown in the “out-years” on the spreadsheet indicate how much new space would be needed to provide what might be considered an “ideal” facility for Cape Elizabeth. In fact, any new space that is built should be far more efficient than the 70% that has been applied to the existing structure. The disjointed nature of the facility that was created by connecting the existing schoolhouses means that the current ratio between functional space and the total space is poor.

The spreadsheet should be considered as a starting point. While it does not represent what might be considered a “worst-case scenario” in regard to facility expansion, it applies generous standards to space allocations. Numerous changes will be made to the space needs spreadsheet in the next few months. Various functional spaces will undoubtedly be downsized or eliminated. Seating capacities of meeting room facilities may be changed, etc. The point of presenting the space needs spreadsheet at this point is to present the concept that will be used in determining the amount of space that the community requires. It represents a point of departure for a discussion based on the findings of the needs assessment.

Needs Assessment Findings

Cape Elizabeth is a remarkable community in many ways. Based on the community’s demographics, exceptionally high public library use would be predicted. Although the Thomas Memorial Library is well used compared to most communities and provides good value to the Town’s taxpayers, it falls well short of the extraordinary usage level that might be anticipated.

By all indications, the Thomas Memorial Library has a well-educated and dedicated staff. The level of funding for the library, while not exceptionally high, exceeds Maine and national norms and compares favorably with peer institutions. The Library offers a typical array of services, a reasonable number of service hours, a quality collection and while it is not a technological leader, neither has it lagged behind in offering digital services.

The Library performs well compared to most Maine libraries; however, its performance on measures such as circulation per capita and visits per capita are well below those for libraries in similar communities in the United States. This needs assessment is, at least in part, an attempt to determine why the Thomas Memorial Library falls short of its potential.

The consultants believe that there are three interconnected factors that explain why the Thomas Memorial Library’s performance is not as remarkable as the community it serves. The first factor was noted in the peer analysis section. The Thomas Memorial Library spends less than 10% (9.44%) of its budget on new materials. Cape Elizabeth’s demographics suggest that it is a community of discerning readers. It is likely that residents want and expect a collection of materials that is exceptional in its scope and recency. While TML’s expenditures support the development of an “adequate” collection, it does not support the building of an “exceptional” collection.

While it may not be obvious, the second factor at play, the Library’s facility, is closely related to the collection issue. The Library simply has little or no room for new materials. Although older materials are weeded out of the collection, Library staff members are often confronted with the task of determining which materials should be eliminated in order to make room for new acquisitions.

Several facts reported in the facilities assessment portions of the report are relevant at this point. You will recall that it was reported that the book stacks in the adult department have aisle spaces that are inadequate to meet ADA guidelines. You may also remember that the book stacks in the main portion of the children's department have aisle spaces that are considerably wider than those required by ADA but that this spacing is a result of the inadequacy of the floor to support the additional weight that would accompany more closely spaced stacks.

The Thomas Memorial Library's administration and staff have been exceptionally creative in their utilization of space. Virtually every nook and cranny of the existing building is being used. In simple terms, the Library's expenditures for materials are consistent with its ability to create space for new acquisitions.

Furthermore, the consultants believe that the combination of the lack of space for new materials and the creative confiscation of any underutilized space to house materials leads to the third factor that discourages exceptionally heavy use of library facilities. That is the fact that even regular users of the Thomas Memorial Library spend little time in the facility. You will recall that the web survey revealed that more than three-quarters (79%) of the survey respondents (predominantly composed of regular library users) said they spent 30 minutes or less during their last visit to the Library and that over thirty percent (30.1%) said their last visit was 15 minutes or less.

The Thomas Memorial Library simply lacks the comfortable reading spaces that encourage people to spend time in the Library reading or interacting with friends and neighbors. Libraries are much like retail establishments in that transactions are largely dependent on traffic. Less time spent in a library translates into fewer "impulse" transactions. Much of the success of the mega-bookstores like Borders and Barnes & Noble is related to creating environments in which people want to spend time surrounded by books.

There are other facility related factors that discourage use of the Thomas Memorial Library. A number of focus group participants indicated that many older individuals and persons with disabilities don't frequent the library because of the stairs. A Cape Elizabeth resident with a vision impairment reported that he chooses to use another library in the area because TML is difficult to navigate.

The Town Facilities Manager said during his interview that, "...the mechanical lifts are unreliable and have serious operational issues." He went on to say that "...when they are operating at all, the lifts are very loud and people are very uncomfortable using them." The consultants have spent a considerable amount on site at the Library. We have never observed anyone using the lifts. In a community with a median age 10 years older than the national average, it is highly likely that many people choose not to use the library because of accessibility issues.

It must be noted that many people who attended focus groups or who participated in the web survey or phone survey indicated their satisfaction with the Library. Many people derive a great deal of joy and satisfaction from their use of the Thomas Memorial Library. The question regarding the Library's future facility needs is not a conversation about basic adequacy or about providing satisfactory service to a majority of the population. The conversation must be about an exceptional community providing exceptional library services to the residents of an extraordinary community.

The current complex of buildings that make up the Thomas Memorial Library has many deficiencies. It is interesting to note that the Town Facilities Manager identified 43 separate deficiencies in his interview alone! The various data gathering efforts revealed many additional deficiencies and underscored many of the building's well-known and documented shortcomings.

In spite of the many deficiencies, the consultants are not suggesting that the Town of Cape Elizabeth should abandon the existing historic structures. The consultants and our partner architects believe that there are several ways that the Town can incorporate the school structures into a functional design that offers access for all, greater energy efficiency, and the deployment of advanced technologies and affords the staff an opportunity to do their jobs more efficiently. We believe that there are ways to create the space necessary to house an exceptional collection and to offer the public a comfortable inviting environment in which to spend quality time.

The process of determining how large the Library must be to meet the exceptional needs of the community and deciding what should be built new and what should be saved will involve the expenditure of two commodities that are always in short supply – time and money. What steps should the Library and the Town undertake in the short term to address the community's needs?

Following is an outline of recommended steps that the consultants believe will result in increased use and greater "market penetration."

Immediate Implementation (2009 – 2010)

- The Library/Town should immediately replace the Federal Pacific Electric Company (FPE) main disconnect switches and load (breaker) distribution panels. The existing panels are a fire hazard and may have insurance implications as well.
- The Library should immediately begin the process of having a mold assessment conducted in the basement of the Spurwink School Annex.
- The Library should set a target for increasing the percentage of its budget devoted to the purchase of new materials at 12% by 2014 and 15% by 2019. This will require a more aggressive approach to weeding materials. Impact on the Town budget would be between \$ 20,000 and \$ 30,000 per year.

- The Library should implement a replacement schedule for computers and peripherals. Consideration should be given to leasing equipment. Efforts should be made to treat nearly all information technology costs as operating expenses rather than as capital expenditures. The replacement schedule should allow for the replacement of each unit on a five-year rotation. A four year replacement schedule is preferable. Because the cost of computers and peripherals has dropped significantly, the Library should be able to implement the replacement of 24 staff and public computers, printers, and other general peripherals at a cost of approximately \$10,000 - \$12,000 per year.
- Long-term implementation of RFID is likely to generate ongoing savings and to minimize the need for additional library staff. The process of tagging new materials with RFID tags should begin as soon as possible. Although the cost of RFID tags is now below \$ 0.50 per item, the Library should budget approximately \$ 1.00 per new item purchased to cover all costs. The Library should also begin tagging a percentage of its popular items as well (tagging 10% of the collection per year would cost approximately \$5,000 per year).
- The Town/Library should budget approximately \$ 150,000 for the next phase of the facilities development process if public response to the needs assessment/design concept project is favorable.

Mid-Range Implementation (2011 – 2015)

- The Library should consider the implementation of a single self-check unit. This will be difficult given the already crowded situation at the existing circulation desk; however, this step should relieve some of the pressure confronting staff as library circulation increases. While the consultants understand that the Thomas Memorial Library prides itself on being “high-touch” rather than “high-tech” with its patrons, survey research indicates that some individuals prefer self-check, especially when such a system enables them to avoid waiting in line.

Consider Now and Incorporate in New/Expanded/Renovated Library (2015 implementation)

- In order to address the relatively high percentage that TML expends on staffing, the Library should not expand its professional staff beyond the current level. While no reduction in professional staff or professional salaries is suggested, additional funding for staff during this period should be directed toward increasing the number of library assistant and substitute hours. A well-designed, expanded library facility could potentially reduce the number of hours during which service desks must be occupied.
- The financial implications of all decisions regarding a new/expanded or renovated library should be given a high priority. It should be recognized that staffing a library costs more in the long-run than building a library. An efficient facility that maximizes staff efficiency should be a high priority.
- Decisions regarding mechanical systems and facility design should consider long-term rather than initial costs. Higher initial costs to purchase mechanical systems that will generate long-range energy savings are usually in the best interest of the taxpayer.

- Planning for a new/expanded or renovated facility should include the consideration of an automated materials handling system (AMHS). A small sorting system will cost approximately \$150,000 - \$200,000.