

Proposed Facility Captures Carnegie's Dream

Of all the institutions, public and private, in the United States, the Public Library may be the most accepting and least judgmental. Libraries make it possible to pursue individual, personal paths to knowledge, understanding, and growth. Unlike most educational organizations the library makes knowledge available to the individual with no prescribed or required outcome. Libraries are set up to meet people where they are and help them get where they want to go. Regardless of your chosen work, political views, ethnicity, or level of education, you are welcome in the library. When Andrew Carnegie built his first library in the United States, it included a swimming pool, a bowling alley, an auditorium and several large meeting rooms. Carnegie, who worked his way to the top without the benefit of expensive, formal education, believed in the transformative power of education. He built his understanding of the world with the help of a library collection. It was the ever-expanding knowledge he gained in libraries that helped him rise from poverty. Carnegie donated \$300,000 to build Washington, D.C.'s oldest library. Inscribed above the doorway are the words: Science, Poetry, History and the building was "dedicated to the diffusion of knowledge." Libraries remain places that are dedicated to making it possible for everyone to succeed. There are no standardized tests. There are no lesson plans. There is no application fee. There is no grade point average requirement. The library is for everyone. The library also remains a great equalizer; bringing people without access to the internet, literature, prose, or newspapers to the same level of access as those with the means to afford them at home.

After considerable public input, the Alley Poyner Machietto architecture team has arrived at a design for the new Columbus Library/Cultural Arts Center that our community can be proud of. The concerns about project cost have been heard and a 20% reduction in the square footage has been achieved. If the renewal of our City's 1% and .5% sales taxes is approved on May 10th, the final details of the project will be worked out. This coming Tuesday, April 26th, at 7pm in City Council Chambers, the design will be presented to the public. The future facility captures the essence of what Carnegie started, with a modern twist. The library will allow for 20 years of collection growth, have meeting spaces, access to technology, a powerful internet connection, and access to digital subscription content. The children's library will be designed to encourage creativity and imagination. The content creation lab will offer tools, a 3D printer, and software that can help curious people build things. The Library/Cultural Arts Center will not only be a place where knowledge can be obtained and experiences enjoyed, but one where knowledge can be applied.

Columbus is home to a broad base of people with different backgrounds, understandings and skills. Together we can work to get ahead financially, intellectually and culturally. We can create a building that is dedicated to increasing our knowledge.