

# Libraries Are Changing with the Times

## by Robert Hausmann

One fact I have learned to embrace is that our world is changing constantly. Some traditionalists wish that we could reverse the clock and go back and live in a more simpler time. Even I find myself reminiscing back to the days of my childhood, thinking of fond memories from the 1970's and 80's, growing up in Columbus. I even think of the times before I was born. I wonder what it would have been like to live in the late 1800's and walk the muddy streets of downtown Columbus, meeting up with Frank North or Buffalo Bill and going on their adventures with the Pawnee Indians. Such a simpler time they say. No cars. No cell phones. No running water. No Netflix. No text messaging. No internet. No air conditioning. No paved roads. No refrigeration. No contact lenses. No Google Maps to find my way around.

Now, on the other hand, some really embrace how our world is changing and think of this in terms of how it is changing for the better. Even Frank North was thrilled when he experienced some of these same types of advancements in his lifetime. He went from having to ride a horse to the ranch he and Buffalo Bill worked near North Platte with no way to communicate to his wife that he was ok, (this trip took several grueling days, stopping to sleep on the ground and hunt for any food along the way), to getting to ride the train, sleeping in a bed and eating food from the dining car. He could even send a message via telegraph and tell his wife he made it there safely.

Now think about the changes we have seen in our lifetime. My parents' first car didn't have seat belts or air conditioning. I remember typing on our manual typewriter and trying to make corrections with white out. In the end, my papers had so many white out splotches it would have looked better had I hand written it. Now I can type on my laptop and make corrections instantly. I remember going away to college in Missouri and needing to have my map unfolded on the passenger seat and highlighted to try to find my way home the first time I made the trip myself. Now, I can push a button in my car and have a nice lady on the other end send all the directions of my trip straight to my car and talk to me along the way telling me when it is about time to turn. I for one, am very thankful that our world is changing, and in countless ways, it is changing for the better.

Libraries are another thing that have seen some changes in the past decades. A library of old was essentially a storage place for books. It was a quiet place to be alone and read. Today, libraries around the country are changing with the times. While they are a place you can still go to find and read in a quiet place, they have become so much more! The libraries of today are becoming the heart of a community. They are a place

that brings people together to collaborate and interact. They are a place with all of the latest technologies available for everyone to learn how to use. They are still a place to go to find books, but they are also now a place you can go to create and make things. They are a place you can go to view art or take a class to learn how to cook. You can learn how to use a 3-D printer or even use a large printer to create a professional banner you need for a family reunion. They are adaptable so that they can quickly change or adapt as both the times and technology changes. They are places that have special sections for all ages, adults who want some quiet time, groups who want a place to meet and collaborate for business, teens who want to hang out with their friends and work on a school project together, or a place young children and their parents who want to begin to find the joy in reading or creating things can go. A library today is all of this to all of these people.

The Columbus Public Library has been in its current location since 1977. The building it occupies was the home of Nebraska Public Power. When NPPD moved locations, the library moved in and tried to fit their purpose into the space they occupied. They adapted to the building the best they could for many years. But as times have changed, the current library space is not able to keep up with the changing purpose of a library of today, and especially, the quickly approaching future needs.

It is time to move forward into the future and instead of making use of the space we have, make a space for what we need. We have the opportunity to create something we can be proud of and that can serve everyone who currently calls Columbus their home. Let it be a selling point for those who are deciding if they want to move to Columbus to make it their new home, and let it be something for those people not even born yet, who will be living here long after all of us are gone. Let us all work together in the coming months and create something we can be proud of. Join us in continuing to advance our great city of Columbus into what it has been named, "The City of Power and Progress". The time is now to help Columbus continue to change for the better and build a library that can serve us now and for future generations to come!