

Ben Schapiro: From the Director's Desk



Over the years, my conversations with patrons have regularly elicited several themes about the library building. Most say the building offers a

welcoming feeling of warmth that is unique for area libraries. It is built on a human scale and the south exposure can fill the main floor with a delightful natural light—great for reading and the occasional nap. At the same time, while some of the details, like our brass chandeliers, have a distinct charm, others, like the many narrow stairways, can hamper access to collections for many patrons.

The public forum we hosted in January brought forth many more reactions, opinions and suggestions about our building. We were pleased at the turnout by both residents and Village officials who came to share their thinking on the current building and how it fits the needs of Morton Grove. Moderated by Library Building consultant George Lawson, the forum highlighted a number of facts and views about the Library.

Since 2000, use of the building has increased dramatically. Adult program attendance has gone up 95.8%. Youth Services program attendance has gone up 245.3%. In 2009, 34,244 people attended library programs compared to 12,648 in 2000. The number of in-library Internet users has gone up 289.8% (from 6,281 in 2000 to 24,485 in 2009) and total circulation has gone up 44.2% in the same time frame. Clearly, the current building is heavily used.

Here is a sampling of the many thoughtful comments and suggestions we received during this very productive meeting:

Positive reactions:

- The Library is a tremendous cultural asset for the community with its programs and collections.

- It provides a wide range of wonderful programs. More space is needed for these programs and for the meetings of community groups.
- The staff has a great service attitude that the community appreciates (this comment met with general audience assent/applause).
- People like the auditorium space, the stepped seating, the stage.

Concerns:

- Collection shelving is very limited.
- Parking is very limited.
- Sound is an issue in the main part of the library. It is very distracting.
- Access: Patrons should be able to both enter and exit from both sets of doors.
- ADA access is needed to allow all patrons access to the collections on the mezzanine.

Suggestions/Ideas/Thoughts:

- A drop-in arts and crafts program for children would be wonderful.
- The nonfiction collections should be more prominently featured in the building layout and in special displays.
- Let's do more for teens to capture their interest.
- Be creative in re-organizing the building layout to attract residents who don't currently use the library.
- Be careful considering the economy and project costs when thinking about a building project. Some residents are very concerned about the cost of potential new building.
- Don't be shortsighted about the economy. We want a library that will draw people to Morton Grove.
- The library is a magnet, a destination. If we won't invest in ourselves, who will?
- Morton Grove needs something special, an attraction.
- Would a branch library make sense for Morton Grove?
- The challenge is putting "modern" and "charming" together in the same sentence. (People like the charm of the existing building but also want a modern library facility).
- Does the "charm" get in the way of maximum service?

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Library Exhibits

March is Women's History Month. Celebrate Morton Grove Women in History: See the exhibit in the Baxter Room by the Morton Grove Historical Museum.

Be sure to see the timeline display of cameras and photos in the Lincoln Ave. entry display case through March.

In April: See winning photos in MGPL's Photography Contest on display in the Baxter Room.

Village on the Green

Looking for some fun this winter? Play the Morton Grove Public Library's *Village on the Green* miniature golf course! Golf holes will be featured during the months of February and March at the following participating businesses and organizations throughout Morton Grove:

Dominick's
Friends of the Morton Grove Public Library
Kappy's Restaurant
Inland Bank
Lin-Mar Motors
Maier's Bakery
Minute Man Press
Morton Grove Baseball and Softball Association
Morton Grove Fire Department
Morton Grove Historical Museum
Morton Grove Park District
Morton Grove Police Department
Morton Grove Public Library
Toll Brothers

The map of the golf course and how to play are available on the Library's web site, www.webrary.org.

On Saturday, April 24th, from 10 to 2:30 you can play the entire golf course at the Morton Grove Public Library's 3rd Annual Spring Blast!

