

## Central Library Renewal

Jeannie Mah

In 1992 we attended a Regina Public Library public meeting about the future of Central Library: the RPL Board was proposing to tear down Central Library because the boiler needed to be replaced. Citizens were outraged! Central Library was then only 30 years old. People in the audience remembered working hard on the "Say Yes" plebiscite for the \$925,000 needed to build this current Library. Thirty years later, the same boiler is still guilty of being old. Had the boiler never been fixed?

**What Will the New Library Provide?**

1. SPACE FOR MORE BOOKS, records, films, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, pictures and maps attractively displayed.
2. Bright and comfortable BROWSING AND LOUNGE AREAS.
3. A quiet STUDY AREA.
4. A library for BOYS AND GIRLS.
5. A STORY HOUR room.
6. Special area for ART AND MUSIC.
7. RECORD LISTENING and FILM VIEWING facilities.
8. A GALLERY for art exhibits, record concerts, film showings, book fairs and meetings.
9. Improved service for BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY.
10. Improved TELEPHONE SERVICE.
11. Space for MICROFILM READERS, PHOTOCOPYING and PUBLIC TYPING.
12. ADULT EDUCATION activities.
13. Meeting rooms for STUDY AND DISCUSSION GROUPS.
14. Space for EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS.
15. GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS and those working with children.

An adequate Central Library will improve the quality and scope of branches and booktrailer services and make possible the future extension of these services to new areas.




**What Will the New Library Look Like?**

The Site is the north fifteen lots bounded by Smith, Twelfth and Lorne. This includes the site of the present building and is owned by the library.

The PLAN provides adequate space to serve the city for the foreseeable future. The PLAN IS NOT FOR A GRANDIOSE OR IMPOSING BUILDING.

The BUILDING will have a full basement area, a main floor and a partial second floor.

The EXTERIOR FINISH will be cut stone trim, precast stone panels, some metal panels and generous use of glass. It will be an economical but beautiful library with a friendly and inviting atmosphere.

This is the absolute minimum requirement. To reduce the cost:

1. The children's department has been located on the lower level.
2. No provision is made for servicing the booktrailers at Central. The booktrailer headquarters will remain at Albert Branch.
3. The closed stack area and meeting rooms will remain unfinished for the present to reduce the initial cost.
4. ECONOMY IN INTERIOR FINISHES AND DETAILS will be the rule.

**What Will It Cost?**

Based on the current city assessment and mill rate tax only 80¢ per annum will be required on each current property tax of \$100 over a 20 year period to finance the \$925,000 required. Over a period of years the Library Board by stinting has managed to save money from operating costs, and this sum amounting to \$110,000 will be used to cover additional costs of moving, furnishings and fixtures.





SOMETHING *for*  
the WHOLE FAMILY

A NEW LIBRARY

VOTE  
**YES X**

ON  
NOVEMBER 2

Issued by the Citizens' Committee for a New Library.

Now we read that the proposed new build, for \$124 million, would only last 60 years, yet to maintain Central Library would cost \$50 million.

While we admire the shiny new Snøhetta and Dialog Calgary Public Library (\$245 million) and the Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects and local studio Fowler Bauld & Mitchell Halifax Library (\$57.6 million), it is curious that the RLP Library Board has not considered the successful, award-winning and cost-effective expansion of the more economical Patkau rehabilitation of the 1967 Winnipeg Centennial Library.

Completed in 2005 for \$21-million, the Patkau expansion of the Winnipeg Millennium Library added 3,700 square metres (40,000 sq ft) of new space, construction of a new fourth floor, and renovations throughout the existing 10,000-square-metre (110,000 sq ft) library. <https://www.patkau.ca/projects/winnipeg-millennium-library>

Our 1962 Modernist Central Library was built after a civic plebiscite vote. Before the vote, the Chief Librarian, the RPL Board, and volunteer citizens worked hard to explain to Regina citizens why we needed a new and bigger Central Library to replace the 50 year old Carnegie Library.

This step to engage citizens is missing in the current process. Sixty years later, the RPL Board of Directors has "considered what's best for customers and the community" and will "Bring project to the community at a public board meeting; call for Board vote."

"The City has been fortunate in having had good library boards with members who are experienced and respected, representing the community," said Chief Library Miss Dunlop. "The members have displayed vision and good judgement in fulfilling their responsibility to develop and maintain a good library service." Mr. F. Bagshaw, whose heritage house was recently demolished, was on the Regina Library Board from 1941 to 1962, and worked diligently to bring the modernist Library to fruition, with Mayor Baker, Mrs Davies, and Miss Dunlop.






“The moves from the old building and then back to the new were tremendous tasks - all accomplished by our own staff. The men seemed to really enjoy themselves especially when they devised a scheme of creating a chute down the back stairs for conveying beer boxes, numbered and filled with books.” Biblio Files, 2017. p.82.



### Larger Building Needed

The Central library was built in 1911. Since that time our book stock has grown, reference services have been expanded, films, records and art exhibits have been added. We need more room for readers, staff and more room for books (over 6,000 books are in storage in the basement of branches for lack of room at Central). We need space for a teen-age section, more room for films and records. MORE ROOM.



### The Need is Urgent!

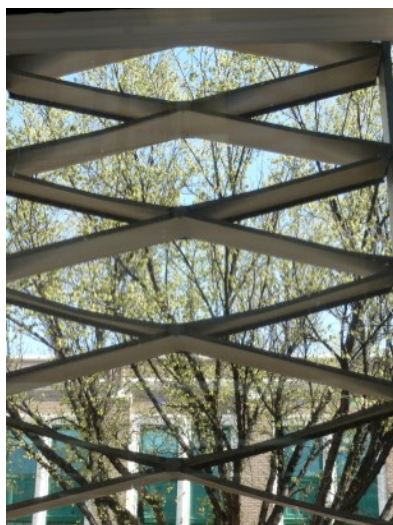
	Here's 1911	Here's 1952	Increase
Population of Regina	30,213	72,000	41,787
Book Collections	6,073	78,790	72,717
Library Borrowers	1,980	16,531	14,551
Circulation of Books	52,579	348,624	296,045
No. of Branch Libraries		4	4
Film Collection		268	268
Film Circulation		5,398	5,398
Record Collection		1574	1574
Record Circulation		5,398	5,398

The 2021 poll summary tells us that “participants have indicated **support for investment to sustain central library services** (over 88% of respondents to the online survey, 90% of respondents to the telephone survey, and approximately 90% (17/19) interview participants)”. The words - **support for investment to sustain central library services** - are positive, but should not become a secret euphemism to be understood as supporting the demolition of a 60 year old iconic modernist building, without public discussion.

This illogical conclusion, in a survey that does not directly address the issue of the demolition of Central Library, is neither a democratic nor an economically prudent use of taxpayer money. For the Board to vote on demolition, with neither public discussion nor allowing the public to know the cost of the seven other options, is shocking!

RPL’s library consultants, in 2015, showed examples of new iconic libraries from around the world. When questioned, a consultant admitted that RPL Central’s Reading Room, with its natural light filtered by a jaunty *brise soleil* (sunscreen) was very similar to their new contemporary (and certainly more costly!) Scandinavian example!

Our iconic modernist Central Library compares favourably in style and function to newer multi-million dollar public libraries. At the last RPL public meeting of February 2020, let us not forget that the majority of voices spoke in favour of preserving Central Library: Regina citizens questioned the expense and desire for a new building.



The Library consultants then explained that libraries now do much more than lend books. We had to explain that, since 1914, the RPL lent sheet music and established a Children's Story Hour, and since the 1940s, concerts, art, and film have been part of RPL programming. Central Library has had a purpose-built Art Gallery since 1962, a Film Theatre since 1975; art, 16 mm film, dress patterns, toys, and now, musical instruments can be borrowed with a library card; and dance, art-making, and a dynamic children's puppet theatre have long been popular features of RPL programming. RPL was a model of programming for public libraries! Chief Librarian Marjorie Dunlop said "Regina Public Library was successful in offering many new services when these were somewhat experimental." Biblio Files, 2017. p.82

Is it an oversight that the heritage value of Central Library is not mentioned in the RPL proposal for demolition, nor any mention of its official legal designation as part of the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District?

Central Library is an outstanding example of modernist architecture, designed by Massey Award-winning local architect Kiyoshi Izumi, and built with the highest quality durable materials of finished and cut granite. National architects and the Regina community signed the **Regina Declaration** at the **Ordinary Amazing Symposium** in 2007, to confirm that Regina's Central Library "is a building of national, historical, cultural and architectural merit, and urge City Council and the Library Board to find a way to keep and maintain and enhance the heritage value of this fine building consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*; as well as explore creative possibilities for a building enlargement that would complement the 1962 building, so it can continue to serve the changing needs of Regina's people, and enhance its key public spaces."

RPL's own 2015 Building assessment tells us that Central Library **is distinguished by its aluminum sunshades, granite exterior cladding and sections of curtain wall glazing**, with a Reading Room which **receives ample natural light from full height curtain wall glazing on the north, west and south sides**. It **holds Municipal Heritage Designation and is located within the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District (Bylaw 9656)**. The report discusses Renovating Modernist Buildings: **Using a 'historical restoration' approach, the building envelope is upgraded but it's appearance remains unchanged with minimal intervention. Using a 'historically sensitive' approach, the building's modern characteristics are maintained but the new elements are added which compliment the original structure. (...). The original materials, such as terrazzo, granite cladding and aluminum were of good quality and have been more or less well maintained.**

[https://cld.reginalibrary.ca/sites/default/files/RPL%20Building%20Assessment\\_%20Feb%202015.pdf](https://cld.reginalibrary.ca/sites/default/files/RPL%20Building%20Assessment_%20Feb%202015.pdf).

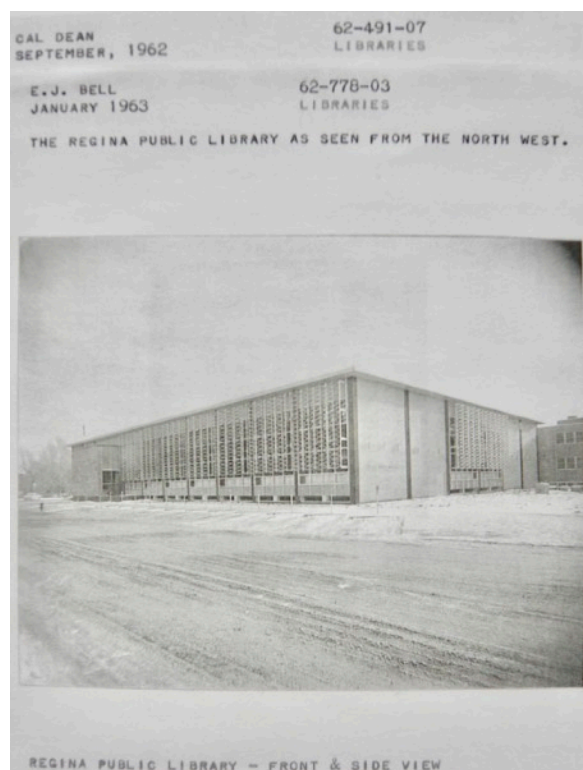
Patricia Patkau spoke at the **Ordinary Amazing Symposium** in Regina in 2007, where she discussed “designing two libraries, one in Winnipeg and one in Montreal. The topic of the flow of people into and around the building was a main focus.” “<http://ordinaryamazing.blogspot.com>. The RPL was a partner of this national symposium.

How could the RPL not even consider Winnipeg’s excellent example of a green cost-effective retrofit and expansion to a modernist library, which, for \$21 million, successfully preserved its history, material, and embedded energy within its contemporary revitalization. The Winnipeg Millennium Library has won the General’s Medal in Architecture (2008); Lieutenant-Governor’s Medal in Architecture (2007); Prairie Design Award(2006); and the Canadian Architect Award of Excellence (2004).

The embodied energy of materials when a building is demolished - wastefully discarded - is an environmental cost that a sustainable city must take into account. Central Library, design by an internationally known local Japanese-Canadian architect should be preserved, maintained, and sensitively expanded. Retention of the existing building within the context of rehabilitation is the most sustainable approach because we are not throwing a whole building, and all of its sequestered carbon and embodied energy, into the landfill.

With great foresight, Central Library included future plans for expansion. From the official opening programme of December 5th, 1962 : “The building is designed for a future mezzanine floor over the centre third of the large adult service area. A multi-storied wing can be added on the remaining 6,500 square feet of the site. ”

You can see this land in this 1963 photo.





In 1962, the ramp was considered to be "state of the art " by Saskatchewan Health and Welfare. Now it is now considered to be "inaccessible" because the hand rail is 1.5 cm too low.

The hand rails were to code in 1962, and they are elegant. Are the rails now too low because the concrete has been repaired badly? An asphalt coating has been place on top of the concrete ramp, about 1.5 cm thick. The RPL's own insensitive repair has made the hand rail to be 2/3 inch , or 1.5 cm, too low. This should not out give cause to tear down a building.



Terri Sleevea, who uses a wheel chair, says: "There are very few buildings in Regina that compare with the RPL from the accessibility point of view. Excellent and well-maintained outdoor ramp, auditory signals in elevator, wheelchair accessible washrooms already exist."

We are in favour of the Rehabilitation of Central Library to bring it up to current codes of safety, accessibility, ventilation, and energy, with sensitive and sensible advice from conservation specialists to insure conservation standards. Yet I fear that installing a generic railing 1.5 cm taller might distract from the original design as badly as the industrial lights which have replaced the original elegant modernist double conical lights. We have already lost the granite cantilevered stairs, which now serve as two benches on the RPL's empty lot, one which I worry about because juts out, dangerously, at knee level, onto the 12th Ave. sidewalk. Details matter.

Our 60 year old iconic Modernist Public Library was built for \$925,000, after a civic plebiscite vote in which citizens gave approval for this expenditure of public funds.

Sixty years later, RPL Board of Directors tell us that they have "considered what's best for customers and the community".





Herein lies the problem. Many citizens do not consider ourselves to be “customers” of the Regina Public Library: we, the taxpayers, give RPL money for the public service of a free public library.

Yet, using our money, the Library Board is treating us like customers, and patronizingly deciding what we need. This is the wrong model for community engagement. Stake holder discussions were with organizations, not the public.<sup>1</sup> The public have been forgotten in the Regina Public Library, if actual citizens who use the library are not part of the process, if engaged citizens are treated as a disruption, and our voices constantly ignored.

Regina citizens are the stake-holders who have the most to lose if we do not preserve our Heritage public library and its excellent public services, in its accessible downtown location, facing our Victorian Frederick Todd-designed park.

The rehabilitation of Central Library provides an opportunity for the City of Regina and the Regina Public Library to develop a reputation for sensitive and imaginative retention and preservation of its built heritage.

Please protect our gem of our modernist iconic Central Library, so elegantly facing Victoria Park.

P.S. While it is true that Regina’s Central Library was built in 1962 to serve its population of 110,000, this ignores the fact that, over the last 60 years, Regina Public Library has astutely built five new suburban branch libraries to serve our city as it grew - Regent Park 1966; Glen Elm 1979; Sherwood Village 1981; South Albert 1985, moved and became George Bothwell 1994; Sunrise, 1990 - and has recently rebuilt two inner-city branches, Prince of Wales and Albert Library. The RPL Board should be proud of its diligent service to our growing suburban city.

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<sup>1</sup> Organization consultations : Appendix 1

## Appendix 1

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Date</b>
Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce	15-Jan-2021
Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID)	18-Jan-2021
Family Service Regina	18-Jan-2021
Regina Folk Festival Inc.	19-Jan-2021
Regina Chamber of Commerce	19-Jan-2021
Regina Region Local Immigration	19-Jan-2021
Cold Weather Strategy	20-Jan-2021
Economic Development Regina (EDR)	20-Jan-2021
Regina Catholic School Division (RCSD)	21-Jan-2021
Saskatchewan Office of Disability Issues	22-Jan-2021
Carla Harris Consulting	25-Jan-2021
Saskatchewan Labour Market Services	25-Jan-2021
Family Law Information Centre	26-Jan-2021
Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)	26-Jan-2021
Reconciliation Regina	26-Jan-2021
Regina Police Service (RPS)	26-Jan-2021
Knox-Metropolitan Church	27-Jan-2021
Regina's Warehouse District	27-Jan-2021
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)	29-Jan-2021