

CASE STATEMENT - ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECT

OUR MISSION

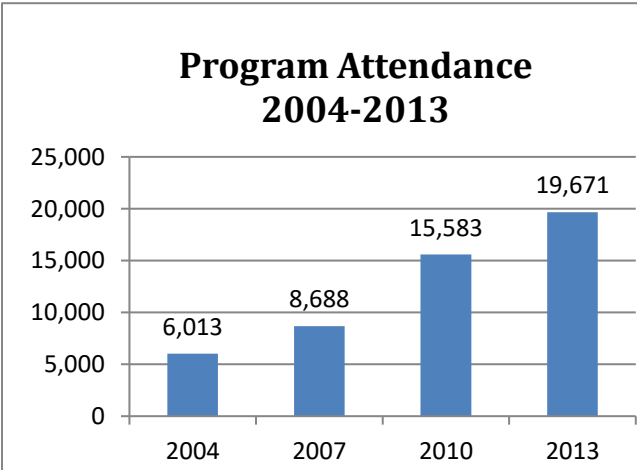
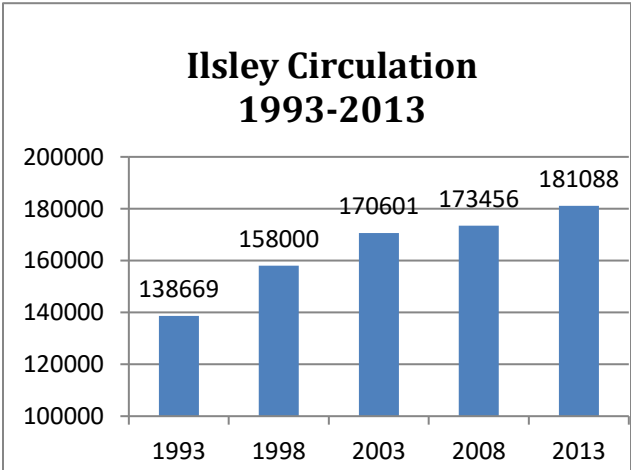
Ilsley Public Library serves Middlebury residents and visitors, and the residents of surrounding towns; people of all ages and all walks of life. The library:

- provides access to current materials in all formats so that users may pursue their individual interests,
- seeks continuously to strengthen a sense of community by providing opportunities for public meetings, informal gatherings, and special programs,
- strives to ensure that all can find, use, and evaluate information on a wide range of topics
- and provides the professional staff, materials, technological infrastructure, and facilities to approach this mission confidently.

HISTORY OF ILSLEY

In 1866, the Ladies Library Association formed a library for its membership. In 1911, the library became public, and in 1924 the present building was dedicated. A minor addition in 1975 included the elevator and a small amount of additional space, A major addition in 1988 added the north side stacks, reference space, and meeting rooms.

The library provides an extremely high level of service: according to the Vermont Department of Libraries annual statistics, Ilsley consistently ranks at or near the top of Vermont public libraries in program attendance, circulation and building use. Over the last 20 years usage has steadily increased, especially program attendance.



WHY DOES ILSLEY NEED A RENOVATION/EXPANSION?

The 1988 expansion provided additional capacity for books, and programs to support the library's continued excellence. However, Ilsley is again at a tipping point. Without space to support 21st century technology, serve youth effectively, and continue traditional library services, Ilsley risks becoming irrelevant just when its place as a center of our community is increasingly important.

Public libraries have always been centers of community education for people of all ages. This means not just providing books, but also offering a convenient and welcoming place for groups to meet; students and entrepreneurs to collaborate; and all to learn in their own ways.

Contemporary libraries also offer a diverse range of programs in partnership with community experts and local organizations, and hands on technology training, led by staff experts. More and better spaces for meeting, collaborating, and learning how to use new technology are needed to achieve this mission.

Ilsley strives to serve children and parents as a community educational center that complements the area's public and private schools homes, and childcare centers. In the last twenty years, an emphasis on giving young children a head start in learning has changed the ways libraries approach pre-literacy activities for 0-5 year olds. Linking play, fun, and reading—and providing parents and early childhood educators with resources and training to help preschoolers succeed—requires space not currently available in Ilsley's dark and cramped children's area.

Tweens and teens also need space tailored to their interests. But currently there is no dedicated space for them. Keeping reading and learning relevant, and giving teenagers a space of their own will offer them safe, educational places to gather and demonstrate that Middlebury cares about its older children.

Exciting areas for youth, collaborative spaces, and technology training areas are essential. But many library users want only quiet places to read, relax, or work. 21st century services must not be added by sacrificing space for books, newspapers or seating. Ilsley must continue to meet the growing demand for traditional services that many demand. Modernizing shelving; making the book stacks easier to browse and reach; and providing quiet comfortable seating throughout the building will help both traditional and new users to meet their needs. A café or relaxed eating rules would further enhance the environment.

If we do nothing, we will disappoint both traditional and newer users of Ilsley. It would become stale, out of touch, and even more crowded.

OUR VISION

We imagine a renovated and expanded modern public library -- a vibrant community educational center at the heart of downtown -- that measures up to Middlebury's reputation and other facilities. .

A reinvigorated IIsley that will serve 21st century residents in the same exemplary fashion for the next hundred years as it has for its first hundred. A library that helps people of all ages learn what they want, as they want, when they want; that provides space for cutting-edge technology and professional guidance to make the best use of it; that is warm and inviting with quiet places to curl up to a good book, meet, and work .

MOVING FORWARD

In Spring 2014, the Middlebury Selectboard and IIsley Public Library trustees formed a committee to assess IIsley Public Library's needs and to recommend solutions that may include interior reconfiguration, renovation, and/or expansion. The committee, which consists of two members of the Selectboard (Susan Shashok & Nick Artim), two IIsley trustees (John Freidin & Maria Graham), and three members of the Middlebury community (Dennis O'Brien, Peter DeGraff & Christina Johnston) are leading an open, inclusive, and deliberative process to engage all members of the community in planning our library's future.

During Fall 2014 the committee will conduct focus groups – in a variety of places and times of day -- with the general public, teens, parents, educators, seniors, and leaders of local non-profits to gather their ideas. The committee will encourage citizens to complete a questionnaire about IIsley, and will visit several recently renovated libraries around the state.

In 2015 the IIsley Board and the Selectboard may hire an architect to develop a preliminary plan; explore public and private funding; and put forth a bond vote to Middlebury residents. Achieving this vision will require both the guidance *and* the financial support of the community. Together we can continue to provide a vibrant, dynamic library for all.