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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While many libraries are familiar with conducting a campaign to raise funds from a bond issue or tax increase for desired improvements, often these funds may not be enough to cover those improvements, plus unforeseen necessary repairs.

Without a thorough roadmap to accurately assess the condition of the library, underlying issues may exist that do not meet code requirements or that are a health hazard. These issues would be required by law to be fixed and would therefore come before any desired improvements like updating furniture, fixtures or space reorientation.

Many of these unforeseen conditions, such as roof repairs, HVAC system issues and structural support problems are expensive and can eat through an entire budget rather quickly. If these items are not properly addressed and given associated costs up front before a bond issue or tax increase is conducted, the resulting increase in funds may not be enough to cover required improvements plus desired improvement

Two items – a Facility Conditions Assessment (FCA) and a master plan – can help ensure the proper funds are raised to address all items. In this paper, we will cover in detail what exactly an FCA and master plan are, the differences between the two and what they help libraries accomplish.



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LIBRARY FACILITY CONDITIONS ASSESSMENTS

Before your Library decides to pursue a facility improvement project, it can be beneficial to professionally investigate qualities of the building, like its condition and functionality, before investing in it. Several steps can be taken to get an accurate picture of the building’s qualities through a facility conditions assessment (FCA), with results that:

- Provide a thorough understanding of necessary improvements to meet code requirements
- Confirm the current conditions of the building systems and enclosure
- Determining the long-term usefulness of the existing building



Bond Architects conducting a facility conditions assessment

An FCA will help key decision makers understand the entire picture and the realistic costs and repairs needed to keep the building in a functional state.



Water damage seen in window sill, wood base and carpet discovered during an FCA at a public library

Priority List		Highest Priority: 1 (High) - 4 (Low)		
Cost Estimation: High Cost (over \$50,000) Moderate Cost (\$10,000 - \$50,000) Low Cost (\$1,000 - \$10,000) Low Cost (0 - \$1000) [Maintenance] X Incorporated Into Current Construction Not Applicable		Branch 1	Branch 2	Branch 3
Site				
4	Install fencing and gates			
4	Install bollards or other permanent deterrents to separate glass from vehicles			
4	Add New hardware to existing gates			
3	Tailor landscaping to improve visibility & reduce hiding places	X		
Lighting				
3	Install additional interior lighting			
3	Install additional exterior lighting			
Key Control / Access Control				
4	Move Knox Box to lower height		X	
2	Replace exterior keyed locks with card/fob reader or keypad			
4	Install Additional Knox Boxes			
Security System, Surveillance Cameras & Communication				
2	Install additional cameras / upgrade existing system			
	Provide real time surveillance monitoring			
4	Remove exterior hardware from egress only doors			
2	Install door position switches on all exterior doors			
1	Replace existing glass with intruder resistant glass (up to a minimum 7'-0" A.F.F.)			
1	Install intruder resistant film on existing glass (up to a minimum 7'-0" A.F.F.)			
3	Improve existing public address system			
2	Provide new and additional panic buttons			
1	Repair doors that are not latching properly			
Windows				
3	Replace existing glass with intruder resistant glass (up to minimum 7'-0" A.F.F.)			
3	Install intruder resistant film on existing glass (up to minimum 7'-0" A.F.F.)			
2	Install (1 minimum) operable window large enough to allow occupants to exit			
4	Replace all wired glass with code compliant glass			
Hallway/Stairs				
3	Connect double doors to remote lockdown system			
3	Add additional double doors		X	
Restrooms				
	Replace deadbolt with one that cannot lock from the inside			

Sample page of an FCA with prioritization for a public library

An FCA can show that investments in your current facility are worth the cost to maintain the building; however, it can also uncover unforeseen conditions that are very expensive to repair and could thus make more financial sense to explore a new facility.

Before deciding to ask voters or donors to increase contributions or taxes, it is important to thoroughly understand what the costs are to achieve the desired improved look and space in the building, along with building infrastructure needs. Voters and donors will want to clearly see where their money was invested in the facility.

Unfortunately, when an FCA is not conducted before a bond issue or tax increase, the risk of disappointed patrons can increase. Patrons may be dissatisfied to see that no visible changes were made in appearance of the Library, like new furniture, updated finishes or reoriented spaces for programming, because all funds were needed for unforeseen necessary repairs.

Items like a complete roof replacement, faulty heating system or non-compliant code issues are expensive yet are not visually appealing upgrades to the general public.

With a completed FCA study and proper planning, the correct budget to achieve not only building system and code upgrades but also to achieve the desired look, space and visual upgrades will be accurately determined before the funds are requested.

So just what is a Facility Conditions Assessment?

An FCA is an assessment of the building infrastructure, like heating, air, windows, roofing, plumbing and structural support, to determine the useful life of these elements. An FCA will also determine prioritization for repair or replacement and the cost for each item's improvement.

The report will give you an understanding of what costs will need to be incurred, and when, over the life of the building. Similar to the decision to continue repairing an older car or to replace it, an FCA is a tool to help you understand the short- and long-term costs for maintaining your facility.

What are the steps to complete an FCA?

An architect, along with its team of supporting

engineers, is engaged to inspect the physical conditions of the facility. The review can encompass either a broad overview or a detailed inspection of all the building's systems and components, depending on the needs of the library. Once the team is on board, they will be on site cataloging their findings in notes, quantities, drawings and photographs. Staff and contractors that maintain the facility will be interviewed to determine the maintenance plan and the ongoing issues with the building. The results will be documented and presented to the key decision makers in a user-friendly format.

What areas are evaluated?

Depending on the facility, various components can be evaluated, potentially including the following:

Site – outside of the building

- Parking lot
- Sidewalks
- Plaza
- Fences
- Trash enclosure
- Landscaping
- Stormwater drainage
- Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), local zoning, etc.

Building envelope - exterior components of the building

- Code compliance for energy use, etc.
- Roof
- Walls
- Foundations
- Doors and windows

Interior layout

- Code compliance for ADA, life safety, etc.
- Vestibule
- Stairs
- Finishes - the interior surfaces such as paint, carpet and tile
- Public spaces
- Staff spaces

Building systems - the 'life blood'

- Code compliance for operations, life safety, etc.
- Heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC)
- Plumbing - including required fixture counts per applicable building codes
- Electrical systems
 - ◊ Power distribution
 - ◊ Access control and security systems
 - ◊ Fire alarm system
- Vertical conveyance - such as an elevator
- Fire suppression

What are the deliverables/results?

The findings will be compiled in a report that will include a summary of findings, cost estimates, prioritized needs (immediate, high, low) and detailed back-up documents. The report will be reviewed with the key decision makers to help them understand the scope of the building improvements needed and the associated costs over time.

How do FCAs vary across Libraries?

The scope of an FCA can vary for several reasons.



Items like landscaping, sidewalks, the main entryway and ADA accessibility are evaluated



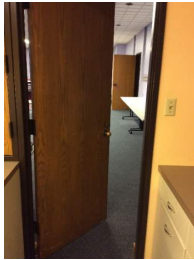


Central lighting controls, shade controls and bell to call for help at service desk

FCA

32. Kitchenette



The flooring, cabinetry, counters have reached their usable life expectancy and need replaced. The appliances should be evaluated for serviceability and possibly replaced. The doors are damaged and need replaced.

Counters and cabinetry Cabinetry and refrigerator Damaged Door

33. Staff Lounge

The flooring base are damaged and need replaced. Scuffs on drywall need patched. All walls need painted. Doors are damaged and need replaced.

Warped base Dated tile and warped base

Interior evaluation of staff spaces

An older building can potentially have more needed repairs or have systems that can no longer be repaired. Smaller buildings typically have a simpler infrastructure and number of components. If the Library is in a shared facility or in rented space, such as city hall or a retail storefront, the Library may not have sole control or responsibility of the building systems and infrastructure.

LIBRARY MASTER PLAN

Whereas an FCA looks at the building systems, a master plan looks at the layout, the functionality and the space needs of the Library. The highest cost for operating a Library is the cost for staff. If the building requires additional staff to cover the services and security of the Library because of a poorly laid out floor plan, or if staff are tripping over each other to perform their jobs because they have outgrown the space, that is less time and funds available for programs and materials.

A master plan looks at the long-term space needs for the Library. Library space needs have changed dramatically over the last decade. Changes tend to be made incrementally or in a reactive way when not considered in the 'big picture' of a master plan.

For example, years ago when physical card catalogs were phased out and demand for public computers arose, the computers were often placed in the space vacated by the card catalogs. That may or may not be the best location for them, but it was the available space at the time.

What are the steps to complete a master plan?

Similar to an FCA, an architect-led team will interview staff, community leaders and key decision makers to learn the unique needs of the Library. They will observe how materials are handled, moved and stored, how staff move through the public spaces and staff areas and how patrons use the Library.

Part of the Master Plan will look at how staff are able to monitor security of the Library. Can they see the main entrance, the entry to the restroom and into the Children's and Teen areas?

The master plan will also address programming and space needs for the future – based on demographics, priorities and needs. The length of time a master plan encompasses can vary with the scale of the library and its needs.

Usually, the extent of a master plan provides for a 10-year time frame at most, about as long as anyone can reasonably predict. However, it can be as short as a detailed 5-year plan.

The team will catalog their findings in notes, drawings and photographs. Staff and volunteers that work in the facility will be interviewed to determine the on-going space issues with the building.



Having a strategic master plan is key for successful library operations



Placement of computers should be well thought out instead of placing them wherever space is available



Library staff are interviewed as part of the process

The results will be documented and presented to key decision makers.

What areas are evaluated?

Every Library is unique, but there are typical areas that need attention within a master plan, such as:

Space

- Is there enough space for the library to be comfortably and safely used by patrons and staff?
- Are those spaces located where they will best function?
- Is the site large enough to fit future expansions?

Collections

- Is there enough room for the collection?
- Are shelves overly full or too tall?

Public Furniture

- Is there enough furniture?
- Is there an adequate variety of furniture to support patrons needs?

Technology

- Is there a reliable, robust technology system in place?
- Is technology easily workable for both staff and patrons?

Meeting Spaces

- Are there enough meeting spaces both large and small?
- Are the meeting spaces properly sized to support a variety of programs such as story time, tutors, clubs and events?

Outdoor Spaces

- Is there enough parking for staff and patrons?
- Is there a green space or programmable outdoor space?

Staff Spaces

- Is there enough effective space to efficiently function and process materials?
- Is there enough space to store tools and supplies?
- Is there enough space to interact with others and find respite during work hours?

What are the deliverables/results?

The findings will be compiled in a report that will include a summary of findings, diagrammatic layouts of proposed changes, prioritized needs (immediate, high, low) and detailed back-up documents. The report will be reviewed by the key decision makers to help them understand the scope of changes needed and associated costs.



Overly tall and full shelving



Meeting rooms should be able to accommodate a variety of programming



Staff workroom / breakroom

The Master Plan could potentially recommend subtle changes to the internal layout, or larger investments like additions or renovations to the building, or it could find that the existing conditions cannot be practically modified to meet the current and future needs of the Library.

How do master plans vary across Libraries?

Libraries that haven't done a Master Plan for many years or ones that have experienced substantial change, like population shifts or altering demographics, will likely need a more detailed study of space needs. Staff will have made changes that were possible for them to implement with their available tools and resources, but more facility-wide adjustments, such as revising shelving layouts or placing study rooms, may have been unattainable.

Library systems that have multiple branches may need to study the placement of the branches across their community to best serve patrons. Each location may have unique needs, such as programs for small children or senior services, that will need to be approached differently for each branch.

CONCLUSION

An FCA and master plan can be performed individually or simultaneously, depending on the Library's needs. At times, the FCA alone can determine the fate of a facility. If the building needs extensive infrastructure improvements, it might be necessary to relocate to a building that is less costly to operate.

However, the existing building may be important to the history of the community, like many Carnegie Libraries. The property where the building is located could also be in the perfect place for the community, acting as a downtown anchor. In instances like these, despite the cost of repair and maintenance, the decision may be to invest in the building.

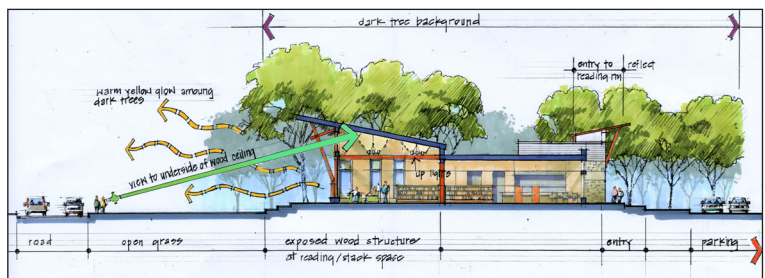
Once an FCA and master plan are completed, decisions to improve the existing building or to relocate to another location, can be made in a systematic, objective way. These reports can also help inform your patrons about why these choices were made, in clear terms. An FCA and master plan become your detailed road maps for future facility decisions.



Reviewing a master plan with key stakeholders



Exterior rendering of a new library based included in its master plan



Site rendering for new library

About Bond Architects, Inc.

Bond Architects provides architecture, interior design and planning solutions to a wide range of municipal, educational and commercial clients. Our innovative projects, practice and people have been recognized for their commitment to enhancing communities, advancing education and promoting sustainability. To learn more, visit www.BondArchitectsInc.com or call 314.863.4994.