

1980s

Board's Bright Hopes Dim

The decade of the 1980s opened with a Berwyn Library Board full of bright hopes for improved services, especially at the Central Branch in City Hall.

The Suburban Library System's Yacko study was followed by a second SLS study, summarized at the January 1981 meeting of the Berwyn Library Board. The report suggested three alternative uses for the Central Branch as a:

- Combination popular library and reading room including best sellers; fiction and popular nonfiction paperback editions; basic references; records and cassettes; and a copy machine;
- Special service or special collections branch geared to senior citizens or in-depth reference materials pertaining to business law and government; or
- Programming center for meetings, displays, adult education and audio/visuals.

To make the branch more attractive, SLS suggested brighter paint and carpeting and more colorful displays. To make it more useful, the report proposed adding a community bulletin board and interfiling the card catalog.

SLS also suggested a survey to determine who used the central facility and an analysis comparing cost per circulation with other libraries.

As reported in the local newspaper, the report sparked debate among Board and staff at that January meeting.

Board President Florence Summers expressed concern about the lack of new book orders to supplement the scantily stocked shelves at the Central Branch.

Fellow Board Member Nevaril-Lhotka argued it was "useless to make purchases because nobody is coming here. This [branch] is going to be closed, no matter what."

"As long as this branch is open," countered President Summers, "It should service the patrons."

Although Director Polivka previously had told the Board that few patrons used the Central Branch, she now speculated the shelves were bare "because the books were constantly being borrowed."

After further study, the Board rejected proposals for alternative uses but favored surveying Central Branch patrons and improving the facility.

“If we upgrade this library [and make] it more attractive, that would be a good start,” said President Summers. Support was voiced for the addition of hanging plants, local art exhibits and the purchase of brightly patterned rugs and small stack chairs for the children’s section. The paperback book rack would be relocated to encourage browsing.

The Board president suggested a large oak table and pull-up chairs for newspaper readers. Miss Summers also suggested the library purchase records and tapes, saying, “The modern mode of living today is with tapes and cassettes.”

But Frank Flaska, a resident in attendance at the meeting, told the Board the branch’s greatest shortcoming was its hours — 2:30 to 6 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays.

Perhaps even more important, according to the *Berwyn LIFE*, was the cautionary note sounded by Board Member Christine Brom — “We could do something if we had the money.”

By the February Board meeting, the results of a patron survey were in hand. They showed participants lauding the North and South branches but criticizing the Central Branch for “too short hours” and “too few” or “too outdated” books. Nevertheless, survey participants favored retaining the three-branch system rather than closing a branch or building a new central library.

Who Controls Purse Strings?

Finances were the main obstacle to improvements. Even a proposal for a two-month trial rental of a copy machine for \$50 per month proved controversial, according to the *Berwyn LIFE*.

When Director Polivka warned that the rental would have to be approved by City Comptroller Paul Los, President Summers asked, “What’s the hang-up? What have we got a Board for? He’s not running the library. Why does anybody have to ask him for anything?”

That perspective was affirmed from a somewhat different perspective by Board Member Ferdinand Kerbs.

“I don’t think we’re getting enough help from within [City Hall],” Mr. Kerbs said. “When city officials wanted us to come down 10 percent, we cut the budget. But when you ask for information, they say they’ll get it and you don’t hear from them. Why doesn’t the comptroller come down and talk to us and tell us they want to cut back?”

Mr. Kerbs then acted on his frustration. Citing a “lack of cooperation from City Hall,” he resigned from the Board. In accepting his resignation, President Summers also expressed dissatisfaction with “the lack of interest in library affairs from City Hall.”

The following month, the controversy escalated. The Board voted to spend \$770 for carpeting in the Central Branch and asked Director Polivka to offer Sunday movies.

When the director said it “couldn’t be done for lack of staff,” the *Berwyn LIFE* reported the Board suggested offering movies on a week night “so working persons could enjoy them.” However, Mrs. Polivka maintained that “people go home, eat dinner, watch television and don’t want to go out.”

The exchange became acrimonious.

“You people [the Board] visit these so-called high class libraries with big staffs,” Director Polivka said. “We’re going along with a small staff.”

“You are too budget conscious,” President Summers responded. “The money is there to serve the people of Berwyn.”

“If we only had enough money to go to Goldblatt’s for shoes, you don’t go to Florsheim,”¹ Mrs. Polivka insisted. “I am spending the taxpayers’ money, and I am doing the best I can.”

“The people are complaining,” Member Gorman noted. “How could we have a good library if we don’t have the money?”

The Board decided to ask for a meeting with Comptroller Los to discuss who controls library finances.

“Either Mr. Los has to quit running the Board or the Board is going to quit,” President Summers said ominously.

The financial controversy escalated when the comptroller would not approve the copy machine rental.

Comptroller Los shared his views on the situation with a *Berwyn LIFE* reporter:

“Figures show the copy machine rental would be a losing proposition,” the comptroller said. “The girls are enthusiastic, but ... my job is to watch the finances.

¹ The former Goldblatt’s Department Store in Chicago was known for its bargain basement prices for shoes and other items. Florsheim, a Chicago shoe manufacturer and retailer, advertised its products as “shoes of exceptional quality.” Berwyn, like other municipalities, is in a bind for cash. Anything that can wait, I advise them to wait. Miss Summers is under the concept that if, at the year’s end, there is money left over, spend it. The money we expected is not coming in or is coming in later.”

Nevertheless, after meeting with the Board, Comptroller Los changed his mind and allowed the copy machine rental to proceed. However, the problems with City Hall continued to multiply.

The *Berwyn LIFE* theorized that any resolution was unlikely until after a new administration took over following the April election. City Attorney Hett had been elected mayor in 1977 but vacated his office early to accept appointment as a judge. Mr. John Naughton accepted the title of Acting Mayor in 1980 but expressed reluctance to take any action concerning the Library Board. The newspaper attributed that reluctance to the temporary nature of his position.

April proved too far away to head off the crisis.

At a mid-March hearing on the city budget, the library was “the only department to feel the city’s ax,” the *Berwyn LIFE* reported.

According to Alderman Lawrence Menchetti, a member of the library’s aldermanic oversight committee, the cut was made because the library had cash left over from the previous year.

President Summers called such reasoning “ludicrous.”

“They tell us to cut expenditures,” Miss Summers noted. “Now we are being penalized for not spending.”

And so, the banner headline in the March 25 issue of the newspaper read:

“Library Board Members Quit”

President Summers and Members Christine Brom, Bernadette Gorman, and Dorothy Ondracek all resigned in protest.

Summers cited a lack of support from the mayor and City Council for the Board's efforts to upgrade the Central Branch. "This is a squeeze play," she told the *Berwyn LIFE*.

"They cut the most important thing — the books," said Mrs. Gorman. "They really want the Central Branch down, and that's why they're doing that."

"It's obvious the city doesn't care about the library," added Member Brom.

The resignations left only three members on what was by state law intended to be a nine-member Library Board — Anna Hassler, Georgia Nevaril-Lhotka and Josephine Lhotka, a relative of Nevaril-Lhotka's through marriage.

Comptroller Los insisted the library was not being picked on and that other cuts in city services, such as tree removal and sidewalk repair, also were being considered.

"Closing the Central Branch ... would only save \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year," the comptroller noted, "a small amount in [the city's] more than \$1 million deficit."

Nevertheless, by the end of the year, the Central Branch would indeed close.

Unable to attain a quorum, the Library Board did not meet from March until June, when newly elected Mayor Joseph Lanzillotti appointed new Board Members Margaret Ritchie and Anthony Scarcello. According to the *Berwyn LIFE*, day-to-day library operations were left to the head librarian not only for those 3½ months but on into September as the Board took its usual summer recess.

The new Board members came into a library in trouble.

According to statistics compiled by the Illinois State Library in Springfield and reported in the *Berwyn LIFE*, other Illinois communities with populations similar to that of Berwyn provided more patron services, books, periodicals, films, recordings and money.

"One reason why Berwyn lags behind other communities may be lack of cash," the newspaper noted. "Of the surrounding communities, the Berwyn Library has the lowest tax rate — .05 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation."

That low rate meant Berwyn was unable to qualify for a state per capita grant, which required a rate of .13. The Suburban Library System reported that, of its 78

member libraries, Berwyn was one of only 18 that failed to qualify for grants the previous year. The Berwyn Library could have received as much as \$17,000, SLS noted.

As a result of the cutbacks, Berwyn residents increasingly turned to other communities for library services. The Oak Park Library reported that most nonresidents using its services were from Berwyn. The situation was particularly acute in periodicals. With only 79 periodical titles on its shelves, the Berwyn Library ranked dead last in the western suburbs. Consequently, Berwyn residents borrowed more than 400 periodicals in one month alone from the Oak Park facility.

By August the Library had a new problem — Director Polivka announced plans to resign. The Board accepted her resignation and then voted to retain her as a consultant for 12 hours a week at \$12 per hour, effective September 1 and lasting until her successor was hired.

By the end of September, the Board had selected Judith Wester as Mrs. Polivka's replacement, pending approval by the mayor and City Council. A high school librarian in New Mexico and former employee of libraries in Wilmette and Winnetka, she already had moved to Berwyn and was planning to resume work toward a master's degree in library science at Rosary College.

It was not to be.

By her December 1 starting date, city approval was still pending. Mayor Joseph Lanzillotti was expressing doubts about the city's ability to afford Miss Wester's salary, even though it reportedly was less than the \$17,040 Mrs. Polivka had been receiving as director.

Faced with city finances that had deteriorated from a \$3.2 million surplus in 1979 to a \$400,000 deficit in 1981, Berwyn officials proposed a citywide 1982 budget that eliminated 15 jobs and called for all employees, including police and firefighters, to forgo salary increases. In addition, elected officials were asked to return their salaries to the city.

On December 30, 1981, the Library Board wrote to Miss Wester, informing her that, "due to circumstances beyond our control, the position offered to you on November 9 with the approval of the mayor and City Council is not available. The city budget was passed on December 28, and the position of head librarian at \$14,000 was not included."

Central Branch Closes

Along with cuts in such city services as tree planting and trimming, the Central Branch of the Library, characterized by city officials as “chronically underused and poorly stocked,” was closed.

In one small victory, the library secured an increase in the book budget from \$2,000 to \$5,000. However, faced with a 1982 library budget half the size of the previous year, the Library Board had little choice but to comply with the city’s requests. The Board reinstated Mrs. Polivka as part-time director at a salary of \$7,500. The combined salaries of other employees were to be cut by \$30,069 and two part-time employees were to be eliminated.

The Central Branch closed on January 1, 1982. North Branch hours were reduced to 15 hours per week on Monday, Thursday and Friday afternoons and the South Branch to 24 hours per week Monday through Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Like the city, the Library Board voted to supplement its income by raising fees. Duplicate cards would increase from 50 cents to \$1; adult overdue fines from 5 to 10 cents per day; and a book overdue for more than one month from \$1.69 to \$2.50.

Still on the chopping block, according to the proposed city budget, were the copying machine fund, purchases of recordings and audio/visual materials, and bindery and landscaping services — a total of \$3,350.

In protest, Board Member Margaret Ritchie resigned.

By February, the Library Board was more optimistic about finances and added 18 hours of service at its remaining facilities. Both North and South Branches would be open from 1 to 8 p.m. weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. The fate of the shuttered Central Branch, still well stocked with books and records, remained in limbo.

Throughout the year, library collections declined. Berwyn now had no back files of magazines on microfilm or microfiche, and no cassettes or videos. Periodical subscriptions totaled 49; reference books, 200.

In September, Board Member Scarcello submitted his resignation to Mayor Lanzillotti, who held the communication until January, saying he thought Mr. Scarcello

“might reconsider.” Director Polivka described the failure to notify the Library Board of the resignation as “only an oversight.”

That January of 1983, the library entered an agreement with the North Berwyn Park District to cosponsor a film program. And in almost an aside, Director Polivka reported a small leak in the roof at the North Branch and commented that a new roof might be needed. If the implications of that “small leak” were understood, there is no mention of it in the Board minutes. The only action taken was to authorize \$225 in repairs. Ultimately, leaky roofs would take a toll on library collections, and Mrs. Polivka would go down in history as the legendary director who personally climbed up ladders to tar the roofs.

With the city proposing to increase the library budget from \$91,366 in 1982 to \$187,957 in 1983, the Library Board felt confident enough in February to begin advertising for a full-time director.

The 1983 budget included money for air-conditioning and roof repairs and an increased book budget of \$30,000. The salary for a full-time director was pegged at \$17,040 and employee salaries were increased from \$48,500 to \$72,919, making the Board hopeful of expanding hours at both branches.

In February 1983, Ms. Elizabeth Mueller, consulting services director for the Suburban Library System, was asked to meet with the library’s Aldermanic Oversight Committee. According to *Berwyn LIFE* newspaper reports, she repeated a recommendation she had made to the Library Board three years earlier that the Central Branch be closed permanently. Citing the library’s small budget, the consultant said, “There is no way the city can do a credible job to support three libraries for a community of Berwyn’s size and population.”

Asked by a reporter for a solution to the library’s problems, Board Secretary Mary Karasek suggested one centrally located library instead of three branches. She and Alderman Richard Toman, chairman of the City Council’s library committee, agreed the former Berwyn Lumber Yard at 30th Street and Oak Park Avenue or the shuttered Piper School at 25th Street and Kenilworth Avenue might be possible sites. However, Alderman Toman cautioned that other uses for the properties already had been suggested by the city and South Berwyn Grade School District 100.

As to reopening the Central Library Branch in City Hall, Toman anticipated direction might come from a resident survey the aldermanic library committee had commissioned Consultant Mueller to complete. The survey also was expected to help the library set priorities for programs desired by residents and save money by eliminating those no longer wanted.

Korbel Named 4th Director

Meanwhile, the library's search for a director was bearing fruit, and on May 16, 1983, the Library Board voted to hire Albert Korbel as full-time director.

Mr. Korbel, a 38-year-old resident of Palatine, had served as administrator of the Bellwood Public Library from 1967 to 1979, where he had supervised a staff of 22. Raised in Berwyn, he attended Street Odilo Grade School and Morton West High School and obtained a Bachelor's degree in literature from Street Procopius College in Lisle (now known as Illinois Benedictine University). He then worked as a freelance writer and job-site supervisor for Lancaster Courts Development, an independent carpentry contractor in Mt. Prospect.

City Council confirmation of the appointment was delayed more than a month while aldermen examined Mr. Korbel's background. After city approval finally was secured, a meeting was scheduled for July 27, 1983, at the Central Branch so that Board and director could become acquainted before his first public Board meeting.

A big surprise awaited Director Korbel and Board members walking into the City Hall Branch, now closed for nearly 1½ years because of budget constraints. A wall had been partially constructed one-third of the way into the library to create offices for U.S. Rep. William Lipinski, who counted Berwyn as one of his constituent communities.

Immediately, questions were raised as to who authorized the work, who owned that portion of City Hall and whether it was legal for a public official to rent space in the library, noted a story in the *Berwyn LIFE*.

Board members were upset that they had not been consulted about the work. They noted a table had been broken during the construction and expressed concern that books could be damaged from the dust raised. The library trustees asked Director Korbel to obtain an explanation at a city department head meeting scheduled for the following day.

Mr. Korbel emerged from that meeting with an agreement by city officials to stop construction “for a while,” and his first days on the job were devoted to resolving the space standoff with the city.

“Both the Library Board and city officials take different stands on who owns the Central Branch location,” noted the *Berwyn LIFE*. “The library is a department of the city and does not pay rent or utilities for that location. However, Library Board members say the library was added in City Hall through a special \$10,000 donation when the building was first constructed. They note the carving of the word ‘Library’ on the outside of the building and the built-in bookshelves.”

When a *Berwyn LIFE* reporter asked Mayor Lanzillotti who had authorized the work, he replied, “It doesn’t matter,” and added that he “did not want to get into a fight situation.” The newspaper then cited interviews with assorted city officials, each of whom attributed the authorization for the construction to someone else.

The matter ended when City Attorney Russell Hartigan said that, since the city owned the entire building as a municipal corporation, he did not see how one portion could be set aside as belonging to someone else.

Now rendered moot were the new Library Director’s suggestions for centralizing all reference materials in the City Hall branch to make room in other library locations for more books. Mr. Korbel refocused on the needs of the North and South Branches.

Since the hot summer was almost over and the \$30,000 budgeted to overhaul the branch air conditioning systems was still unspent, Director Korbel suggested the money could better be utilized for a new roof at the South Branch.

“Several years ago a flood caused costly damage to many children’s books,” Mr. Korbel noted. “The roof is 23 years old, has a history of leaks, and every rain, it [takes on] a little more water.”

With copying machine service costing \$55 per month at each branch, the Board readily approved the director’s suggestion to lease new copiers for a monthly fee of \$150 per machine. Revenues from a 10-cent charge per copy were expected to nearly cover the rental.

Noting that the lack of a telephone in the South Branch children’s books department forced staff members to run up and down stairs from basement to first floor to

answer the phone, Director Korbel asked for three additional phones at that location and one more for the North Branch on 16th Street He also requested two communication lines at the North Branch to increase staff accessibility to patrons telephoning in with questions.

Salaries were raised to a range of \$3.25 per hour for a page to \$6 to \$9 for a full-time professional. The maintenance position was restored to full-time status, and among the first tasks assigned were installation of shelving and construction of a meeting room in the 16th Street basement.

In September, things began to look up for the short-handed Library Board. Down to three members for nearly a year, the Board received two new trustees — Mr. Michael Coghlan and Mr. Jeffrey Glass.

Council Says “No” to Technology

The library’s requests for midyear budget adjustments were passed on to the City Council and approved. However, negotiations on the 1984 budget foundered. The City Council declined to allocate funds for a library computer system. According to a *Berwyn LIFE* newspaper report, the Council “allocated money instead to areas it felt could better serve the people of Berwyn.”

In 1984, the library again asked the Suburban Library System for help in analyzing studies and surveys on the strengths and weaknesses of Berwyn’s branch libraries. An SLS consultant also helped identify seven potential building sites. Most favored for being “centrally located and accessible by public transportation” were the vacant Berwyn Theater property at Ridgeland Avenue and Cermak Road and the old greenhouse property at Oak Park Avenue and 29th Place. As with many similar recommendations, the report was accepted and placed on file.

Library Board and staff focused instead on improving services in their current locations. They had very little to work with.

In 1983, the year Albert Korbel came on as director, a comparison of Illinois public libraries prepared by the University of Illinois ranked Berwyn 52nd out of 54 cities in total expenditures per capita. By 1985-86, Berwyn had risen to 46th but still ranked below Calumet City and North Chicago.

Nevertheless, by the mid-1980s, slim increases in funding had enabled the library to increase hours at both North and South Branches to 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

In a 1986 outreach to senior citizens, the library opened a branch in the Berwyn-Cicero Council on Aging in Cicero.

“We bought large print books specifically for the seniors, especially Harlequin romances, and the ladies just loved them,” recalled Mrs. Carol Shotola, a retired library employee. “They would crowd around me as soon as I came in the door with those books. We also reproduced crossword puzzles and word finds and mazes, as many as 75 copies at a time. Many of these people did not have much at home, and they would take the puzzles in order to have something to do in the evening.”

The collection of library books at the Council on Aging continued to grow, topping out at 500 titles around 1994. By the time the Council closed its doors in Cicero in 2005 and opened in smaller quarters in North Riverside, readership had declined and the library service was discontinued.

In the early 1980s, the library repaired its leaky roofs, and although phone system upgrades were still on hold, library collections were greatly improved by 1987:

<u>FIVE YEAR GROWTH</u>		
<i>Service</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1987</i>
Magazine back files (microfilm or microfiche)	- 0 -	40,000
Cassettes	- 0 -	664
Videos	- 0 -	555
Periodical subscriptions	49	520
Reference books	200	Nearly 5,000

According to the *Berwyn LIFE*, the Berwyn Library’s Periodical Department was one of the first in the area to offer a computerized guide to magazines and newspapers for hands-on public use. “Many libraries have either News Bank or Magazine Index,” Director Korbel explained. “They don’t have both. And they usually keep them behind the desk where people can’t get at them.”

But there was a hidden price to these improvements — space.

The basement of the 16th Street Branch was revamped to house an expanded Reference Department; a room at 34th Street now housed the new audio/visual service. But in both buildings, supplies had to be stored on shelves in narrow hallways. Additional book shelves were installed in already crowded rooms.

Because space was no longer available to duplicate a full range of services in both buildings, library collections were split. The North Branch became the reference repository; the South Branch housed the Children's Department.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the expansions in services and facilities, the library still was a long way from meeting state standards.

"We need 75 more magazines, and I don't know where I will put them," Director Korbeltold the *Berwyn LIFE*. "We should have 3½ books per capita, and we have about two. We should have 250 to 300 seats; we have a total of 75 to 100 in the two buildings. If we don't meet certain standards, I feel the Suburban Library System will cut us off from reciprocal borrowing."

That was of special concern because Berwyn's out-of-district borrowing was on the rise.

"People who walk into the 34th Street Library and learn the Reference Department is at 16th Street say, 'I don't want to go to 16th for this when I can get everything I want in one building in another community,'" Mr. Korbeltold a reporter.

"Our reference collection compares favorably with Oak Park. We have more to offer than Stickney, more than Riverside, but not in one place," Korbelsaid. "That is why we are losing people."

At the February 1987 Library Board meeting, the Director urged the importance of trying to find out more about Berwyn residents' opinions of their library.

"I'd like to know who uses what library branches; how many people don't know about all our services; and how the people would feel about having one building as opposed to two branches," Mr. Korbeltold the Board.

Moreover, the Director noted, a community survey was a prerequisite to qualify the library for state per capita grants. Prior to Mr. Korbelt's tenure, the Berwyn Library never had applied for the annual grants offered by the state based on population. Under his leadership, Berwyn had successfully applied for and received \$46,628 in state funding

for 1987. However, to qualify for future funding, the library would have to complete the community survey that the state required every five years.

The Board agreed to use some of the 1987 grant money to mail a survey to every residential address in the city.

District Status Explored

It also agreed to continue to explore the possibility of becoming a district library independent from the city. In November, the Board had hosted a presentation by Ms. Beth Mueller, consulting services director for the Suburban Library System, and Ms. Jane Shaw, administrative librarian for the Lisle Public Library, which recently had moved out from under the authority of the Village of Lisle to become an independent district with an elected board now responsible for convincing voters to authorize a tax levy sufficient to support library services.

“We were presented with all the good points [at that meeting],” recalled Berwyn Library Board Member Ann Marrone. “But for all the good points, there had to be bad ones. She [Consultant Mueller] told the Board, ‘Everyone is going district.’ But when she said 150 out of 600 libraries in SLS have gone district, that’s not a whole lot.”

After an SLS workshop on the subject left Board members still puzzling over the same questions, they decided to invite a presentation by the head librarian and the board president of the Oak Park Library, since that institution recently had considered going district and decided against it. After several postponements, the Board finally hosted the Oak Park representatives in June. According to *Berwyn LIFE* newspaper reports, the presentation again left many Berwyn Board members undecided.

“The decision confronting the Berwyn Library Board is clouded with the bias of each viewer,” concluded Board President Ray Hassler. Appointed to the Board to fill the vacancy created by the death of his mother, Mrs. Anna Hassler, the President then hung another cloud of uncertainty over the Board’s future direction by announcing his resignation “due to increased business responsibilities.”

As the Board adjourned that June for its traditional summer hiatus, Director Korbel urged trustees to use the vacation break to formalize goals. By the time meetings resumed in the fall, the Board’s focus apparently had shifted because the major headline was “Building Fund Established.”

In September 1987, a \$500 donation from the Friends of the Berwyn Library opened the way to establishing a Berwyn Public Library Building Fund. It was thought the fund might be used to:

- Maintain or renovate the existing properties;
- Hire consultants or architects to provide proposals, specifications and blueprints for a new library building;
- Purchase property and construct a new building; or
- Furnish a new or revamped facility.

Almost as an aside, the *Berwyn LIFE* noted the library still was studying the possibility of separating from the city of Berwyn. It was a debate that would continue off and on into the next century without resolution. Alternately city or library officials would question whether taxpayers would be willing to raise the library's tax levy sufficiently to support an independent district and whether private fundraising could make up the difference.

The 1987 discussions of "going district" did not lead to any action by the Board.

"I was in favor of a district library," then Board President Nevaril-Lhotka would later recall. "But nobody wanted to leave the umbrella of the city. It was scary going all the way out on our own."

Most Board members apparently felt they had more than enough challenges in trying to remedy library shortcomings while operating within the city's safety net.

In a December 3, 1987, letter to Library Board and city officials, Director Korbel detailed those challenges and outlined a staff assessment of how library services could be delivered if a new facility was not to be available in the short term.

"While these buildings were fine in their time, they are no longer adequate to meet community needs," Korbel wrote. "Some problems need immediate attention, and even though the solutions may appear temporary, they are necessary to maintain quality service. Our bottom line is that we feel the city has made a commitment to the library system and must now back that up with an infusion of financial support."

The director identified four main problem areas:

First, we must acknowledge the hardship imposed on patrons by having the collection divided. Designating the 34th Street building as a

browsing library does not make it easier for patrons or even staff to distinguish between “serious and less serious” nonfiction. The patron who wants a specific magazine article and a best seller must drive across town to get them both on the same day. Why go to the Berwyn Library when he could get both in the same building by driving to Oak Park?

Second, there is a lack of appeal. Sixteenth Street has no carpets, curtains or seating. The Children’s Department windows, full of bullet holes, add to the negative impression. Neither building contains a room for meetings, for listening to AV materials, for typing or working on computers — all services a modern library should provide.

A third problem concerns our fiction and nonfiction collections.... Because the library cannot afford to double buy, neither building contains an adequate collection. A patron who begins in the Reference Department and then hopes to find more information in the main collection will probably be disappointed. Many titles are out of date, located at the other building or not owned by the Berwyn Library.

While most area libraries are automating their card catalog, the Berwyn Library, because of budget constrictions, has no plan to do so.... The state of our card catalog is a disaster. In each building we have an old and a new catalog which are arranged differently. Cards may or may not indicate in which building the books are housed.

The Children’s Department at 16th is very inadequate, not only because of the Library’s inability to double buy books for two locations but also because students arriving after school cannot find a place to study in the Children’s Room. The students overflow into the Reference Room, where they disturb adult patrons. Further, they are forced to use adult reference materials because the children’s collection does not provide the materials they need.

Reconstruct Or Build Anew?

Director Korbel then listed possible remedies suggested by the staff, including splitting services between the two buildings.

One approach would turn the 16th Street Branch into a children's library and the 34th Street Branch into a facility for adults, Mr. Korbelt said. "This plan would end the need for double buying; department heads would spend less time running between buildings; and the arrangement would easily be grasped by patrons. The children's building could have an alcove where parents might look at magazines or paperbacks [while their children browse].

"The makeup of the city supports such an approach," the director explained, "because the 16th Street Branch is located near more schools. [But] it appears from circulation statistics more fiction is checked out at 16th even though 34th has the larger fiction collection." Moreover, he noted, additional space would be required to combine adult fiction and nonfiction at the 34th Street Branch, a building incapable of expansion and with too few parking spaces to support increased use.

Another approach would be to move children's services to 34th Street and reconfigure adult services in one of two ways, Mr. Korbelt said:

1. 16th Street might be turned into a reference and nonfiction library, with 34th the center for children's and adult fiction and AV (audio/visuals). The problem with such an approach, he noted, was that "70 to 80 percent of reference questions originated at 34th."

2. With the exception of a good children's reference section (to serve the area's schoolchildren), the 16th Street Branch would house only large print, adult fiction and best sellers. The 34th Street Branch would house the Children's Department and become a family-oriented library, "where a whole family could go to get reading materials."

To gain space for reconfigured services, the library's administrative offices might be moved to an office building or rented storefront. Or, the 16th Street building could be extended to the east sidewalk on Elmwood Avenue

Even if no moves were made, Korbelt said, he considered it "imperative that the 16th Street building be expanded, carpeted and given a facelift."

In addition to suggesting ways to reconfigure the buildings, staff members also were recommending a new service to address the drop in circulation — a readers' advisor. A designated staff member could help patrons obtain current fiction and

nonfiction, keep tab of reserves and assist in ordering seven-day materials, Director Korbel noted. At 16th, such a person could take incoming calls and help patrons in the stacks and with the card catalog. (*It would be nearly a decade before such a service could be instituted.*)

The Board's response to these proposals was to seek help in determining whether a new library at a central location was possible. The director was asked to prepare a list of organizations that perform feasibility studies.

The City Council's response was once again to pare down the library's budget. The library requested \$976,989. It received \$518,335, nearly the same amount as the previous year. Dropped from the budget was the request for a \$250,000 new building fund. The library had hoped to use this to hire a building consultant and develop the architectural drawings needed to apply for state construction grants either to retool existing facilities or build anew.

"I would love to see the library improved," Alderman Michael Woodward told a *Berwyn LIFE* newspaper reporter. But as a member of both the City Council's Budget and Library committees, Woodward said, "The cost is prohibitive right now.

"The question is whether the library is going to become independent [of city rule]," he added. "It then would have to raise its levy, and I don't know if the citizens are ready to do that. I would like to see it go to referendum to see if the people want it."

Director Korbel estimated that, in addition to state and city funding, the Berwyn Library would need to nearly triple its levy to cover the library's portion of a possible \$3 million project. He admitted to being disheartened by the elimination of the \$250,000 building fund from the library budget. Without such a fund, he said, "We might as well disband the Berwyn Library system or seek out Oak Park and Stickney or Riverside and Cicero and see if they want to split Berwyn's clientele."

Library Board President Nevaril-Lhotka conceded the library could do little without the support of the city administration. Nevertheless, she was optimistic.

"I was on the board that built these present buildings in the 1950s," Mrs. Nevaril-Lhotka told the *Berwyn LIFE*. "Maybe we can do it again."

By the April Board meeting, Director Korbel also was encouraged. The Berwyn Public Library Building Fund had risen to \$2,950, half the amount he considered necessary to “legitimately interview consultants to develop building plans.”

Director Korbel said he was particularly heartened by a \$1,000 contribution from Mayor Lanzillotti, because it “showed by example that the mayor is willing to support our efforts.” The Director suggested the next goal would be to raise \$25,000 to obtain architect renderings.

Any decision by the Board was to be guided by the results of a survey mailed to 16,000 residents and expected to be tabulated by mid-May.

That survey became the focus of debate at an April 1988 meeting of the All Berwyn Committee. According to *Berwyn LIFE* reports, some A.B.C. members who were not on the survey mailing list felt the library should have asked questions of all residents through a referendum.

The most heated discussion concerned the merits of a central library as opposed to the current branch system.

“The libraries may need repair, but a central library is going too far,” said one audience member. “The Berwyn Library does not need to keep growing,” he said, “because Berwyn residents could go to libraries in other suburbs. We don’t have to keep up with the Joneses.”

“We can’t be sponging off Chicago, Riverside or Oak Park,” rebutted another A.B.C. member.

The debate was picked up that spring by the *Berwyn LIFE* in a series of articles titled, “Library at the Crossroads.”

“In the coming weeks, the Library Board must decide whether to shelve one or both of its existing buildings and construct a new facility, or once again to apply ‘Band Aids’ to keep the system in its present form,” one article suggested.

“Through a communitywide survey and fund solicitation, the Board is reaching out to determine whether there is a community will and financial way to build a new library.

“During a facility tour last month by the Board’s Building and Grounds Committee, participants noted the system’s two branches share a common problem — a lack of space.

“Committee members noted narrow, crowded aisles and the inability of patrons to find a quiet place for reading or research. They noted the cost in dollars of trying to duplicate basic materials in two buildings and the cost in good will of trying to explain to frustrated families why children’s books are located in one building and reference materials in another.

“Committee members noted the space needed is not available on the existing properties. They suggested a new building was needed.

“‘Back in the 1950s, they bought little pieces of land and tried to squeeze into them,’ explained Board Secretary Mary Karasek. ‘Nobody had the foresight to see that library service would change.’

“‘The library of the 1980s is very different from a few decades back when it was a source for recreational reading and help with school work,’ agreed Ms. Beth Mueller, consultant services director for the Suburban Library System. ‘Today’s library is an information center. Adults want in-depth information for use in their present jobs or in obtaining new ones. They look to the library for technological information, business directories, even tax service forms.’”

As to the practice of maintaining two library locations instead of one, Consultant Mueller said, “It constantly dilutes services. The logical thing is to put it all in one place.”

The problem was where, the newspaper noted later in its Crossroads series. Of the seven possible building sites evaluated in 1984 by the Suburban Library System, only one remained by 1988 — a vacant Ogden Avenue car dealership. SLS consultants had considered it “too small and too far southwest to be appropriate.”

The only addition to the site list was city-owned Janura Park property at 28th Street and Oak Park Avenue.

However, by April 1988, the attention of Board and staff was focused on immediate concerns, not future prospects.

Budget Shortfall Threatens Service

A \$39,000 shortfall in the 1988 budget threatened to force the library to close over the winter months. Another \$8,500 was needed for repairs at the 16th Street Branch.

The budget approved by the City Council was \$39,500 short of the amount needed to pay staff salaries for the full year, Director Korbel told the Board at a meeting covered by the *Berwyn LIFE*. The director said Mr. Alan Burton, the city's administrative coordinator, had informed him it would not be possible to transfer funds from some other budget line item to meet the salaries.

"We thought about shutting down for the summer, but all the programs are in place," Mr. Korbel said. "Rather than do something that drastic, that soon, we thought we should try to work it out with the [aldermanic] Budget Committee."

"President Nevaril-Lhotka noted since services have been divided between the two library branches, it no longer was possible to close one branch and keep the other open, a practice followed during a previous financial crisis," the newspaper reported.

As to 16th Street repairs, the Board agreed to replace broken windows on the northwest side of the building with smaller casement windows and brick up the remainder of the window wall. The approach was expected to reduce heating and air conditioning costs by 20 percent and eliminate the need to replace the draperies.

Director Korbel asked Board members to consider a small expansion of the North Branch, noting that, even if proposals to build a new library went forward, they would "be living in the 16th Street facility for at least five years."

Earlier proposals to expand the 16th Street Branch along its entire length proved too costly, the director said, because air-conditioning equipment would have to be moved. He suggested a small front or side addition could provide much-needed space at an estimated cost of \$100,000. The South Branch on 34th Street had insufficient land for any expansion.

Having failed to receive responses to earlier requests to discuss these issues with aldermanic oversight committees, the trustees decided to "write their aldermen" to ask for a meeting. They also decided to write the city administration asking for guidelines on dealing with the press.

Director Korbel had reported receiving criticisms about what he and Library Board members "were saying to the press."

“We don’t want to embarrass the city, and we are not out to be malicious,” Mr. Korbel said, “but obviously, the Library Board should be free to speak.”

As the issue continued to fester over the next few months, Board Secretary Mary Karasek questioned, “How can we conduct a public meeting without making public statements? We have the right to express our opinions.”

The Board’s letters elicited a quick response on at least one front. By mid May, city and library representatives were holding joint discussions.

That affirmation of support from Alderman Anthony DiMenna, chairman of the City Council’s Library Oversight Committee, heartened those in attendance at that May meeting. In addition to Director Korbel, the library was represented by Board President Nevaril-Lhotka and Members Ann Marrone, Doris Remp and Rosemary Scola. Accompanying Alderman DiMenna were Alderman Lawrence Menchetti, chairman of the City Council’s Budget Committee, and City Comptroller Allen Zank.

By meeting’s end, the *Berwyn LIFE* reported, those present had:

- Found a solution to the \$39,000 shortfall that threatened to close the library doors from October to December;
- Agreed to seek Council approval to hire an architect for North Branch renovations;
- Authorized Director Korbel to explore with the North Berwyn School District the possibility of joint library-school parking on school-owned land at 16th Street and Gunderson Avenue; and
- Opened the way for further city-library discussions on building a new full-service facility while retaining the 16th Street location as a partial-service branch.

“Early in the meeting, Alderman Menchetti and Comptroller Zank found the answer to budgeting problems,” the newspaper reported. Contradicting information Director Korbel had received earlier, Alderman Menchetti insisted funds could be transferred from one line item to another to meet the expected shortfall in salary appropriations.

Board members were delighted to discover they actually had more money to work with than anticipated. In the final hours of the city’s budget process, the library’s portion

had been raised from \$468,000 to \$514,870. But the library never had been informed of the increase. Not only would the \$39,000 shortfall be covered, but the library would be able to repair its broken windows at 16th Street.

Director Korbelt then went a step further, suggesting a \$100,000 mortgage be taken out on the South Branch to pay for an addition to the North.

Mr. Menchetti said the aldermanic committee would “take the suggestion under consideration,” the newspaper reported. “But we are talking \$100,000 for a building that is woefully inadequate in parking,” Menchetti noted. As to a long-range solution, he urged the Library Board to “take a vote and put in writing” what members wanted to do in the immediate and long term not only regarding physical facilities but whether the library wanted to become an independent taxing district.

Director Korbelt explained that, in its present status, the library only could levy at a rate that would bring in \$350,000 to \$400,000 (annually). “There is no way we can operate a new, major facility for that amount,” he said. “We can’t operate for that amount now.”

Either the city would have to fund a new building and its daily operational costs, Mr. Korbelt said, or the library would have to “go district, sell bonds and have a sufficient tax base to support the operation.” In either case, the director noted that new construction could not be completed for at least five years. Depending on where the new facility was located, he added, “We might need to keep 16th Street open.”

Alderman Menchetti concurred, saying, “I think the citizens of Berwyn are interested in two branches, not one central library.” Noting most available building sites appeared to be south of Cermak Road, the alderman maintained, “There are small children who could not cross Cermak and senior citizens who can’t travel that far.”

According to a the *Berwyn LIFE* report, Director Korbelt favored maintaining a branch system “so long as one of the facilities offered full service. Berwyn now has services divided between the two buildings because the facilities are so small,” he noted. “We can’t operate everything in one building. I have never come across anything in this country similar to this type of operation.”

The meeting ended with aldermen and library leaders anticipating guidance from an April survey that, unlike the 1988 version, had been mailed to every home in Berwyn.

Heartened by Uncertainty

In June, Director Korbelt summarized the preliminary results of that survey. Of the 1,512 respondents, 429 used the 16th Street Branch; 657 used 34th; 305 used both; and 100 used neither. A total of 552 respondents patronized another library.

A total of 834 said they would like all collections at a single library; 495 said no.

As to a referendum, 676 said they would vote to build a new library; 341 said no; and 477 were unsure.

“That means more people were unsure than said no to a referendum,” Director Korbelt noted. When taking into account the large number that said they would prefer all library services under one roof, Mr. Korbelt concluded that, with the right construction plan, a solid base of support existed for building a central library.

While many Berwyn residents were looking outside their community for library services, some nonresidents preferred the Berwyn facility.

In July, Sister Cyril, a nun at Loretto Hospital in Chicago, began serving an internship at the Berwyn Library as a requirement for completing a degree in library technical assistance service from the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn. She told the local newspaper that she chose the Berwyn Library because of its friendliness and its proximity to Loretto Hospital, and because it was the only library that offered her a library card.

“Oak Park and Cicero would not give a nonresident a card,” Sister Cyril said. “Oak Park wanted \$50 (for such a card). When I came to the Berwyn Library, I found they were very helpful.”

For its part that July, the library received a helping hand from Summerfaire Inc. The organizers of Berwyn’s annual summer festival gave the library \$5,000 to help fund the hiring of a building consultant. Together with other gifts and fundraiser proceeds, the Board decided in November that it was financially positioned to sign a contract with Consultant Richard Thompson. For a fee between \$3,500 and \$4,500, Mr. Thompson was commissioned to evaluate the present two-branch system and recommend whether the community would best be served by one central library or one full-service library and one branch.

Responding to newspaper articles quoting people as saying they had lost interest in saving pennies and were giving or even throwing them away, the library embarked on a “Pennies for the Library” fundraiser. Containers were placed in the two branches and adults and children were encouraged to donate their pennies to build a new library. By the end of 1988, the building fund had grown to \$9,000, and further fundraising was postponed to a time when an architect would be needed.

Meanwhile, efforts were made to address at least some of the library’s shortcomings.

At the North Branch, renovations permitted separate desks to be established for children’s circulation and reference and opened a way to offer readers’ advisory services to patrons. However, a lack of space and funds prevented the institution of readers’ advisory services at the South Branch. The library even lacked funds to hire a cleaning service.

Adult circulation declined by nearly 11,000 between 1987 and 1988. Juvenile books and audio/visual materials suffered similar decreases. Only adult audio/visual circulation showed a gain — 789 over the previous year.

To better cover the after-school and after-work crowd, library hours were changed from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. to 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at both locations.

Additional reference books and 25 new periodical subscriptions were purchased. Nevertheless, the Berwyn Library still did not meet state reference standards.

Resignation Rocks Library

“The Berwyn Library Board’s Budget Committee never got beyond the first line of their fiscal 1989 budget review before the first bomb dropped,” was the lead on a story in the January 20 issue of the *Berwyn LIFE*.

“When Board Member Patricia Maietta questioned a proposed 55 percent increase from \$20,548 to \$35,000 in the library director’s annual salary, Director Albert Korbel responded, ‘That is the salary I think you will have to pay to get my replacement.’”

After researching what library directors usually are paid, Mr. Korbel said he found the minimum starting salary was \$35,000. “Last year, \$20,800 was budgeted for the Berwyn director’s salary,” he noted.

Director Korbel also proposed salary increases for professional and clerical staff, explaining, "The library has been unable to hire qualified personnel at the rate it presently is able to pay." The director said the situation was especially acute in the Technical Services Department, where the supervisory position had been vacant for many months and books were piling up uncatalogued.

Money for air conditioning repairs at the South Branch also was high on the request list and increased custodial service as well, the newspaper reported. "As the building is falling apart, the maintenance man is doing more maintenance and not cleaning," Mr. Korbel explained.

To give the Library Board time to find a replacement, Director Korbel said he would stay on until March 28, the day the budget was expected to be passed by the City Council. This would enable Mr. Korbel not only to continue crunching the numbers but to work with the building consultant as well.

The budget negotiations bore little fruit. The budget for the entire City of Berwyn increased by only \$217,000. That amount divided among the various departments of the city meant a scant increase for the library. An \$11,000 hike in library salaries and \$13,000 for maintenance and repairs was achieved by cutting \$26,000 out of reference and adult book purchases. The salary slated for a new library director was set at \$24,126.

Work with Consultant Thompson proved more successful.

On March 8, the consultant presented a building analysis and construction proposal that later became the template for promoting the referendum.

"Collections have approached no growth," Mr. Thompson noted. "There is no staff work place so staff must share tables in public areas. Neither building can serve senior citizens who can't climb stairs."

For the library to operate at minimum standards set by the Illinois Library Association's "Avenues to Excellence," Thompson said the Berwyn branches should have a book collection of 178,698 to serve the city's population of 46,849. Instead, only 103,633 volumes were available.

Further, the consultant noted, to house even the current collection adequately would require 18,360 square feet of storage and display space and an additional 526 feet for patrons and staff.

“An increase in space is needed just to operate the present library in accordance with generally accepted levels of patron convenience and staff efficiency,” Mr. Thompson concluded. He then repeated a refrain of library consultants throughout the years:

“This is too small a community to support two libraries well. You have more libraries than you can afford. That is not to say you can’t have two buildings. It may be politically easier to do that, but the end result will not be as good.”

Asked about adding on to the existing buildings, Thompson’s off-the-cuff reaction was, “Nothing you have will support an addition of the size needed.”

Based on Northeast Planning Commission projections that Berwyn would have 44,000 people by the year 2010, the consultant suggested constructing a building of 76,065 square feet. “That space would be sufficient for 20 years,” he anticipated. Then an additional 13,200 square feet might be needed to serve “unforeseen needs of the future.”

But although Mr. Thompson urged the need for haste in refining his report because of the anticipated availability of millions of dollars in state construction funds in the fall, the Library Board placed the matter on hold until a new director was in place.

In late March, the library suffered another blow. Trustee Patricia Maietta resigned, charging the Board was “a powerless appendage of City Hall.”

Koppe Becomes 5th Director

Finally, at a special meeting on May 15, 1989, the Library Board hired Mrs. M. Kathleen Koppe of North Riverside as the new director. Mrs. Koppe’s career had begun with employment by the Melrose Park Public Library while she was still a student at Triton College in River Grove and Rosary College in River Forest. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rosary in 1976, she worked as a serials library assistant at Loyola Law School Library in Los Angeles, and then moved on to a position at Newport Center Branch Library in Newport Beach, California. She later worked as technical librarian for the American Medical Association in Chicago.

Mrs. Koppe’s Berwyn employment was decided by a split 4-2 vote of the Board. Voting in favor of the employment were Vice President Rosemary Scola, Secretary Mary

Karasek and Members Ann Marrone and Doris Remp. Voting against were President Nevaril-Lhotka and Member Suzanne Camacho.

According to the *Berwyn LIFE*, Mrs. Nevaril-Lhotka declined direct comment on her vote. “The majority rules,” she said, and then emphasized, “The entire board will support the new director.”

Of those voting to employ Mrs. Koppe, Secretary Karasek was the only one to explain her position, saying she favored the candidate’s 15-plus years of experience in public and academic libraries, compared with the other finalist, who had just graduated from library school.

The new director’s first challenge was to lead the Board and staff to a consensus on whether to repair and expand the existing buildings or follow Consultant Thompson’s recommendation to construct a new building. However, there were obstacles in her path, the major one being a “disheartened staff with a high turnover rate,” according to a the *Berwyn LIFE* analysis.

“Sixteen out of 40 staff members left last year,” the newspaper reported. “To cover staff shortages, Reference personnel help out in the Children’s Department. Everybody pitches in to catalog new acquisitions since no replacement has been found for the Technical Services director, who left in December.

“The staff’s frustrations boiled over with Mrs. Koppe’s appointment,” the newspaper noted. Staff members, who first learned of the appointment when they read it in the newspaper, came to the Board to question the new director’s credentials. They maintained that, under new state requirements, a library director was expected to have a Master of Library Science degree, whereas Mrs. Koppe possessed only a Bachelor of Arts. They noted that several current staff members had more experience than the new director.

“Board members told the staff that the Board had selected the most qualified candidate among those who applied,” the newspaper reported. “They asked why staff failed to apply for the position themselves. They questioned how much longer they could continue without a director in place and said they had done the best they could with the salary available.”

City Administrative Coordinator Lawrence Zdarsky told the newspaper that both staff and Board were “misinformed.”

In an interview with the paper, Zdarsky said he knew of no state requirement that a library director must possess a master’s degree in library science. “Because the Board had not set a salary ... we put into the 1989 budget what Mr. Korbel’s salary would have been this year. We told the Board that if they needed more time or money, they could have it.”

“The law allows the Board great independence,” Mayor Lanzillotti said, “and it is the Board’s responsibility to make appointments. We have never interfered with the Director or the Board. I want the best library our money can buy.”

To improve communications in the future, Zdarsky and the mayor agreed to appoint a member of the city’s law department to deal with legal questions the Board might have. They also promised a more active aldermanic oversight committee.

A *Berwyn LIFE* reporter turned to Beth Mueller, consultant services director for the Suburban Library System, for the last word on the subject. Consultant Mueller told the reporter that, although state law did not require a library to hire a director with a master’s degree, a library could jeopardize its state per capita grants if it failed to do so.

“The law for per capita grants says libraries must either meet or show progress at meeting Illinois Library Association standards,” Consultant Mueller said. “One of those standards is that any library that serves more than 5,000 people should have at least one full-time professional librarian with a Master of Library Science degree.”

With a population of 46,000, Berwyn could lose more than \$46,000 in state grants annually, the consultant observed. “This would be more than enough to pay the additional salary needed to attract a director with an MLS degree.”

To their credit, Board and director were able to put the controversy behind them, and after Mrs. Koppe had completed one month on the job, local newspaper headlines read, “New director pleases board.”

Director Koppe’s initial reaction to the Thompson report was that she “didn’t think the city needs exactly what the report is proposing [70,000 feet of new library space].” Relaying her impressions at the June Library Board meeting, the director said, “I don’t see how we can afford the Thompson proposal. This is like the ultimate, perfect

library. The report did not seem to address whether Berwyn needs this for the type of patrons we have.”

Board and city officials seemed receptive to her interpretation, and Director Koppe focused on the attainable. She recommended replacing at least one branch telephone system, noting telephones had been improperly wired to handle the automated circulation database system to which the library subscribed; the system had been intended to meet patrons’ requests for materials and information by contacting some 60 other libraries by computer. An emergency request for \$5,000 to replace one telephone system already had been forwarded to city officials, Mrs. Koppe reported. The second library branch could be rewired the following year.

Yet another in the seemingly endless series of library surveys was undertaken in the fall of 1989. This latest analysis concentrated on library users, and, in an appearance before the All Berwyn Committee, Director Koppe confided it had altered her perspective on facility needs.

“After repeatedly being told that a central library is ‘a very volatile issue and a bad thing to bring up,’” Mrs. Koppe told A.B.C. members she was “pleasantly surprised” when the survey showed a new and more convenient location of services was one of the top patron concerns.

Director Koppe said a follow-up, general population survey had been requested by Mayor Lanzillotti, and would be sent in June to all of the city’s postal service customers.