

July 2010

Newest Cobb County Branch Library Wins Rave Reviews

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2010) "Newest Cobb County Branch Library Wins Rave Reviews," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 47 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol47/iss3/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

Newest Cobb County branch library wins rave reviews

"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity."

— **Albert Einstein**

"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

— **Charles Swindoll**

"Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises."

— **Demosthenes**

These sayings fairly sum up the reaction when the Cobb County Public Library System heard that the much-loved and very popular Merchants Walk Library was to be sold and slated for demolition by the end of 2009. A search for a new location was begun immediately, with the goal of creating a new home for the East Cobb patrons that was convenient, accessible and modern. A major goal would be to provide a much larger space than the previous cramped quarters and offer an environment that would highlight new technologies such as self-checkout systems and include advanced audiovisual systems.

The Parkaire Landing Shopping Center, a short mile and a half away from Merchants Walk, offered what at first seemed an unlikely venue: an empty former health club with dark black walls, no windows, and basketball lights in the ceiling. However, the size of the space presented the opportunity to realize many of the goals and dreams for the new library. Cobb County Commission

Chairman Sam Olens negotiated a long-term lease on the location for the county, with the vision of enhancing commercial activity and further growth in this area of the county. Papers were signed, and it was full speed ahead with space planning and architectural design.

In order to minimize expenses on the project, Cobb County chose its own in-house resources, utilizing the capable and proven employees of the Property Management Department. Caren Carmichael, design coordinator, and Lee Vaughan, project manager, met with Library Director Helen Poyer and Regional Manager Mike Aiken on a weekly basis to develop an interior design and architectural plan that would fit the needs of the library as described by Merchants Walk Branch Manager Ansie Krige. As plans solidified, John Gross of Moreland Altobelli architectural firm would translate them to blueprint, so that construction could begin. In late August 2009, interior demolition of the old health club commenced.

Throughout the autumn months, design meetings and construction continued on parallel tracks, with the specter of the wrecking ball for the Merchants Walk branch looming ominously at the end of December. Decisions on paint colors, carpet design, furniture styles and lighting fixtures were made by Director Helen Poyer and Mike Aiken under the expert guidance of Caren Carmichael. Excitement built as the new library grew phase by phase, each visit to the site showing completion of another facet of the grand design. Walls went up, dividing the space into



A reading area in the East Cobb Library

recognizable patterns, ceilings were hung, electricity and plumbing installed, windows placed in the former blank walls, columns created. Beautiful cabinetry was produced by the Property Management woodworking shop, including the new circulation desk and display cases for the front lobby/café. The café area itself was designed to provide a place for patrons to relax, perhaps read their newly borrowed book or simply enjoy conversation and a small snack in the library storefront. This space was just one of the unique features of the design, and it has already proven to be very popular with patrons.

From the beginning, the new library was envisioned to contain the latest in technology, a prime feature being the dedicated teen area, in which a wall-mounted high-definition television was placed, to be used by teens for gaming, displays of teen-created poetry and art. In addition, a smaller TV monitor was placed in the front lobby/café, where patrons would be able to view library program schedules or other county information.

The circulation desk itself is designed to take advantage of future library systems such as RFID checkout. Also, a self-checkout station similar to the one already in use at the Central Library was installed. The Community Room and the Children's Program Room were both equipped with built-in touch-screen controls for running HDTV ceiling-mounted video projectors and automatically deployed movie screens, all managed by state-of-the-art AV receivers and Blu-ray DVD players secured in a separate closet. Community groups wishing to take advantage of this technology would only need to bring their own laptops, plug them in to the system in the Community Room and view their own program on the big screen. As Project Manager Lee Vaughan said, "This library probably has more wiring than the space shuttle."

By mid-December, Lee Vaughan was able to deliver the extremely good news, as the holiday season approached, that the new library would be ready for move-in beginning in early January. The mammoth task of moving the old Merchants Walk collections and furnishings began. Late December through January found the Merchants Walk staff, with the help of library system staff and volunteers, busily filling packing crates full of books for the upcoming transfer. While this was going on, shelving was being disassembled at Merchants Walk, moved and reassembled at the East Cobb branch location. Team effort was again on display as Property



Carmichael



Vaughan

Management, Parks & Recreation and the Sheriff's Office assisted with the move of materials. Merchants Walk branch operations stopped for one full week at the end of January to give staff and volunteers the time to re-shelve the collections. On Jan. 29, Branch Manager Ansie Krige was able to look around her new library and report that the East Cobb branch would be open and ready for business on Feb. 1.

Public response to the new library has been overwhelmingly favorable. "The entire building has been designed to be community-friendly," Krige said, "which is noticeable from the moment one enters the library. The library has been designed to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that makes a visit to the library a pleasure." Patron interest and enthusiasm for the East Cobb Library are high, and its opening is having an impact throughout the community. Regional Manager Mike Aiken describes the new facility in this way: "Libraries function as a community gathering center today, providing a place for education, entertainment and discussion of neighborhood interests for Cobb County residents and nonresidents alike."

For more information, visit www.cobbcatt.org or call the East Cobb Library at 770-509-2730. ►►

Mike Aiken and Erika Ruthman contributed to this article.