



Weekend Poll: Library overdue fees, good or bad?



This week Erin Roll reported that the Montclair Public Library will no longer be overdue fees on materials in the hopes of increasing users.

Customers with overdue materials will not be able to take out items until all overdue materials are returned. Books or materials that are more than 90 days will be charged a \$20-\$30 fee.

The American Library Association has viewed overdue fees as an equity issue: the fees often result in people who need the library the most, including children and low-income families, not coming back.

Read Montclair Local's recent story on library fines [here](#), then tell us what you think. Let us know by voting in our poll below and by leaving a comment in our comment section at the bottom of the page.

Do you agree with the Montclair Library ditching overdue fees?

- Yes, and tell us why in the comments below.
- No, and tell us why in the comments below.

Vote

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Rediscovered film reveals Montclair's innovative library in 1940



'Portrait of a Library' is a snapshot of the Montclair Public library in 1940. A small snippet will be shown at the library's 125th celebration on April 14.

Courtesy MPL

By Kelly Nicholaides

for Montclair Local

A newly-digitized, 16mm film captures the Montclair Public Library as a pioneering institution of knowledge and progress.

“‘Portrait of a Library’ is a snapshot of the Montclair Public library in 1940. It shows people using the library, our home delivery service, people calling to reserve books, use of the first automated circulation card catalog and a reading of ‘Native Son,’ which was controversial,” said Peter Coyl, Montclair library board director.

IBM had designed the first punch card data processing system and equipment to record book loans and returns that was used in Montclair, prompting librarians worldwide to visit the library and view its offerings.

The “Portrait of a Library” film’s digitization and availability to a wider audience reflects the library being at the forefront of innovative library services.

“It’s an important piece of our history and speaks to the longstanding culture of Montclair as being progressive and forward thinking,” Coyl said.

A brief clip of the film will be screened to coincide with the library’s 125th anniversary Gala Celebration on Saturday, April 14, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$50. The event includes light fare, discussion, overview of future plans for the library and dessert. The film will be screened in its entirety as part of the Montclair Film Festival on Saturday, April 28, 12:15 p.m. at

Clairidge Cinemas. Tickets are \$12 for members, \$14 for non-members.

Created by cinematographer Sy Wexler and director/producer Hans Berger, “Portrait of a Library” was in the Montclair Public Library’s archives. It was made for the sum of \$1,200, paid by the Agnes Osborne Fund, whose mission was to spread international understanding.

“Early this year we donated the film to the Library of Congress who has digitized it using the three copies we had for the use of the American people,” said Coyl.

The film showcases “the democratic values embodied in the American library system,” according to the Montclair Film Festival website, which noted that “Portrait of a Library” was distributed internationally by the Museum of Modern Art.

Since 1893, the Montclair Public Library has remained ahead of the times. It started out as a subscription-based library, and later turning into an association library. In the 1920s, the delivery service for homebound patrons and a computerized circulation system began. By 1969, bookmobiles on street corners, parks and playgrounds boosted library use by 40 percent within two years. Public computers were brought in during the 1980s and integrated the Adult School of Montclair. Robotic Electronic Checkout and bookbike were introduced in 2015.

Looking ahead, library trustee Ilmar Vanderer said that although we live in a time of remarkable and rapid change in information environment, the basic purpose of libraries has remained unchanged.

“Strategies for meeting that purpose must evolve to meet changing community needs and emerging new technologies,” Vanderer said. “We want Montclair Public Library to continue being an innovative, dynamic, engaging, purposeful and welcoming as possible, from its customer service, community programs, and collection development to accessibility, building design, and multi-media technology.”

Short term goals include implementing a new Strategic Plan for the next five years. Long term goals include \$16 million re-design of both library buildings as announced in March, and to be formally presented at the 125th anniversary celebration on April 14.



Architect reveals \$16M library upgrade



Architect Andrew Berman unveiled the \$16 million plan to renovate the Montclair Public Library and the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library on March 29.

By JAIMIE JULIA WINTERS

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New York-based architect Andrew Berman unveiled the \$16 million plan to renovate the Montclair Public Library and the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library that would bring the community centers into the 21st century.

Plans, revealed on March 29, include updating the exteriors with more glass to bring in natural light, adding an extension to the third floor of the main library, a large extension to the Bellevue Library, the addition of a grand staircase to the main library, and ridding the libraries of stacks to give way to large, open public spaces while providing more classrooms and private study areas.



Plans call for the entrance to be moved and a plaza to be installed out front.

Andrew Berman/ Rendering

“With this [plan] we are creating more space for programming and people ...and light. The space will be more flexible,” Berman said Thursday night.

Although book loans have not dropped, with digital cataloging book shelving can be curated more wisely to do away with stacks and thereby create more open space. Shelves will be located against walls with collections changing with the seasons.

“DVD loans have dropped,” Berman said. “Books have not, especially for children.”



A grand spiral staircase would be added.

Andrew Berman/ Rendering

Main Library

Plans for the main library branch on South Fullerton Avenue include the following, at an estimated cost of \$10.4 million:

- Moving the main entrance to the left, adding floor-to-ceiling windows on all three levels and creating an outdoor plaza to the right of the building;
- A new grand staircase to access all floors, while keeping the original stairwell;
- An expansion of the auditorium into the hallway;
- Large public spaces on each floor;
- Glazed front windows covering all floors;
- An outdoor walled-in terrace area accessible through the library only;

- The addition of approximately 6 classrooms and a STEM room; and
- An option to expand the third floor to include a teen area with music and quiet rooms at \$1,775,000;

Additional costs include \$240,000 for parking and landscaping site work, \$580,000 for roofing, \$625,000 window replacement and \$300,000 for the patio.



At the Bellevue Branch, an addition would almost double the space.

Andrew Berman/ Rendering

Bellevue Library

The Bellevue plans call for more modest renovations totaling \$680,000, not including \$250,000 for parking and landscape site work and \$2.2 million for the addition.

“It’s a lovely building and does not need a radical reinvention,” said Berman.

Bellevue highlights include:

- A glass addition slightly smaller than the original building in size;
- Adding another entrance with the addition;
- A large public space and classroom on the first level;
- An option to create a teen area and more children programming space;
- Two classrooms and two ADA bathrooms on the lower level; and
- An elevator

The Library Board stressed the plans are preliminary. Funding is still being discussed, but would come from state allocations and municipal funds.



Both libraries would be given more open space and light.

Andrew Berman/ Rendering

History

The Bellevue branch was built in 1914 with \$80,000 of the funding coming from the Carnegie Corporation. It underwent a renovation in 1985, closing for eight months.

The main branch was built 1955 on land and with funds of \$250,000 donated by the Davella Mills Foundation. The total cost was \$800,000. In 1996, the library was renovated, relocating to the YWCA for a year. The renovations included the auditorium, cafe, art gallery and third floor children’s area. The library is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

Andrew Berman

Andrew Berman is an architectural and cultural heritage preservationist in New York City and is known for his

preservation work in Greenwich Village and the Meat Packing District.

“Andrew Berman Architect’s work is defined by unique spaces and structures designed to resolve complex programs and sites,” according to his company’s website. “Each project is inextricably of its place. Each project speaks of its client, their culture, and programmatic needs. The building’s construction is intrinsic to its meaning and presence, as well as its practical resolution. Materials are invested with purpose. They come alive in the light, and gain character over time through use and weathering.”