

New Library Opens in Camarillo

On March 31, 2007 Camarillo's brand new library opened its doors for the Opening Day celebration. This library, a part of the Ventura County Library, had been the vision of the city and the library for many years. And the vision was now a reality.

Approaching the library, a beautiful Spanish, California Mission style building, there is a fountain of colorful tile shaped like a Grecian urn. As you walk through the doors you feel like you are entering a five-star luxury hotel. This building has comfort, luxury, creativity and beauty. It is designed to inspire and entertain and to be a total "experience" for all ages.

Camarillo is a community which used and appreciated their old library, but, at 15,000 square feet, the old library, built in 1974, was crowded and outdated and could no longer serve the growth of the community. In June 2002 the City of Camarillo, in partnership with the Ventura County Library and the Pleasant Valley School District, applied for \$15,621,743 through the Library Bond Act of 2000, and in December, 2002, they were notified that their application had been approved for the full amount. The library was financed with the bond money from the state, the city's share of \$8,411,563 (later augmented by another \$2 million from the city), and \$400,000 contributed from the Friends of the Library's Building Fund. Coordinating all the building plans for the grant was Gail Doi, Deputy City Manager, and preparing the Library Plan of Service was Starrett Kreissman, then Director of the Ventura County Library. The City was very active in the whole process. Many design sessions were held with the full City Council.

A wonderful design team was assembled. The Chief Architect was James Nardini of CWA Architects, and the Interior Designer was Judy Van Wyk of The Design Studio. This was the same design team that designed the famed Cerritos Public Library. The Library Consultant for the building program was Kathryn Page, and Stephen Finney prepared the conceptual design that went with the grant. The "Show Set" in the library – all the exciting artisan work - was constructed and fabricated by Scenario Design.

One of the outstanding features of the library is the Children's Area which, at 22,000 square feet, is larger than the entire old library! As you walk into the Children's area over a spongy carpet that makes you feel like you are walking on waves, you see a large sunken treasure ship, very popular with the children! There is also a room that is like being in the submarine in "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea". Here portholes look out to colorful fish swimming by. Murals of favorite children's books cover the walls in one corner of the Children's Area.

In the Young Adult area, there are spectacular glass and ceramic mosaic pillars designed by Jolino Beserra. Throughout the whole library light fixtures, wall panels, carpeting, all are artistic and carefully coordinated. Tile work is exceptional throughout the library, and it was done by California Tile and Pottery in the California/Malibu style.

The library has 65,000 square feet and sits on 10 acres purchased by the city. The first floor contains the Young Adult and the Children's area, an after-school homework area, a literacy center, Conference rooms, including the Community Room which seats 200, and small study rooms. A whole wing – 2200 square feet- is devoted to the very popular Friends Book Store, which makes amazing profits that are donated to the library. To be opened soon is a small refreshment café.

Upstairs is the adult reading and reference. There is a fireplace with sofas and other comfortable and charming areas for reading.

100 public computers are available in the building. The whole library has wireless and hardwire setups so that people can use their own computers. There is also a computer training center.

The capacity for books and audiovisual materials is 270,000. It was designed for a projected population growth for the 93 square mile service area through the year 2020. On opening day there were 120,000 books from the library's old collection supplemented by 40,000 new books purchased by the city from a fund-raising campaign which raised over \$1 million.

The public responded enthusiastically to the opening of the new Camarillo Library. In the first 5 days there were 17,000 patrons, 10,000 items were checked out and 600 new library cards were issued. Over 500 children and adults attended the 6 story-telling events in the first days after the opening. The City and the County Library are overjoyed at having this vision of a library completed. As Gail Doi said, the 2000 Bond Act really did “stimulate a renaissance for libraries” in terms of showing the public what a public library really can be – a free public facility which is an outstanding cultural center for the community. For Ventura County, the Camarillo Library is an inspiration and a model for the entire county