

Oldham's New Library is a Literacy Lodge



By John Foster

In a building with the soul of a lodge, the new main branch of the Oldham County Public Library opened to the public Monday in La Grange. The change from the old branch is drastic.

Library Director Susan Eubank said stonework, wood grain and rich hues throughout contribute to the park lodge atmosphere. Arts and crafts-style furniture surrounds a lounge area beneath a stone hearth and a reused old-growth tulip poplar mantel.

As attractive as the building is, the biggest change is the space. At 30,000 square feet, it is three times the size of all the three old libraries put together. And there are immediately noticeably more books than the Duerson branch. A \$150,000 grant from the Peyton Samuel Head Family Trust brings 35,000 new books, magazine subscriptions, DVDs and the like to the library.

Many of the most unique features aren't as evident. All the building materials are harvested from within 500 miles of the site, and the wood is from sustainable forests. Fifty-five geothermal wells send water 300 feet into the earth to heat it. All the water from the roof runs into a 1,500 gallon underground tank which is used to flush the toilets, irrigate the landscaping and fuel the outside waterfall.

The paint and carpet is low VOC, the building is situated in order to save as many trees as possible, lights shut off when rooms are empty and there are four electric car chargers in the parking lot.

All this adds up to make a building that meets standards held by the U.S. Green Building Council. They are the first public library in the state to apply for certification by the council, Eubank said.

About 1,500 people attended the grand-opening festivities Sunday and a smaller number quickly filled the library with business Monday.

Stan Puckett arrived when the doors opened at 9:30 a.m. He moved within walking distance a few weeks ago and has peered in the doors eagerly awaiting the opening. By 10, he already had a new library card, ready to check out his first books.

Mary Jo Robb also arrived shortly after the doors opened.

"Oh, it's absolutely gorgeous," she said.

She came in to retrieve some books on tape plus novels and non-fiction books.

She admits to being a little lost in the new expansive space.

All that space comes at a price — about \$7.2 million including furniture.

Funds came from money saved through the years by the library, plus \$1.5 million from the state budget plus grants. Eubank said the building should be paid off in about 20 years.

If you go

The Main Branch of the Oldham County Library is located between Parker Drive and Yager Avenue, behind the Oldham 8 theaters in La Grange.

They are open 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, visit www.oldhampl.org.

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