

Consult the Cat

Shannon Roy, Editor

This question came from Denise de Rochefort-Reynolds at the Frank Carlson Library in Concordia: “We need to put down a new floor in our restrooms but they are no longer in good compliance with the ADA. Can we replace the flooring without a major remodeling? Or do we need to bring the restrooms into compliance as part of the project?”



This question made the Cat’s claws tingle. Nothing is more tempting than loose tiles that can be tackled and shredded and generally massacred. Unfortunately for libraries, children sometimes suffer from the same temptation. Anything coming loose is hard to resist, even if you know perfectly well what public property is.

A floor that is deteriorating can become a public hazard and should be replaced as soon as possible. Concordia’s plan to replace tiles with a softer vinyl is a good choice for user comfort and will probably be easier to keep clean.

Replacing a damaged floor is maintenance, not a major remodeling. It should be implemented even if the restrooms are not in good compliance with the ADA. The major problem with the restrooms at Frank Carlson, according to Denise, is that they don’t have the recommended clear space of five feet by eight feet. The lack of clear space in stalls is a common problem in libraries and one that cannot always be solved without a building program.

All public libraries should make sure that their restrooms are in the best compliance that is possible without a building program. Lighting should be strong, paint should be light, mirrors should be large, signage should be large and clear, grab bars should be correctly placed, faucets should be push-type, and pipes should be wrapped or covered with a vanity table.

It is still true that no remodeling or expansion should be implemented that does not result in a completely barrier-free facility. The disabled community has been remarkably patient with public libraries because they are aware of their limited funding. But they are also aware that there is no excuse for an updated library that is still breaking the law.

The Cat is not disabled but, like all cats, she is vain. A restroom that is so dark that she can hardly find her face with her paw makes her want to do a lot more than shred a loose tile. But most of those restrooms have not been in libraries. Kansas public librarians and trustees have made heroic efforts to create barrier-free facilities since 1991 and a number of beautiful libraries have been built in the past twenty years. Such efforts certainly deserve a purr from the

Cat.