

LOGS TO LITERATURE (L2L) PROPOSAL

Mark Jakubauskas¹ and Matthew Burke²

October 25, 2012

Summary: We propose to salvage the logs from the trees to be removed by the Lawrence Public Library expansion, have the logs sawn into lumber and then distribute the lumber to a set of area artists and craftsman (identified through a juried application process). These artists and artisans would be asked to create from the salvaged wood objects of art and craft, which would then be auctioned to the public following an exhibition, with proceeds to benefit the Friends of the Library.

The Trees: An informal inventory of the trees surrounding the library shows that there are at least a dozen or more oaks, sycamores, and ash trees of sufficient size to produce useable lumber. We estimate that, based on their diameter, that there may be nearly 1000 board-feet of lumber that could be salvaged from the trees. Given this, it would be unfortunate if these trees were simply cut down and converted to firewood or wood chips, when a far higher and better use could be obtained from them. Matthew Burke has held several logs-to-lumber workshops at his studio on the KU campus, and Mark Jakubauskas has contacts with several local sawyers who operate small lumber mills and drying kilns.

The Concept: Our concept – with many logistics and details to be worked out if the use of the logs is approved – is as follows:

- Identify, through personal contacts, the media, and the assistance of such organizations as the Lawrence Arts Guild, local artists and artisans interested in creating a work (or works) of art or fine craft from the library trees;
- Select, through a juried process, proposals for such works from these artists. This process might include examples of past work by the artist or craftsman.
- With the cooperation of the city and the contractor responsible for site clearance, salvage useable logs and wood from the trees; then with the assistance of the sawyer, mill the trees into lumber, and prepare them for drying by air or kiln.
- Distribute the lumber to the artists and artisans according to their proposals submitted in the juried process, with a deadline for completion of the works;
- Exhibit the finished pieces in a suitable venue, such as the Lawrence Arts Center exhibition gallery;
- Hold an exhibition and auction event, open to the public, at which the pieces on exhibit would be auctioned off to benefit the Friends of the Library, and ultimately, the Lawrence Public Library.

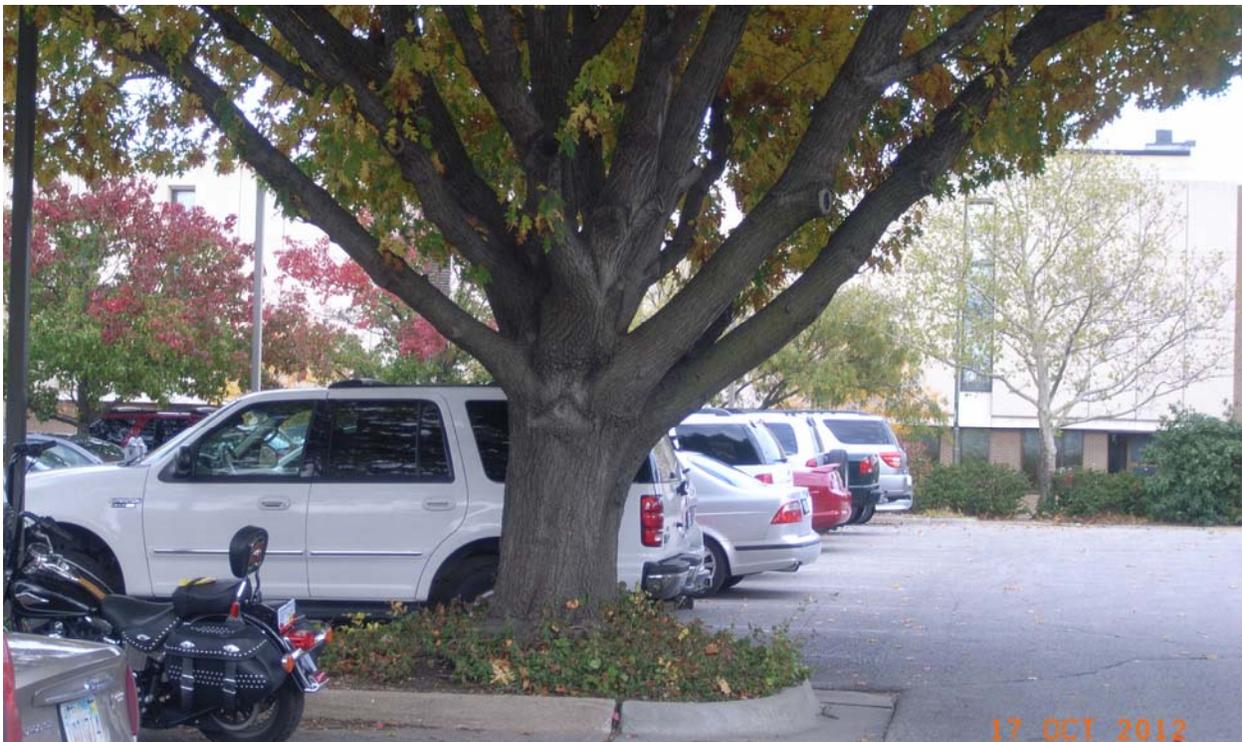
Status: We have discussed the concept with the LPL Director, Mr. Brad Allen, and he is supportive of the general plan. We have not proceeded with contacting any other persons or organizations (Lawrence Art Guild, Lawrence Arts Center, Friends of the Library, etc) while the question of whether the trees could be obtained was still pending.

¹ Mark Jakubauskas is a lecturer in the Environmental Studies Program and a research associate professor with the Kansas Biological Survey at KU.

² Matthew Burke is an associate professor of sculpture in the Department of Visual Art at KU.



- Ash trees along the Vermont Street side of the library



- A large pin oak in the parking lot east of the library. The intersection of so many limbs at the trunk creates interesting grain patterns in the wood.

Trees die, but live on in new library...Only in Topanga!

TOPANGA LIBRARY | JANUARY 24, 2011 | BY: KEN FERMOYLE |



Trees cut, but live on

Credits: ANTHONY VEREBES

RELATED TOPICS

- [Topanga](http://www.examiner.com/topic/topanga/articles)
- [Library](http://www.examiner.com/topic/library)

[Topanga](http://www.examiner.com/topic/topanga/articles) Canyon residents take pride in their status as “tree-huggers,” active environmentalists. Thus, when four trees (two oaks, two pines) had to be cut down on the site of a sorely-needed [library](http://www.examiner.com/topic/library), Topangans were conflicted. They wanted and needed the library, first to

be built in the area. But the trees were a familiar landmark at a bend in Topanga Canyon Blvd, almost across the road from the Post Office. Eliminating them went against the grain.

Enter Susan Nissman, Senior Field Deputy to L.A. County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, and a 31-year Topanga resident.

While attending a Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles, Nissman chanced to visit the booth of Pacific Coast Lumber, a leader in producing eco-friendly products from trees which would otherwise go to waste; turning them into functional pieces of art, furniture or other useful items. A bulb lit up; it was serendipity in action!

When Nissman described the library project and the tree dilemma, Pacific Coast lumber founder Don Seawater, showed immediate interest. Their discussion ultimately led to Pacific Coast Lumber subcontracting to remove two “gnarly pine trees” and two oak trees and to recycle them. As a result, wood from those very trees, removed from the library site on Sept. 29, 2010, will be re-cycled into products that will actually be used in the Topanga Library.

“Album covers, benches, Adirondack chairs, plus shelving and tables” are some possibilities said Seawater, who also teaches Resource Management at Cal Poly. It’s too early to specify which types of products will become part of the library because the amount of wood actually available for production has not yet been determined.

I do not live in the Canyon, but nearby in Woodland Hills. However, I have considered myself a Topangan at heart for more than four decades, since attending events at Will Geer’s Theatricum Botanicum in the 1960s. This story of four trees and a library is an example of why I love the Canyon. And I’m sure that if Will himself could read this article, he would smile broadly and say: “Only in Topanga!”

[News Logo](#)

- [Office of News & Information](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [UW Community Photos](#)
- [UW Classifieds](#)

-  [Subscribe to News](#)

Search UW Today

FROM THE UW NEWS ARCHIVES PRIOR TO 2011

2009-06-04

The Tree Salvage Program would give new life to reclaimed wood

[Nancy Wick](#)

UW Today

A beloved elm tree that stood at the entrance to what is now the Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse is about to enjoy a new life in the lobby.

During the recent renovation of the playhouse, the tree was evaluated and found to be too fragile to save. But instead of turning into wood chips in someone's garden, it was cut down and the wood transported to a local business called Urban Hardwoods. There, it was sliced lengthwise into approximately 2-inch-thick slabs, stacked and air-dried in a large warehouse for approximately one year. Finally, for six months it was cured in a large kiln, then fabricated into five benches that will sit in the playhouse lobby.

"We were able to visit Urban Hardwoods to select individual slabs for each of the five benches," said Randy Everett, project manager in the Capital Projects Office. "Each piece of wood is beautiful and unique as to grain, color and edge quality, so selecting just the right ones can be daunting, but fun."

The benches were installed in the lobby June 3, and signage is planned to explain to patrons where they came from. Urban Hardwoods, Everett said, donated the wood curing and most of the bench fabrication services in exchange for the surplus wood harvested from the elm.

Such wood reclamation is something that Campus Landscape Architect Kristine Kenney would like to see happen more often. That's why she's starting something she's calling the Tree Salvage Program.

"A lot of people are coming to us asking for conference tables or benches or anything that can be made out of wood," Kenney said. "So we said, 'Well, we have a carpenter shop on campus; they can

News from the University of Washington:

Originally a storehouse and remodeled into a theatre in 1930, the Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse (originally called the Seattle Repertory Playhouse), was the very first state-sponsored theatre in the nation and was home to WPA projects and the Negro Federal Theatre Projects.



Mary Levin

Drama school Technical Director Alex Danilchik and Master Carpenter Tres Tracy Ballion carry benches made from an elm tree that stood in front of the playhouse into the lobby.

make this furniture.' [That way] we make sure the trees that come down on our campus go into furniture that's built for our campus."

In ordinary circumstances, Kenney explained, trees that are taken down in a construction or renovation project belong to the contractor. And even in special circumstances such as the playhouse, where the tree is claimed for University use, the wood must be sent out for processing. Her aim is to bring that work in-house.

To that end, trees that have been taken down recently and are worth salvaging have been cut into 14-foot lengths and stored on campus. "I think we have probably 15 to 20 logs right now, and they're all different species," Kenney said. "We have cedar, we have elm, we have walnut."

The roadblock to the project moving forward is funding for the milling of the logs — the one piece of the process that can't be done in-house. Kenney is looking for a source of funding for that. But she says that's an up-front cost, and that afterward this should be a self-sustaining project.

"So we're encouraging any department out there that is interested to contact us and see if we can get this program started," Kenney said.

Contact Kenney at kkenney@u.washington.edu.



Mary Levin

A closeup shows the grain of the wood from the elm tree.