

## **'In the Belly of the Beast,' Gallup-style**

Written by By Bernie Dotson  
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In 1981, Jack Henry Abbott wrote the acclaimed "In the Belly of the Beast," a book of letters to famed novelist and journalist Norman Mailer about his experiences as what Abbott saw as a brutal and unjust prison system.

The book was an account of the 37-year-old Abbott's life behind bars for more than two decades.

Gallup isn't too far removed from the theme of Abbott's book, especially when one considers the size of the Octavia Fellin Library.

The library is the Indian Capital's take on 'In the Belly of the Beast.'

This isn't a tongue-lashing directed at the Gallup City Council and it certainly isn't a ploy to make people go out and buy a book most probably have never heard of.

But if the Gallup City Council, which has the final say-so on a new library, doesn't know by now how bad the need is for a bigger and more comprehensive facility, then they might want to talk to someone, anyone, who attended last weekend's Authors Festival and Children's Jamboree.

More than 1,200 people from around the Four Corners and beyond attended the festival.

Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington made sure everyone was comfortable at both the main library and the Children's Branch.

She had desks and chairs moved to accommodate both authors and patrons, something that would not have had to be done if the building housing the library was considerably bigger.

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Gallup's library situation is in-ordinary. The Children's Branch is located about a block away from the main building which, in itself, doesn't foster inter-generational relationships.

The Children's Branch along Second Street is a former bank, which means the building's floors weren't originally constructed to support cumbersome book shelves. And has anyone ever thought what the main library building on Hill Avenue would look like with a second or third floor? Wow!

No one is asking for a library the size of ones in New York City or Washington, D.C. A lot of people from not only Gallup, but from far out places around McKinley County, and the surrounding Navajo and Zuni reservations, utilize both the children's and main libraries.

Maybe some kind of cost agreement could be drawn up with these entities.

A new state-of-the-art library would probably cost between \$8 to \$12 million, not much when figuring in the long-term community benefits.

Abbott lived most of his life raging against the machine. Gallupians shouldn't have to do the same.

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