Pottstown’s best bargain

The Pottstown Regional Public Library, the borough’s most cost-effective public institution, celebrated its reopening the first day of December after nearly six months of renovations.

It’s fascinating how much the library accomplished with just $630,000 — half from a state grant and half from local fundraising.

Compare this to $30 million in public dollars the Pottstown School District has spent in recent years renovating and enlarging just four elementary schools serving 1,450 students in grades K-4.

Meanwhile, the public library has 27,000 registered users and receives about 160,000 visits in a typical year.

**Historic gem**

So what was accomplished for $630,000?

First, the main reading room has been transformed with new flooring, ceilings, and lighting.

**“Found” space**

Architect Dick Frantz “found” space for a new meeting room by extending the mezzanine on the south side of the building to the east side in what had been open space above the main floor. The new room connects to an existing elevator and stair tower.

A new passport office was constructed underneath the new meeting room, together with a staff workroom and a handicapped accessible public lavatory.

**Non-profit status**

The public library is a non-profit that operates with an annual budget of just $650,000.

It receives 50 percent of its funding from local governments, 20 percent from the state, and the rest from private fundraising.

It’s Pottstown’s best bargain.