Collapsed library wall will be restored

BY DANA DUNN Enquirer Contributor

LEBANON, Ohio — The original portion of the 79-year-old Lebanon Public Library probably can be preserved even though two-thirds of a two-story rear wall collapsed Friday, delaying an expansion project, an architect said Monday.

"Unless some major factor enters consideration that we are not aware of, I can't see any reason why it will not be restored to the way it was before this happened," Gerald Hammond of Steed, Hammond and Paul, Architects, said.

Hammond's firm designed a \$1.4 million addition to the library. Work began on the addition last month.

"Our priority has been to stabilize the situation in the building to guard against further damage and we are meeting today (Monday) to nail down a master plan of where we go from here." Hammond said.

"Obviously this will affect our time schedule for the addition because now we have to allow

time for the restoration work, but the addition as far as we can tell will go on as planned."

No one was injured when the 20-foot-tall west wall collapsed, even though four people were in the library at the time. Construction workers in an excavated area next to where the wall collapsed also escaped injury.

Workers were using heavy equipment around the foundation at the time of the collapse, but Hammond said a cause for the accident has not been determined.

"We are just now beginning to think about the cause of it," he said. "It would be very premature for anyone to hazard a guess."

Hammond said it also is too early to estimate damage to the structure as well as furnishings and books that were stacked against or near the fallen wall. "There are too many complexities involved in the cause and you have to remember that the board of trustees will now have to make provisions to rent a library," Hammond said.

Trustees President William Fowler, whose

board met Monday night, said he already had a couple of sites in mind to use as a temporary library, including the United Telephone Building downtown and a spot at a nearby shopping center.

Lebanon Fire Department firefighters remained at the library until 11 p.m. Friday — until the building had been fortified with wooden shoring.

State Route 63 (Main Street) was closed for 13 hours to through traffic while the building was being shored up, and one lane nearest the library's north wall remained closed Monday, Fire Chief Mike Hannigan said. The sidewalk around the building has been blocked.

Hannigan said a large sheet of plastic was draped over the hole Saturday to protect books and shelves inside.

The Lebanon police department is patrolling the area when construction workers are not on duty.