

Report on the Status of the Santa Cruz City-County Library System
Fiscal Year 2009/2010 through Fiscal Year 2013/2014
June 30, 2015

After some very difficult years, the Santa Cruz City-County Library System is poised for a brighter future. The budget has been realigned with expenditures trimmed to suit the new fiscal reality. The Joint Powers Agreement that currently governs the system is expiring and a new group of board members/directors will soon be in place. The Library Director has recently retired and recruitment for a replacement will begin in the coming months. The library's leadership, at its most strategic level, is changing, and this is after years of change affecting every level of the library system.

This report will serve as a high-level summary of the status of the library system in key areas during Fiscal Years 2009/2010 through Fiscal Years 2013/2014. It is meant to be a helpful tool, in this time of transition, for those currently at the helm of the library system as well as for those who will lead it in the near future: Library Board members, representatives from the County and the cities served by the library system, the new director, and staff.

Among the sources used to develop this report are:

- [Joint Powers Board Agenda Packet of February 14, 2011](#)
- [Joint Powers Board Agenda Packet of March 26, 2011](#)
- [Joint Powers Board Agenda Packet of April 4, 2011](#)
- [Joint Powers Board Finance Subcommittee Agenda Packet of February 23, 2015](#)
- [Joint Powers Board Agenda Packet of March 9, 2015](#)
- [Joint Powers Board Agenda Packet of June 8, 2015](#)
- [Ballot Language from Measure B \(1996\)](#)
- [Ballot Language from Measure R \(2008\)](#)
- [3-5 Year Strategic Plan 2010-2015](#)
- [Compromise Service Model Report](#)
- [Technology Plan 2013-2018](#)
- [Facilities Master Plan 2014-2023](#)

Also helpful were the comments from Library Joint Powers Board members, jurisdictional representatives and administrators, and library staff. For the reader's convenience, the online version of this report links to the documents referenced above. On-site visits to each library location also helped with data gathering.

History and Governance of the Santa Cruz City-County Library System

The Santa Cruz City-County Library System is composed of 10 libraries located throughout most of Santa Cruz County, a bookmobile, and virtual services. The first public library built in Santa Cruz was funded through a grant from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1902 to be built at what is now the current site of the Downtown Branch. Three other Carnegie libraries followed. As libraries came to exist in other areas of the County of Santa Cruz, a contract was established to have them administered through the City of Santa Cruz.

The 1988 contract between the City of Santa Cruz and the County of Santa Cruz reaffirmed the arrangement. By the mid 1990's it was clear that additional funding was needed to sustain the aging system and improve library operations and facilities. In November of 1996 a county-wide ballot measure, Measure B, which was a ¼-cent sales tax, was approved. The ballot measure also paved the way for a new governance model for the library system. The sales tax measure had a sunset clause, however prior to the deadline of the initial measure voters reauthorized the sales tax through Measure R in 2008 and eliminated the sunset clause, making the sales tax permanent.

A joint powers agreement to govern the library system was established among the jurisdictions the library system represents: the City of Capitola, the City of Santa Cruz, the City of Scotts Valley, and the County of Santa Cruz. The life span of the agreement was ten years. While the City of Santa Cruz was to continue administering the business affairs of the system, a library governing board was created, composed of:

- Two members of, and selected by, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
- Two members of, and selected by, the Santa Cruz City Council
- One member of, and selected by, the Capitola City Council
- One member of, and selected by, the Scotts Valley Council
- Three At-Large Citizens appointed by the Governing Board

A joint powers agreement was also established to create the Library Financing Authority, which would accept and distribute the sales tax. It was determined that proceeds from the sales tax would be distributed based on service area and population.

Also, there was a maintenance of effort requirement aimed at retaining support from funding sources already provided to libraries. While the City of Watsonville operates its own library system and is not part of the Santa Cruz City-County Library System, as the sales tax was county-wide, Watsonville shares in the proceeds and is a member of the joint powers Library Financing Authority, along with the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and the County of Santa Cruz.

At the time of this report, both the *Library Services Joint Powers Agreement* and the *Library Financing Authority Joint Powers Agreement* were up for review and revision. It is anticipated that the structure of the board will change to address some key issues. The Library Board, in its current composition, reportedly is large and unwieldy. Some feel that the library system itself, by nature of the reporting structure, is city-centric, sometimes to the detriment of the libraries in smaller communities. Members who represent specific constituents and communities, are said at times to focus on the interests of those communities rather than on the library system as a whole. It is also thought that there is a disadvantage to the citizen-members, as they are not privy to certain information at the same time that it is available to those who are also members of city councils or the Board of Supervisors. An opinion was expressed that the current Library Board has responsibility but no real authority because important actions require approval from another governing body. As a result of these concerns, in developing the new joint powers agreement, there was unanimous accord among committee members and the current board that the new board should be composed of the administrators of the four jurisdictions the library system represents, and that a citizens' advisory board should also be created.

The revised Library Financing Agreement has been moving forward as well. In the original agreement the City of Santa Cruz and Santa Cruz County were generous and showed tremendous support of the library system as a whole in the way the formula was developed for the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and in how the funds were divided. Over the years, as expected, the structure of the MOE is becoming increasingly imbalanced and needs realignment. For example, the County Library Fund has grown when other resources have not at the same pace, and if continued, this would lead to inequity. Jurisdictions also would like more say in how funds are allocated for projects in their areas, such as for buildings and capital improvements.

Both sets of joint powers agreements were presented to the Library Board as information items at the June 8, 2015 meeting and will go to the respective jurisdictions for review/approval in the very near future.

Library Budget, Staffing and Service Hours Review

The library system gets its funding primarily from the Library Financing Authority, which in turn is funded from the MOE - the City of Santa Cruz General Fund portion for libraries; the City of Watsonville's General Fund allocation for their library system; the County Library Fund, which is the property tax specifically collected for libraries; and the county-wide sales tax collected for libraries. Contributions from Friends of the Library groups, donations, and grants provide additional support.

Fiscal Year 2009/2010 was a challenging year to say the least. The Library Director had retired and as the Assistant Director took over responsibility for the operation of the library, it became clear that she had no choice but to submit a proposed budget with deep cuts throughout the budget.

As the Acting Director explained in the budget memo, "The problem is not the current services offered, they are basic public library services...The problem is a budget that has no place to grow, while demand for service (and use of existing service) has been up all year, and this is coupled with a dramatic decline in sales tax; a smaller decline in property tax, and now the very real threat that the state will take 8% of the library's remaining property tax."

The budget cuts were needed and resulted in staff furloughs, reductions in workforce, retirements, and open hours were nearly cut in half. There were discussions about closing some of the libraries, all very hard conversations and choices that the new director had to face when she came on board. To meet all obligations, the library system borrowed money from the City of Santa Cruz.

The library's budget progressed over the five-year period as shown in Table 1 below, which is based on data provided by the library system to the California State Library in the annual California Public Library Survey.

As with some other customer service-oriented entities whose focus is face-to-face service, the cost for library services is predominantly driven by staffing costs. It is possible to reduce staff and depending on work schedules, salary schedules, benefits and bargaining unit negotiations, personnel costs still may rise. This is what occurred at the Santa Cruz City-County Library System. Over the five-year period staffing at the

library system dipped from 97 FTE to 81 FTE, while the costs for personnel went up from \$7.5 million in FY 09/10 to \$7.9 million by FY 13/14.

Table 1
Budget and Staffing Progression
FY 2009/2010 to FY 2013/2014

FISCAL YEAR	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
All Revenues	\$11,094,954	\$10,960,147	\$11,047,475	\$11,983,092	\$12,568,816
Local Revenues	\$10,458,064	\$10,532,426	\$10,647,630	\$11,538,453	\$12,023,642
Personnel	\$7,518,879	\$7,643,440	\$7,703,194	\$7,351,346	\$7,926,484
Supplies & Services	\$3,307,833	\$2,569,981	\$2,408,601	\$2,250,229	\$3,811,364
Collection	\$391,108	\$567,000	\$772,918	\$927,190	\$1,074,759
TOTAL Expenditure	\$11,217,820	\$10,780,421	\$10,884,773	\$10,798,765	\$12,812,607
FTE Staff	97.45	97.45	88.46	79.41	81.18

Changes to Staffing and Library Hours

The financial woes at Santa Cruz City-County Library coincided with similar bad news for other library jurisdictions in California. They, too, were examining their costs and services. Discussions of reductions in workforce, reducing library hours, more use of volunteers and the possibility of closing libraries were not unique to Santa Cruz. Likewise, such discussions resulted in misunderstandings, and perhaps hard feelings, among some community members, their representatives, administrators and staff. Ultimately the Santa Cruz City-County-Library System did not close any libraries but was forced to reduce staff and therefore reduced library hours throughout the system.

The decision to take unpaid furlough, reduce staff and limit library hours was not met with much favor either but it could not be avoided given the lack of resources needed. The Library Board created a task force to develop options for Financially Sustainable Service Models. Several options were developed, including reducing costs through library closures and alternative reductions of hours but all of the options were rejected by the Board. Instead, a Compromise Service Model was developed by the Compromise Subcommittee and that model was implemented.

The goals of the compromise service model were to:

- Keep all 10 of the system's libraries open and the bookmobile operating
- Additionally, offer services through technology and in other community spaces
- Increase the meager schedule of open hours, increasing them incrementally over the next three years to a core level of 392 hours per week
- Build a reserve fund up to 6.8% of revenues by 2015/2016 and eventually up to 10%
- The fund balance would be allowed to grow for needed system changes
- Increase funding for materials to 8% of the operating budget
- Implement operational efficiencies and use technologies to meet the needs of library users more effectively

The work of the Task Force, and subsequently that of the Compromise Committee, coincided with or were followed by the efforts on the part of the library director and a consultant to create a new staffing model. The library director acknowledged that they needed to work in haste, which left some key players with a sense of having been left out of the process and questioning some of the results.

The process was very detailed and complex. The result was a new, financially sustainable service model that involved a series of reclassifications of positions with revised duties and salary levels. The new staffing plan was being developed while other important changes were or had already taken place, for example, the elimination of use of the security gates at the libraries.

When security gates were in use additional steps were required at both the time of checkout and checkin of materials. These processes took more staff time. Of great concern, however, was that the volume of work and speed at which people worked were causing repetitive stress injuries for staff. The library implemented self checkout, which provided patrons with convenience and privacy when checking out their own materials and helped address the problem of repetitive stress injuries.

Staff worked closely with the unions, the City of Santa Cruz - Human Resources, and the Board to help find ways to bridge the funding gap. There were a significant number of retirements, helped by incentives but 13 staff layoffs still occurred. In addition, several staff members had to reduce their work hours.

Ultimately, the staffing study realigned duties and pay scales with the new reality of 21st Century library services. It redefined service levels for the Santa Cruz Library System

and addressed the library's financial issues. In some cases there were increases in duties, as well as in pay, as work was consolidated and spread out over a broader group of staff. As shown in Table1 above, staff levels changed from 97.45 FTE in FY 09/10 down to 81.18 FTE by FY 13/14.

Friends of the Library and volunteers did what they could to assist with fundraising and taking on tasks that, for the most part, could be absorbed without being in violation of the requirements for the separation of duties for paid staff and volunteers. Offering programs through volunteers is a time-honored tradition in library services nationally. The Santa Cruz City-County Library system took further steps with a plan to allow volunteers to sort the materials and place them on the shelves in some of the libraries. As has been the case in other library systems, this experiment eventually was abandoned due to the effort required to keep enough volunteers trained and consistently available to do what some would consider to be one of the most physically challenging of library tasks.

Library hours are a hallmark of a responsive library system. Maintaining a core number of hours and establishing a regular schedule allow access to the libraries to meet most of the needs of the public in the target areas. Library hours and effective use of the library go hand in hand; limited access often results in less use. When library hours were reduced in 2008/2009 there was an outcry from the public. The hours were "dismal and embarrassing," according to staff.

The Compromise Service Model introduced in 2010 sought to address this concern and established new core library hours. The goal was to reach 392 hours per week by July 2012. However, other changes in the library were taking place at the same time and it became apparent that the increase in hours would require considerably more staff, and therefore much more money. At various intervals, the director and library managers studied, calculated and reported staffing needs and costs to the Board for a potential increase in hours, although at that time it was not recommended by the director to do so. The most recent review was provided to the Library Board on March 9, 2015.

Shown in Table 2 below is the progression of weekly library hours by location and year. At their lowest point in FY 2009/2010, library system hours were down to 205 per week. Hours increased from 257 hours per week when the Compromise Service Model was first implemented, to the current level of 359 hours per week. This still falls short of the core hours the Compromise Committee recommended, the goal of 392 hours per week.

Table 2
Library Hours

Branch	FY09/10	FY10/11	Current	July 2012 Goal
Aptos	32	38	44	48
Boulder Creek	12	21	32	35
Branciforte	14	18	32	35
Capitola	21	22	36	40
Downtown	38	47	54	56
Felton	8	15	27	30
Garfield Park	12	18	27	30
La Selva Beach	8	14	27	30
Live Oak	28	30	36	40
Scotts Valley	32	34	44	48
TOTAL	205	257	359	392

Library staffing plans can be complex when they involve multiple shifts and multiple sites. These are not traditional 40-hour per week jobs. With 10 locations and a varied schedule, it is not a straight-forward task to add a few more hours per library. Key positions are required at each library for safety and security of the public and staff. These positions are likely to be full time and/or half time and they would need to be multiplied by the number of locations, and with enough redundancy added to accommodate breaks and lunches, as are required by law. Substitutes would be needed for vacations and other absences, too.

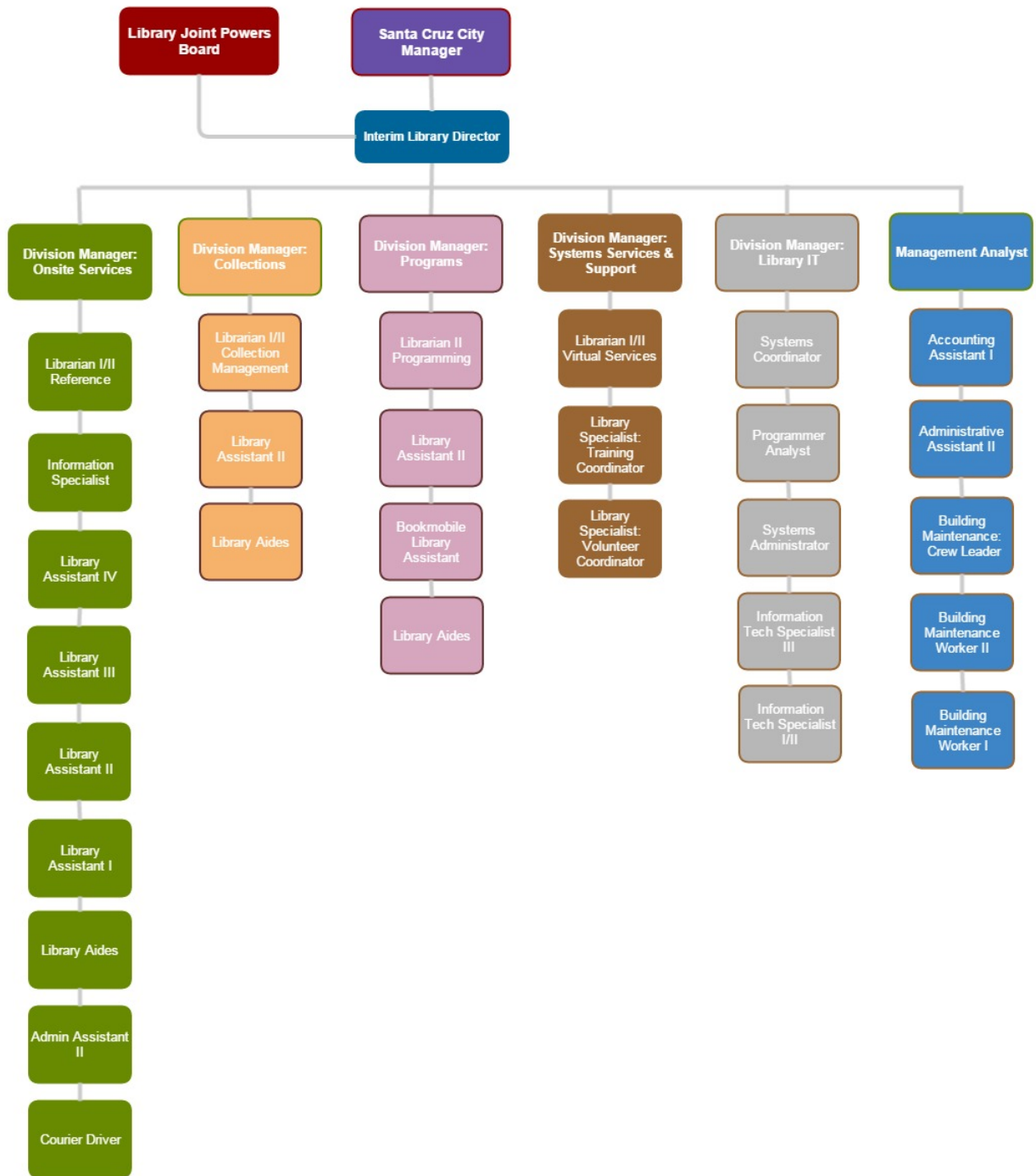
The Santa Cruz City-County Library System has had a tradition of hiring staff as full time or half time, except for Pages or what are now Library Aide positions. This is in contrast to other library systems that employ hourly part-time staff at various levels. These individuals often work for years without the benefit of a regular position. As a result, the cost models are different in these libraries, as well. At the Santa Cruz City-County Library System, some library aides work at multiple locations to try to maintain enough hours; and they are subject to possible displacement by newly hired library aides. Some say it is difficult to advance in these temporary or limited positions. In order to keep up, they may have to take time off and pay for their own library-related training. These are the types of experiences part-time/temporary staff of various levels have had in other library systems, too.

Adding more hours to at least reach the core hours target is still a choice that may be made. Timing may be a factor though, given changes that have been made in the past and any on the horizon that may impact staffing costs. In the most recent review of costs based on 2013 salary levels, increasing to the core number of hours could increase the budget by \$220,000 to \$340,000. This is at a time when the budget has not yet dramatically improved. And, since this is a staffing cost it could be difficult to reverse if the budget does not grow. Staffing costs generally grow more quickly than other costs over the years. At a cursory review, library staffing seems to be optimized for the current number of open hours, and given the use of technology and centralized services. When a new board and director are in place and once the financial picture is clearer, core hours is an area that could be re-examined.

Additional Points Regarding the Compromise Service Model and Current Staffing

As stated previously, the Compromise Service Model and the Staffing Study together were used to determine new service levels, staffing levels and duties at the libraries. Some higher paid staff, librarians, were moved from some of the larger libraries so that they could use their skills and knowledge to provide system-wide planning and services, such as centralized reference, collection development and program development.

The library's organization changed. This is shown in the chart below, which represents the current organizational structure with the Interim Director in place of the Library Director. A number of staff members are performing multiple duties filling in as a result of the director's retirement and the temporary leave of the assistant director/Manager of System Services & Support.



At the Santa Cruz City-County Library System smaller branch libraries already had considerable experience with persons in charge that were competent and dedicated and who did not possess the Masters in Library Science degree. These staff members had already been performing well on site with direct delivery of circulation services, providing on-site floor supervision and answering less complex reference questions. Under the new service levels and staffing model, this concept was duplicated at some of the larger libraries, moving librarian-level staff to centralized positions instead.

The staffing model metrics determined the number of staff required per site and included statistics on circulation of materials, reference needs, building size and the service needs of special populations. For example, additional staff may be needed for an influx of students after school. Furthermore, service desks were combined where practical to create a one-stop, more efficient service; and the concept of floating collections was implemented.

Typically floating collections are thought to reduce the volume of delivery of materials as items that move to a branch where someone wants them would remain there, rather than being sent back to the place of origin. However, this concept has not always led to the expected reduction in the work load of the delivery team, as was the case with Santa Cruz.

While the new staffing model has met some success in consolidating duties and moving librarians to centralized functions, in some cases refinement has been needed. The public generally does not distinguish between a librarian with an MLS and a Person-in-Charge who may not have a library degree. However, what is expected is a relationship with staff that they consider to be “their librarian.” This is someone who recognizes them on entry, remembers the materials they like and the questions they have asked. Users want someone who is helpful, perhaps proactively bringing new materials to their attention. They like having a person at the library who cares about assisting them in their quest *today*, just as they did the day before.

From the library perspective, these types of interactions keep the librarians in touch and informed of the interests and goals of the community members. This information helps librarians make the best selection of materials and provides key elements in designing the most interesting programs. So while centralizing staff may be more efficient, it possibly misses this important connection. A hybrid staffing model may be helpful in fostering such beneficial connections for the librarians and library users.

Library Planning Processes - The Strategic Plan, Technology Plan and the Facilities Master Plan

The library system put significant time and effort into important planning processes to help inform and guide its future. It is a benefit that the library system has the flexibility to hire consultants fairly easily, on an as-needed basis. This stretches staffing and allows important planning processes to move forward more quickly.

Between 2010 and 2013, library staff, and the board developed the *3-5 Year Strategic Plan 2010-2015*; staff and a consultant developed the *Technology Plan* and the *Facilities Master Plan* was completed by a team of consultants with staff input.

The Strategic Plan

According to Barbara Gorson, the Chair of the Joint Powers Board at the time, the focus of the Strategic Plan was to define the library's "purpose, guiding principles, and service priorities and key objectives for the future." A steering committee of board members, staff and public was created and an extensive series of town hall meetings, focus groups, surveys, an environmental scan, and a director's blog provided a wealth of input from the public.

The result was that the Library's **Purpose** was defined as to: *Connect, Inspire, Inform* and the **Vision** to: *Transform lives & strengthen communities*. The library's **Mission** is the following:

The Santa Cruz Public Libraries enhance Santa Cruz County's quality of life by providing vibrant physical and virtual public spaces where people connect, discover, and engage the mind. All ages have the opportunity to nurture their love of reading, find diverse and relevant resources for entertainment and enrichment, and strengthen community networks.

In addition, key tenets were developed for the system:

- Reading, Viewing and Listening for Pleasure
- Lifelong learning
- Community connections
- A welcoming place
- Financial sustainability, and
- Organizational readiness

Based on these guidelines, the board and staff set goals and objectives and each year developed a budget to work toward them. For example, the recovery of the budget for materials has a direct correlation to the first bullet item, “Reading, Viewing and Listening for Pleasure,” and the library system’s expansion of partnerships and programming closely relates to “Community Connections,” while the plan to set aside funds for reserves relates to “Financial sustainability.”

The end of this strategic plan is coming soon. It coincides well with the changes that are occurring in leadership and funding resources for the library system. By the time a new director is hired and the new library board takes effect, it will be time to develop a new strategic plan.

Technology Plan 2013-2018

The development of the Technology Plan was timely for the library system, which had considered itself to be woefully out of date, technologically-speaking. The plan helped chart a way to:

- Implement a new Integrated Library System to help staff and the public manage and access the collection and resources
- Hire staff with expertise to manage the technology of the library system
- Create experiences for the library to connect, inspire and inform library users
- Create community connections through technology and through partnerships, thereby delivering more efficient and effective library services and programs

Nearly half-way through the timeframe for the plan, the library is well on its way to accomplishing all of these goals. A new, robust Integrated Library System has been installed, a team of Library Information Technology staff has been hired, and users have taken to the new self checkout system/pay stations, as well as to the virtual branch. Staff reports that library users find the self checkout and pay stations convenient and easy to use.

Library staff has also implemented a new automated system for part-time staff to report in and to check on their hours and assignments. The Aesop system is used primarily by school districts for placement of substitute teachers. Santa Cruz Library staff went through extensive effort to adjust the system to library needs. It is far more efficient and reliable than the telephone call-in and manual spreadsheets of years gone by, which are still used at some libraries. This is an area where the Santa Cruz City-County Library system has advanced past other libraries that have considered but have not made such

changes. In some cases there are short term costs constraints, in others it is because the task is so complex and the manual system still works in a limited fashion.

The Facilities Master Plan

Recognizing that library buildings require maintenance, upgrading and in some cases replacement, the library system hired a team of consultants to help develop a facilities master plan. Due to limited funds and as a result of other studies that had already involved public input, this plan was strictly a facility assessment and did not involve a community assessment component. The Library Board accepted the *Facilities Master Plan* in April 2013.

The plan provided three levels of improvements:

- Maintain – Keep the doors open, providing maintenance so that the facilities would continue to operate while addressing building code and safety requirements - \$16,153,000
- Gain (and Maintain) – Improve Library Service and Operations with adjustments to buildings to accommodate efficiencies, such as single service desks, technology needs and specialized service needs such as teen areas - \$21,153,000
- Attain – Increase library square footage to accommodate 21st Century library services and population growth by constructing new buildings and expanding others. Both Felton and Capitola, long-delayed projects, were slated for new buildings and improvements were recommended for other branch facilities - \$76,084,000.

There has been a delay since the Facilities Master Plan was first introduced. Construction costs have increased and additional new building needs have been discussed. The potential amount of funds and the projects that could be completed vary. While there had been a tremendous amount of community input related to the library system, in hindsight, a community assessment specific to this effort would have been useful from the outset. It would have been a tool that could have been used to help identify priorities for improvements to determine which projects go forward first. The Library Board and staff will need to decide on the best way to review project costs and priorities.

The *Facilities Master Plan* clearly identified that at the very least, maintenance of buildings is required soon and construction of new buildings and other improvements to existing buildings should be completed or the library system, as suggested by a

consultant, will not stay stagnant but move backwards. The *Facilities Master Plan* addresses building maintenance and improvements specifically while a separate consultant group developed standards for furnishings, fixtures and equipment at the libraries. A source of funding would be needed for these improvements, too.

Library Ballot Measure for 2016

A consultant was hired to gauge interest among the public to fund the library's facilities improvement needs through a ballot measure. Polling has been favorable in the three polls conducted so far. A committee may recommend a ballot measure to county voters, perhaps for the election in June 2016 or shortly thereafter. If so, another poll will need to be conducted in January 2016 to gauge the level of interest in funding facilities improvements.

Overall Library Statistical Performance

There are no really good comparators among California libraries for the Santa Cruz system. Either the form of governance, as a JPA, is not the same or the geographic region size, population size, the number of facilities, or the budget may not be close enough to that of Santa Cruz to make meaningful comparisons. The closest ones identified for the purpose of this report are San Mateo County and Santa Clara County.

Tables 3a-3c (below) provide examples of the type of statistical reports that may be used to compare libraries in California. It shows a small group of data points for the Santa Cruz system against the systems mentioned above, which have some similarities, although they are limited. Also included, are statistics for the City of Watsonville, which is located within the boundaries of the County of Santa Cruz and shares in the proceeds of the sales tax. Watsonville operates its own library system. Their information may be of interest to readers of this report.

It may be of interest to note that libraries in some other counties offer a set of core hours to their jurisdictions. Then, communities or cities served by the system may opt for additional hours, which they pay for separately. The information on libraries in Tables 3a-3c may include bookmobiles in the number of facilities/outlets and hours.

The Santa Cruz City-County Library System has performed remarkably well given the challenges in funding over the years.

Table 3a (FY 2009-2010)

Library	Population 1/1/2010	Borrowers	Area Sq. Miles	Total Outlets	Square Feet	Librarian FTE	Total FTE
Santa Cruz City- County*	212,144	122,489	436.21	11	92,013	25.85	97.45
San Mateo County*	286,569	63,681	351.00	13	136,464	41.15	114.38
Santa Clara County*	426,156	314,926	1,046.00	10	256,250	78.75	267.75
Watsonville	60,057	46,422	6.19	2	46,000	12.00	46.00

*Library Systems with JPA form of government

Table 3b (FY 2009-2010)

Library	Total Operating Expenses	Print Materials Expenses	Electronic Materials Expenses	Book Volume Held	Databases	eBooks	Audio
Santa Cruz City- County*	11,217,820	66,321	245,929	Not reported	22	Not reported	Not reported
San Mateo County*	18,752,045	1,122,097	226,808	614,440	90	11,080	88,655
Santa Clara County*	34,081,846	521,192	84,357	1,370,938	108	4,902	145,116
Watsonville	2,286,166	109,674	18,242	126,635	66	11	6,378

*Library Systems with JPA form of government

Table 3c (FY 2009-2010)

Library	Annual Hours	Total Circ.	Reference	Library Attendance	Public Access Computers	Virtual Visits
Santa Cruz City-County*	11,024	Not reported	289,541	935,082	154	1,763,702
San Mateo County*	31,041	4,106,245	212,869	2,334,661	333	261,835
Santa Clara County*	20,310	11,814,552	442,473	3,669,465	259	2,503,365
Watsonville	8,000	319,533	62,948	486,224	60	Not reported

*Library Systems with JPA form of government

The statistics shown in Table 4 below are for the Santa Cruz Library from the most recent, complete fiscal year.

Table 4
Santa Cruz City-County Library Statistics
FY 2013/2014

Population	211,233
Operating Expenditure	\$12,812,607
Annual Hours	20,425
No. Outlets	10 (plus Bookmobile)
Square Footage	99,863
Total FTE	81.18
Borrowers	118,361
Total Circulation	1,731,236

Collection Expenditures	\$1,074,759
Total Programs	1,943
Library Door Count	1,101,359
Reference	150,488
Virtual Visits	1,379,576

The budget, library hours and staffing have been discussed elsewhere in this document. However, a few observations come to mind related to some of the statistics above. It is a great sign that more than half of the members of the population are library users and circulation is healthy for a system of this size. With an increase in hours or return to core hours these statistics would likely increase as well. There are nearly as many virtual visits as there are on-site visits. This number will grow, too, as the library purchases more e-materials and library users become more aware of what they can access from home or from anywhere that the internet is available to them for access to the library.

The success of the library programs and partnerships is particularly encouraging. The library offers an impressive array of programs. Staff has reported that partnerships for programs at the libraries and at other shared venues are so successful that more community groups are seeking to work with the library to expand their reach. With nearly 2,000 programs available throughout the year, a library user may find several great choices to attend during any given week.

The popularity and relevance of certain programs shift though. Some programs work well in specific areas while others do not. Some programs offered repeatedly run their course in one area but not in another. The key is for library staff, community groups and volunteers to maintain awareness of the demographics of their service area and to be in tune with the needs and interests of the communities.

Reference services continue to dip in Santa Cruz, as has been occurring nationwide. This confirms that the library system is on the right track in recognizing a greater need for e-materials, consolidating or centralizing services using the professional staff, thereby making the most of library staff expertise for outreach, enhanced programming and collection development.

Concerns Articulated in the Interviews

In spite of all of the successes there have been concerns about the structure and cohesiveness of the library system, as articulated in interviews with jurisdictional representatives, administrators, Library Board members and staff. These concerns stem to a great extent from the following and are being addressed in the development of the new JPAs:

- A governing/reporting structure that is vulnerable to inadvertently creating high accountability to some and low accountability to others, even though all participants have an important stake in the outcomes of library funding and services
- A lack of tools to address inequities across communities, especially when difficult decisions need to be made quickly and when they involve sacrifices that may impact some communities more than others
- An erosion of trust due to strained relationships as the reporting structure and communication styles inherently leave some individuals and groups feeling that they are not afforded the same level of responsiveness or appropriate attention to the details that concern them most

The following were also mentioned:

- While the two larger entities may well be able to operate their own libraries separately, it is more efficient, effective and meets the expectations of the voters to operate as an independent system comprised of the ten libraries
- Drastic change has been a constant in recent years, a respite from extensive changes would be welcome and in some ways, may be necessary
- Nearly half of the staff may be eligible to retire in the near future, especially at the higher levels. A succession plan needs to be in place
- Staff fears that a new JPA structure may impact jobs and pensions
- At the same time, change in the structure of the JPA and the Maintenance of Effort are needed and discussions are going in the right direction now
- A ballot measure in June 2016 is important for facility improvements to pull the system up and set it on a forward path
- Felton and Capitola need their new library buildings
- It is difficult for part-time staff members (library aides) to get enough hours and to advance in the system
- Some staff members have slowly recuperated from past cuts in hours

- Working at the library is the perfect fit, allowing so many staff members to use their education, experience and eclectic interests in a valuable public setting
- The greatest asset of the system is the library staff. They are dedicated, long-term employees who have a wealth of experience and talent; and they truly believe in public service
- It is great that a third party is doing this assessment/report on the library system

Recommendations

This is a time of important opportunity for the library system. In the past, a number of planning activities started at the same, or different times but converged and influenced the outcomes of other planning efforts. The changes that are occurring now will address past vulnerabilities and engage key players who can effectively plan and take action in support of the system. Administrators/directors, staff and the Advisory Board have a chance to re-evaluate past assumptions and chart a future taking into account 21st century information and technology tools and strategies to accommodate service and facilities needs of the communities throughout Santa Cruz County. It will take considerable planning and this is the optimum time. In some cases, which steps occur first will be dependent on other actions, and some may happen simultaneously, depending on staff resources. Some areas to consider are the following:

- Nearly all of the future decisions rest on the actions that are occurring now in the formation of the new JPA, getting the administrators/directors in place and the new Library Financing Authority agreement approved. These should continue to move forward as quickly as possible
- Continue research on the interest of volunteers and the public to introduce a ballot measure for library building improvements, and if so, provide the information needed for a ballot measure
- Develop a strategy for determining priorities in an equitable manner, and for updating costs for the building improvements described in the Facilities Master Plan and other library projects that have been introduced
- Begin the process to hire a new director once the new decision makers are in place.
- Develop a new strategic plan and metrics for service levels once the director is on board

- Based on the strategic plan, cost considerations and staffing, determine if the library system should implement the core hours previously identified, maintain current hours, or if different hours and library schedules are needed
- Based on the strategic plan and plan of service, consider demographics and surveys of interests to continue the success and possible broadening of library programs
- As with the entry of any new library director, there will be reconsideration of the composition of the management team, potentially including those strategic positions with staff that do not possess the MLS but have other pertinent qualifications
- Consider other changes needed, such as the best way to provide more community connections for the professional librarians performing centralized planning and services
- While this option is not likely to result in immediate action, continue research into the transition of all library matters and staff to the new JPA to foster seamless management, decision-making and accountability within the organization
- Maintain regular, open communication with the Library Board, staff, jurisdictions and the public on library matters

Conclusion

It is a tribute to the Board, administrators, staff, and the public that the library system has overcome its recent misfortunes. In Santa Cruz County libraries are deemed relevant by the community. Library hours have been restored significantly in comparison to the worst of times, although not yet to core service hours. This was done through changes to and consolidation of staff duties, growth in the use of technology, the strengthening of relationships and experimentation with Friends of the Library and volunteers to help provide more funding and services. Increasing to core hours is still a possibility, depending on the timing and choices related to other existing services that the new library board may consider.

Staff has tapped into one of the most important roles of 21st century libraries, strengthening community connections and providing opportunities for community engagement. Santa Cruz City-County Library has put some of the concepts into motion that other library systems are still talking about and considering - consolidating service desks; use of technology for staff assignments and call-in; floating collections; centralizing collection development, reference and program development, are some examples.

All of the jurisdictions tied to the library system have shown a tremendous interest in the library as a core service and important benefit to their communities. Each is looking to retain and strengthen library service. The City of Santa Cruz has done well as the agency in charge of the business operations of the library in behalf of the other system members. Under some circumstances, it would have been easy to see the library as a “quasi” department of limited interest. The County of Santa Cruz has been very supportive of library services and generous over the years in the structure of the maintenance of efforts and share of sales tax proceeds. The growing imbalance of the resources brought to the system through the different funding sources is being addressed. The eventual consolidation of the library system under the new JPA will help the decision making process and the reporting structure to be clearer and more accountable to all jurisdictions and parties involved.

In talking to library leaders and staff, there were hopeful thoughts expressed about the library system and its future as the discussions ensued. The JPA jurisdictions, board members and staff will have an open slate and can embrace new opportunities that come their way. And, it is just the beginning. This is especially true if community members put forward and approve a ballot measure to fund library building projects.

The talent, excitement and dedication are already present in the library system. With clear communication, remedies for past deficiencies, and better funding for services and facilities, the board and staff can chart a path to great success for the library community.

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