

COUNTY OF VENTURA  
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July 25, 1996

Chief Administrative Office  
Ventura County Government Center  
800 South Victoria  
Ventura CA 93009

Re: LIBRARY RESPONSE TO THE 1995-96 GRAND JURY REPORT, PHASE II

The Library Services Agency (LSA) wishes to thank the 1995-96 Grand Jury for its time and effort spent on issues pertaining to library service. Our responses to the Grand Jury's recommendations follow.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

*The Wright and Foster Libraries should be combined at a large centralized location with access to public transportation.*

**RESPONSE:**

Ventura is unique among the communities served by the LSA in having multiple library facilities. Because the LSA allocates staffing resources to communities served largely on the basis of population, this means that while staff in Simi Valley is consolidated in one facility, in Ventura, a similar level of staffing is thinly spread over multiple facilities. In fact, in Ventura, a single staff operates both Foster and Wright Libraries by opening them on alternate days. This results in a hop-scotch schedule that is inconvenient to patrons and difficult to remember. In addition, neither facility is large enough to accommodate a full consolidation of the public service aspects of both buildings.

There are large financial implications for a possible large consolidated facility, and for increased operating expenditures for either a larger consolidated facility or the ability to operate the present facilities on a more extensive basis.

The City of San Buenaventura is an active partner in finding a resolution of the problem of inadequate library facilities and services in the City. The City Council has approved \$220,000 in enhanced funding for 1996/97. This will provide all funding to operate Avenue Library for the fiscal year and allow continuation of the expanded schedule of hours open at Foster and Wright. (The County-funded baseline schedule provides 36 hours open per week split between Foster and Wright.) The City's contribution allows Foster to be open a total of 26 hours per week and Wright to be open a total of 27 hours per week.

The City of San Buenaventura has also committed funding for a facilitated Community Planning Process in the first half of this fiscal year. Issues of service, service levels and facilities will be discussed. The desired outcome is development of goals in these areas and a financial plan for achieving them.

The status quo at Foster and Wright will be maintained until the Community Planning process is complete. At that point, if only the current level of funding is available into the future, service will be consolidated at Foster or Wright Library.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**

*The California State Multi Library Network plan for providing state-of-the-art information resource sharing should be a high priority to library management.*

**RESPONSE:**

This is, indeed, a high priority to LSA management. The draft legislation for this program has just been distributed for review, and we are actively participating in the plan.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

*Staff training in technology systems and available resources should be ongoing.*

**RESPONSE:**

This is essential in order for staff to be current in information technology. Staff is learning to take full advantage of our existing technology. We are currently hampered by not having state-of-the-art computing equipment. Our current integrated computer system is 7 years old and has no graphical interface capability. There are also insufficient state-of-the-art personal computers available to staff, and insufficient funds for training. Our challenge is to find the resources to acquire updated equipment and training.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**

- A. *Due to proposed library management reorganization and downsizing, the Library Services Agency should evaluate and justify all existing job classifications.*
- B. *Revise the Reference Library job description so that it will be more flexible.*
- C. *An experienced library assistant might serve the Reference Desk.*

**RESPONSE:**

- A. The County has authorized the hiring of a consultant to conduct a comprehensive library study this autumn. This will include a review of staffing and the development of any recommendations for change.
- B. This comment is a puzzlement. The existing job description for Librarian I seems quite flexible. Quoting from the official County job description

"Under general supervision performs . . . professional library work involving reference, assistance, readers' advisory, collection management, staff development, program coordination, and public contact . . . and performs related work as required."

- C. Library assistants [Library Technicians] have for many years helped provide assistance to the public at the reference/information desk.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

*Libraries should continue to promote special programs which increase patronage such as: ESL and literacy tutors, children's reading programs, story telling, adult discussion groups and homework assistance. Schools should be encouraged to cooperate in this endeavor.*

**RESPONSE:**

The Library will continue to promote special programs, and will continue to rely heavily on volunteers to assist with the provision of programming and on non-County contributed or earned funds for program financing.

Core funding for the Adult Literacy Program has been authorized only through September, 1996, and we are searching for alternate sources. For the past three years the children's Summer Reading Program has been funded by donations and license fees. To accommodate budget cuts we have had to delete our circuit-rider storyteller position which provided storytimes in the small and medium libraries.

A pilot homework center has been established at Ojai Library funded by a grant from the First Interstate Bank Foundation. It is being developed in conjunction with the Ojai Library Foundation and the school district.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

*Large libraries should explore the possibility of supporting a used book store, a gift shop, musical concerts, coffee shop and film evenings.*

**RESPONSE:**

Simi Valley Library and Ojai Library have very successful Friends used book store. Camarillo, Foster and Wright Libraries have serious space constraints. These ideas are especially attractive as considerations for planning new facilities. There are no community meeting rooms available in Ventura, and they should be planned for any new facility.

Programs for children and adults will be developed as staffing allows and will be especially dependent on the development of community partnerships.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:**

*The libraries should provide classes for patron in the use of computers to access information. This will serve to free limited library staffs.*

**RESPONSE:**

As a pilot, volunteers have been trained to teach the public who are novice Internet users how to access the Internet and navigate using the library's computer terminals. Training sessions originally scheduled for July will be rescheduled because of unforeseen glitches resulting from the load of a new software module.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:**

*A written round table for County library staff would allow for an efficient means of sharing suggestions and creative ideas among libraries.*

**RESPONSE:**

All library staff have access to e-mail, have received instruction in its use, and are invited to use it as a means of sharing suggestions and creative ideas.

The Library has made a commitment to involve staff in its strategic planning process, which began in the last half of 1995. All staff were invited to an initial meeting with a facilitator in September 1995. Ideas and suggestions were requested, and volunteers were asked to serve on a strategic planning committee. This resulted in the creation of a 5-Year Strategic Plan. Five "goal teams" have been formed to develop objectives for each of the goals identified in the plan. These teams have met regularly since then, as well as a Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee to oversee the process. Several time since the initial staff meeting, members of the committees have made an effort to meet with staff or to obtain written suggestions from staff.

In addition to the strategic planning process, branch and department supervisors meet monthly in the "Library Management Forum" where problems are discussed and recommendations are made. Additional meetings are scheduled for children's librarians and circulation staff. Large libraries and departments also hold staff meetings on a regular basis.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:**

*Each library should have an attractive box available for contributions in a centralized location. Individual groups may wish to provide matching funds.*

**RESPONSE:**

This has been tried. It was our least successful fund raising endeavor.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**

*Review possibility of charging fees for other than basic services. For example: out of city patrons, use of computers and electric typewriters.*

**RESPONSE:**

We currently charge for meeting room rental, photocopies, electronic typewriters and book reservations. These fees are an important source of revenue, but comprise less than .62% of our operating budget.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:**

*The consultant should be hired to assist in developing the Library Federation Plan as soon as possible.*

**RESPONSE:**

The Board of Supervisors have authorized hiring a consultant to conduct a management audit of the LSA, to develop alternatives for governance and structure, and to do a financial analysis and projections. The selection process is underway. Work is to start July 29 and be completed by October.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:**

*The management of the library should review its central library support operation with the goal of streamlining operations and cutting unnecessary costs. Some goals can be achieved by delegating routine functions like book ordering to the individual libraries while at the same time giving the libraries computer based tools to simplify their work.*

**RESPONSE:**

Simplification of materials processing tasks has been recently implemented. Materials selection is a decentralized process. A recent software upgrade allows further streamlining of selection and ordering. Materials ordering must be a centralized process so that proper communications with vendors and proper accounting records can be maintained.

Much computer equipment is old and inadequate in type and amount. Our challenge is locating the resources to improve this situation.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:**

*Library management should hire a consultant or engage Information System Department personnel to analyze its operations and explore the great potential of technology for reducing labor intensive work of professional librarians and at the same time increase the information sources offered to the public beyond the hard cover books. It is the duty of the library system to be the store front where the public can access the vast treasure of information which is stored on computer files (also called*

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*databases) throughout the world. These vast warehouses of information are accessible through computers from commercial and public sources like the Internet.*

**RESPONSE:**

The Library needs to replace/upgrade its public access computer system which is over 7 years old and had no graphical user interface capability. We need to replace old terminals with personal computers. We are exploring costs and alternatives to achieve this.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:**

*Small neighborhood libraries should remain open since they play a vital and necessary role for all local citizens, especially the young, the elderly and the disadvantaged.*

**RESPONSE:**

Small neighborhood libraries certainly do play that role. The Board of Supervisors has allocated funds for operation of these libraries through September 1996. Additional funding is necessary to operate these libraries beyond September.

Sincerely,



Dixie D. Adeniran  
Director