

Response to 2012-13 Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Ventura County Library

Report Date: June 7, 2013

Responding Agency/Dept.: County Executive Office

Response by: Michael Powers

Title: County Executive Officer

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: FI-01, FI-02, FI-05, FI-07
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: _____
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefore.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04 have been implemented or partially implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 9/25/13

Signed: 

County Executive Officer

Number of pages attached: 4

Findings

FI-01 The Grand Jury found that the VCLS is not conducting adequate outreach into the community to gain volunteers. It also limits their ability to meet with school administration in order to demonstrate their available services, and to obtain the assistance of the community to provide specific programming, all due to limited staff.

Agree

While the County Executive Office acknowledges the VCLS recently implemented changes to move towards having professional librarians lead its programs, the VCLS acknowledges the need for, and continues to seek, additional volunteers to assist with programs and services. To this end, VCLS is in the process of increasing outreach to establish more partnerships and relationships in several communities.

FI-02 Used book sales provide extra income. However, not all of the libraries in the VCLS take part in this venture. Ojai appears to be most successful due to its volunteer base.

Partially Agree. With the exception of the Piru branch all VCLS libraries are associated with Friends Groups that participate in, among other activities, used book sales.

FI-05 The summer reading program is very successful. It deserves an opportunity to expand through greater networking. The program would also be enhanced by asking for more volunteer assistance.

Agree. As detailed in the response to recommendation R-02, outreach efforts are underway in this area.

FI-07 Based on interviews, observations and analysis of information, the Grand Jury determined that a well-functioning and community-supported library system can potentially provide invaluable services to the community.

Agree

Recommendations

R-01 The Grand Jury recommends that a strategy to expand the most successful summer reading library program be established.

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This recommendation has been implemented.

VCLS has begun the process of expanding outreach to increase student and volunteer participation in the Summer Reading Program (SRP). For example, this year, VCLS staff reached out to schools not only through informational flyers but with class visits and presentations. To further highlight the SRP, presentations were made at various Boys and Girls Clubs and VCLS participated in the daylong Summerfest event in Ventura that reached over 7,000 children. In addition, the summer reading log is being made available not only at libraries, but also at the VCLS website and at various businesses. The County Executive Office supports this effort.

R-02 The Grand Jury recommends that a means to reach out to potential volunteers be initiated. There are a number of programs that could be staffed with volunteers. Also, the VCLS may find that the community will help support the development of new programs, such as:

- **used book sales**
- **tutoring for remedial reading, English and mathematics, to relieve the VCCCD and enhance the services provided by the VCLS**
- **enhanced study programs**
- **research assistance and guidance**
- **encourage more help from the list of organizations, identified as "Friends of the Library" and the local public**
- **provide programs that showcase the library and expand public awareness, such as professional workshops and entertainment**
- **pursue electronic and Internet programs that offer the library participants volumes of information and references that could not be housed within a small library**
- **investigate the potential of linking the libraries within the VCLS, whereby every library within the system has total access to the collective information sources of the system libraries**
- **pursue and encourage book clubs, business groups and organized educational entities to use the facilities in their local libraries.**

This recommendation is partially implemented as a number of programs currently use volunteers. As previously noted we acknowledge the VCLS recently implemented changes to move towards having professional librarians lead its programs, however the VCLS continues to seek volunteers to assist with programs and services. The Adult Literacy program which provides remedial reading instruction is one example. In addition, a number of the programs listed above are currently offered by VCLS and utilize volunteers.

Regarding the development of new programs noted in the recommendation, many programs on the list are currently provided by VCLS and have been in place for a number of years:

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- **used book sales** – book sales take place at all libraries, except for Piru and Soliz, as these locations do not have adequate space available to conduct sales.
- **tutoring for remedial reading, English and mathematics, to relieve the VCCCD and enhance the services provided by the VCLS** – The VCLS READ program currently partners with Oxnard and Simi Valley Adult Education to provide remedial reading assistance.
- **enhanced study programs** – Afterschool homework help is provided at all VCLS branches except Oak Park and Piru.
- **research assistance and guidance** – Print and on-line research materials is currently available at all VCLS libraries with trained staff available to provide research support.
- **encourage more help from the list of organizations, identified as “Friends of the Library” and the local public** – During FY 2011-12, over 450 volunteers contributed approximately 20,000 hours of support at VCLS. VCLS will continue to reach out to various community organizations for support.
- **provide programs that showcase the library and expand public awareness, such as professional workshops and entertainment** – VCLS currently offers story-times and other programs for children as well as a broad range of adult programs such as music programs, writer’s groups. Upcoming offerings include Hispanic Heritage Month and a Comic-con.
- **pursue electronic and Internet programs that offer the library participants volumes of information and references that could not be housed within a small library** – already in place at all VCLS libraries.
- **investigate the potential of linking the libraries within the VCLS, whereby every library within the system has total access to the collective information sources of the system libraries** – Library patrons currently have the ability to browse the library catalog online at any time as well as to renew and request items from any internet connected device.
- **pursue and encourage book clubs, business groups and organized educational entities to use the facilities in their local libraries** – Two VCLS libraries have book clubs. Oak Park will be offering a robotics club – a program developed in partnership with CSUCI, the Society of Engineers and VCLS.

The County Executive Office (CEO) supports VCLS efforts, where feasible, to increase educational services and programs offered to the public. The CEO also supports VCLS outreach activities to increase volunteer participation and to pursue relationships with business groups, community and educational organizations to enhance programs and services.

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R-03 The Grand Jury recommends that the library system be viewed on the basis of what it can provide to the community rather than from a monetary position. This may provide the incentive to find a means to allow libraries to meet or exceed the claims of independent systems and to become a credit to the County.

We agree with this recommendation. The recommendation has been implemented and will continue to be pursued.

As was evidenced in the proposals recently submitted to the cities of Ventura and Simi Valley the benefits associated with being part of a larger system include economies of scale, extensive on-line resources, access to experienced, professional library staff and to the collections and broad range of programs at all libraries in the system. Additionally, in response to the change in library use by the public, VCLS is working towards a new model of library service that more closely aligns with how people use libraries. One example is the increased use of library services via the internet. In response, VCLS has added to its e-books and downloadable audio books collection. Another example is the increased outreach to publicize the Summer Reading Program to address the loss of student reading skills over summer break. VCLS will continue to look for innovative ways to provide the community with valued programs and resources. The County Executive Office supports this effort and has provided VCLS with maximum flexibility in the FY 2013-14 budget in anticipation of changes under the new service model.

R-04 The Grand Jury recommends that the VCLS administration invite city managers to discuss ways and means to assist in the improvement of libraries within their cities. This may initiate more involvement, enlightenment as to the potential of libraries, new ideas and possible additional funds and resources.

We agree with this recommendation and it has been partially implemented by the VCLS. VCLS has attended the monthly meeting of city managers and has met periodically with individually city managers. VCLS meets City Staff, Library Advisory Commissions and City Councils to provide information about library services. These meetings are on-going and continue to provide a forum for discussion with City Staff on the best and most cost effective ways to provide library services to the public. Going forward, VCLS has committed to increasing the frequency of such meetings as part of their future plans.