CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
AGENDA ATTACHMENT 2

MEETING DATE: Thursday, January 22, 2009
AGENDA ITEM #: 8
ITEM: ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Commissioners or Library staff may make announcements regarding the Library Commission and Library or Friends group activities of interest to other Library Commission members.
Dear CALTAC Honor Board members:

It is time to renew your membership in the California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners. CALTAC is a 501(c)(3) corporation and an affiliate of the California Library Association. It continues as an organization dedicated to developing more effective library service. It offers the opportunity for us to become more knowledgeable advocates for local libraries, literacy, and the California library system by educating ourselves, sharing expertise, and staying up-to-date concerning legislation of interest to libraries. In addition to the highly successful workshops, our comprehensive Trustee Toolkit for Library Leadership, and the informative quarterly newsletter, CALTAC offers on-site Board Effectiveness Training, which has been very much in demand by boards and commissions throughout the state. CALTAC supports the California Library Association in advocating on issues of importance to public libraries, such as full funding of the Public Library Foundation.

Enclosed are copies of our current brochure and membership application. We ask that you circulate this information to all members of your board or commission and encourage them to again join us as a group and be included in our list of "Honor Boards" for 2009.

As an Honor Board, you can take advantage of our special group membership rate of $23 each for five or more members of a board or commission who join together at one time. We encourage you to include at the same discounted rate your Library Director as part of the Honor Board and one of the five or more individuals joining CALTAC at the same time. Another advantage of our Honor Board designation is that membership for individual members of an Honor Board goes with the position on the library board or commission; Honor Boards do not need to pay additional dues for incoming members who replace outgoing members of their board or commission. Of course, a change in the composition of your board or commission during our membership year requires that our Membership Committee be notified in order for the incoming members to receive our mailings. The dues rate for individual members is $25. If your Board is not in a position to join, please consider individual memberships so that your library is represented on our rolls.

Membership applications can be copied and should be filled out for each member. If preferred, the names and addresses for all members may be listed on your library's letterhead. Please identify your library director if he or she is among those joining CALTAC. Please use home addresses so that members can receive mail quickly and directly. Applications should be returned with payment to:

CALTAC
C/O California Library Association
717 20th Street, Ste 200
Sacramento, CA 95811

Please remember that CALTAC membership is for a calendar year. Some library boards and commissions who joined as an Honor Board during the second half of 2008 may be unable to pay CALTAC dues early in 2009 if their library's fiscal year does not coincide with the calendar year. Should this describe your situation, please let us know so that we can work out an appropriate payment date and continue to include your Honor Board on our member roster and mailing list.

We trust you will renew your CALTAC membership. Please contact me with questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Doris Lau, Membership Chair
Telephone – 626-991-7822
E-mail – dklgov@yahoo.com
Trustees, commissioners, system advisory board members, library advocates, and all members of the library community:

SAVE THE DATE

CALTAC - Spring 2009 - Workshops

February 28, 2009 : San Francisco Public Library
March 14, 2009 : Torrance Public Library

Welcome from Stacey Aldrich ... CA Deputy State Librarian
A view of the future - what the REAL questions are

Featured speaker: Joan Frye Williams ... Library and Information Technology Consultant

Libraries in the Future: What Trustees and Commissioners Can Do about Answering those Questions Before Somebody Else Answers them For Us!

The California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners (CALTAC) invites you to share your interest and concerns and explore options on important library issues.

Watch for more information.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!
ABOUT CALTAC

The California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners consists of present and former library trustees, commissioners and system advisory board members as well as library directors, library staff, Friends, and other library supporters. It's purposes are:

- To educate trustees and commissioners to carry out their duties and responsibilities to provide effective library service
- To provide library trustees and commissioners and other library supporters the opportunity of working together on concerns important to all libraries in California
- To promote interest in the development of effective library service
- To cooperate with programs of the California Library Association and the California State Library and to help unify library action in the state
- To work for legislation for better library service
- To recognize outstanding accomplishments and contributions to library service by individuals and organizations throughout the State

CALTAC is exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and contributions to the organization are tax deductible.

We invite members to become subscribers to the CALTAC listserv, a forum for discussion and a place where legislative and other news is posted. Visit our website to subscribe.

www.caltac.org

Mail membership form and payment with check payable to CALTAC to:

CALTAC
C/o California Library Association
717 20th Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95811

For additional membership information, contact:
CALTAC Membership Chair, Donna Lin
Tel: 424-231-7627  Email: dal24@yahoo.com
WHAT DOES CALTAC DO?

CALTAC functions through its committees comprised of member volunteers from throughout the state. These include the following:

- Regional Workshops in Library Leadership provide opportunity for trustees, commissioners, librarians and concerned members of the public to learn from library experts and from each others’ experiences.
- CALTACTICS, the CALTAC quarterly newsletter, keeps members informed about the organization’s activities.
- On-Site Board Effectiveness Training is offered by CALTAC volunteers to library boards and commissions to aid in working toward their library goals for the benefit of their communities.
- The Legislative Committee informs members about legislation affecting libraries, alerts them to join in lobbying efforts at appropriate times, and helps them participate in the annual Legislative Day in Sacramento.
- The Awards Committee publicizes services to libraries by annual recognition of outstanding contributions by individuals or organizations.
- The Literacy Committee encourages local library sponsorship of volunteer tutorial services to aid the functionally illiterate.
- The Intellectual Freedom Committee keeps CALTAC members aware of challenges to the right to read, and the means to defend that right.

To become actively involved in any of these committees, contact the Membership Chair.

YOU NEED CALTAC

- To keep up-to-date and well informed on library matters of concern to you as one responsible for promoting good library service in your community.
- To add to your effectiveness during your term of office as a member of a library administrative or advisory board, or any other group supporting a library, and to provide an outlet for your continuing participation in library activities when your term is ended.

CALTAC NEEDS YOU

- To learn from your library experience through your participation in CALTAC workshops and committees.
- To reinforce library/community strength in presenting library matters to the Legislature or to local governing bodies.

TO JOIN CALTAC

CALTAC membership is open to everyone who is or has been a trustee, commissioner, or advisory board member of any library or library system in California as well as library directors, librarians, library staff, Friends, and other interested persons who wish to support CALTAC’s purposes and receive CALTAC publications.

CALTAC is a 501(c)(3) corporation. Dues and other donations are tax deductible contributions.

For more information about CALTAC membership or to discuss membership issues, contact:

CALTAC Membership Chair, Doris Lau
Tel: 626-991-7822   E-mail: dklgov@yahoo.com

Mail membership form and payment with check payable to CALTAC to:

CALTAC
P.O. California Library Association
1720th Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95811
2009 CALTAC Workshop in Library Leadership
Library Trustees & Commissioners Answer Questions --
Before Somebody Else Answers For Us!
Joan Frye Williams, Library and Information Technology Consultant

Thinking in Future Tense -- from the California State Library
Stacey Aldrich, California Deputy State Librarian

Saturday, February 28, 2009: San Francisco Public Library
Saturday, March 14, 2009: Torrance Public Library

PROGRAM

9:00 Registration
9:15 Welcome: Richard K. Moore, CALTAC President
San Francisco/Torrance Mayor or representative
San Francisco/Torrance Library Director
9:30 Highlights from Sacramento and the California State Library
   Stacey Aldrich
9:45 Keynote I: The Future part 1
   Joan Frye Williams
10:45 Break
11:00 Keynote II: The Future part 2
   Stacey Aldrich
12:00-12:30 Break out groups – discuss how we can get more involved with supporting our
   libraries in how we deal with future issues
12:30-12:45 Groups report conclusions and wrap up
12:45 Adjournment

Registration Form for NORTHERN WORKSHOP
San Francisco Public Library --- Saturday, February 28, 2009
100 Larkin Street, San Francisco 94102 — (415) 557-4400

Name:
Address:
City, State, Zip:
Phone:
Fax:
Email:

Registration Fee (due by 2/15/08)
CALTAC Member $18
Non-member 20

Make checks payable to CALTAC and mail to:
Diana Bautista
2725 Somerset Park Circle
San Jose CA 95132

NO REFUNDS
Early Bird registration fee $18 when post marked by February 15, 2009; otherwise $20.
Date of Application: ________________________
Name: ____________________________________
Address: __________________________________
City, State, Zip: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________________

CALTAC MEMBERSHIP is open to anyone who is or has been a trustee, commissioner, or advisory board member of any library or library system in California as well as library directors, librarians, library staff, Friends, and other library supporters.

___ Individual Membership ($25)
___ Group Membership ($23 each for 5 or more members

 Attach a separate Membership Application form for each member off the Group and identify library director, if he/she is joining.

Please mail this Membership Application separately to CLA, 717 20th Street, #200, Sacramento, CA 95811

__ NEW__ RENEWAL:

Home Phone: _____________________________
Work Phone: _____________________________
FAX Number: _____________________________

For each member, please indicate name of library or library system and position in the library community.

__________________________
(Name of Library or Library System)

___ Present/Former Library or System Trustee
___ Commissioner, or Advisory Board Member.
___ Library Director
___ Librarian/Library Staff
___ Other (please specify)

San Francisco Main Library -- Directions:
100 Larkin Street, 94102
Civic Center BART station
Use the Grove St. Entrance to the library
Parking is available across from the library in the Civic Center garage
Map available at: http://tinyurl.com/82cddg
(415) 557-4400 -- library
(650) 303-9810 -- Diana Bautista

Torrance Public Library -- Directions:
library.tornet.com
3301 Torrance Blvd
Torrance, CA 90503
(Southwest of the 405)
Map available at: http://tinyurl.com/7c6zps
From Long Beach airport:
405 North to 110 South to Torrance Blvd., then West
(310) 618-5959 -- library
(714) 743-2437 -- Richard Moore

Registration Form for SOUTHERN WORKSHOP
Torrance Public Library -- Saturday, March 14, 2009
3301 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503 -- (310) 618-5959

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
City, State, Zip: _______________________
Phone: _____________________________
Fax: ________________________________
Email: ______________________________

CALTAC Member $18
Non-member 20

Registration Fee (due by 3/1/09)

Are you a CALTAC Member? __ yes __ no
Do you wish to share your email address with other workshop attendees? __ yes __ no

Make checks payable to CALTAC and mail to:
Doris Lau
c/o P.O. Box 609
Long Beach, CA 90801

TOTAL ____________________

__ NO REFUNDS__

Early Bird registration fee $18 when post marked by March 1, 2009; otherwise $20.
Free2dream is the theme for January, February and March. It ties in to the inauguration, New Year’s resolutions, Black History Month and Women’s History Month.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

- February is Black History Month – hire a storyteller, African Dance troupe.
- Do a ‘dream interpretation’ program
- March is Women History Month - feature a woman author, performer or local celebrity
- Children's program ideas
  - “Sweet Dreams” PJ Storytime in the evening,
  - make a top hat for Lincoln’s Birthday
  - make a ‘dream catcher’ (Task Team will supply directions)
- Do a display of “dream reads”
- Use the ‘drawing sheet’ (provided by the Task Team) for teens and kids to ‘draw their...
  - Dream bedroom
  - Dream date
  - Dream friend
  - Dream house
  - Dream vacation
  - Or any theme that suits your community library

FUTURE Free2 THEMES:

- Free2read or free2all for April and May to tie into the Reading Festival
- Free2create for June, July, August to tie into the Summer Reading Program
ALA Releases Tough Economy Toolkit

Chicago -- A new web-based resource has just been released that will help library advocates make the case for libraries during times of economic downturn. The "Advocating in a Tough Economy" toolkit is available at www.ala.org/tougheconomytoolkit.

"With city, county, state and federal budgets under increasing pressure, we need to be making the case for libraries more than ever. All too often, libraries are the first to receive budget cuts. Funders need to understand the essential role that libraries play in our society and economy, with usage up significantly, and increasing numbers of people coming to libraries for job-related services, for access to government assistance programs, and as a way of making their money go further." says Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director. "The new toolkit will arm librarians and library supporters with the facts and strategies they need to speak out effectively for libraries in this tough economy."

The toolkit contains information on how to work with decision-makers, ways to work with the media, and talking points to help libraries articulate the role of libraries in times of economic downturn. Talking points on the economic value of libraries, with return-on-investment examples; libraries and the economy; and upswings in library usage are included. Users are also invited to share their stories of how they have successfully advocated. Recent media coverage of libraries is also featured.

This resource is part of the "Advocacy U", ALA’s new initiative geared to providing tools, training and resources to library advocates achieve real advocacy goals in real situations at the local level. Learn more at www.ala.org/advocacyuniversity.

"The Advocating in a Tough Economy Toolkit" is also a work in process. Updates and improvements will be implemented as new information and new success stories become available.

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Happy Holidays! Here’s a terrific article in today’s SF Chronicle that documents increasing use of SF libraries:

More people using libraries in tough times

Julian Guthrie, Chronicle Staff Writer

Saturday, December 27, 2008

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/27/BA4814U7KK.DTL

Deborah Burstyn

Writer/editor - Contra Costa County Representative BALIS Advisory Board
925.932.6472
925.286.3015 cell
More people using libraries in tough times

Julian Guthrie, Chronicle Staff Writer
Saturday, December 27, 2008

Nona Nangalama checked out a dozen books from the San Francisco Public Library this week, saying that in better economic times, she would have gone to Borders to shop for the items.

The San Francisco resident and unemployed mother of two is using public libraries even more in these tough times. She is checking out books instead of buying them, and using the Main Library's job and career center to begin her search for employment.

"I live right near the Borders South of Market, so that would be easy for me to go there," Nangalama said, holding 12 books on mastering algebra and geometry that she had checked out for her daughters. "You come here and get advice, guidance and books - all for free."

As the economy slides into a recession and families are cutting back on expenses big and small, libraries in the Bay Area and beyond are experiencing a big increase in membership and circulation.

But as demand rises, libraries are also seeing a squeeze in funding. Libraries rely on property taxes, and city coffers everywhere have been hit by the bad economy. Library officials from San Mateo to Marin County are beginning to look at ways to cut costs without reducing services.

"We're trying to be conservative looking at the next fiscal year," said Martin Gomez, director of library services for San Mateo County, which has 12 libraries in 11 cities. "All of our numbers, in terms of visits and circulation at branch libraries, are up by around 5 percent. But real estate drives our revenue, and property taxes are down. We're not looking at layoffs or reduced hours of operation, but we know the economy is going to take a while to bounce back."

San Francisco's public libraries have seen a 27 percent increase since July in the number of people seeking library cards, and a 12 percent increase over the same period in the number of materials checked out. That amounts to 32,000 cards issued and 3.8 million books, CDs and DVDs checked out.

"We are seeing a significant increase in folks coming into the library to access our computers, to visit our job and career centers, and find information on government aid and look up credit
ratings on financial institutions," said Luis Herrera, city librarian for San Francisco, which has 27 branch libraries and the Main Library at the Civic Center.

"When the economy is down, library use is up," he said.

More library cards

More Americans have library cards than at any time since 1990, according to the American Library Association.

"Across the country, in every kind of neighborhood and community, library use, by various measures, is up," said Jim Rettig, president of the American Library Association, which has 66,000 members and promotes libraries and librarianship. "At this point, we have an entire population affected by the recession. People are discovering they can save money by using libraries, and they can develop their knowledge and seek employment."

Rettig said the 2 billion items checked out from U.S. libraries this year is 10 percent more than during the economic downturn in 2001. But books, DVDs and other material are only part of the story, he said.

73 percent of U.S. communities, the only place a person can get free Internet access is libraries," Rettig said. "Libraries in areas hit hard by factory closings are playing an especially important role in the economic recovery. Most job applications are now submitted online."

Branches closing

Rettig noted that a number of cities, including San Diego, Philadelphia, Trenton, N.J., and Mesa, Ariz., are looking at closing branch libraries. "Public libraries are facing the most severe cutbacks in decades," Rettig said.

He said the American Library Association will submit a proposal to Congress early in the new year seeking $100 million in stimulus funding. The funds would go to enhance services and materials; extend hours of operation; and offer more classes and workshops focused on financial literacy, housing counseling and small business development. He also hopes a portion of the funds would go to renovating and upgrading facilities.

San Francisco's Herrera said the city's funding for libraries is holding steady.

"we have support through a set-aside in the city's general fund and property taxes," he said. "But we are going to be very prudent in how we approach spending. San Francisco is really committed

to providing library services for free." In fact, Herrera said, San Francisco has been increasing hours and services. In November, seven of the 27 branches opened for an additional day each week. Four libraries are under renovation. The number of public computers at libraries has increased by 48 percent in the last two years.

**Job seekers**

Susan Cohen, a librarian for 15 years who now runs the job and career center on the fourth floor of the Main Library, is seeing more people come in asking for help with resumes and job searches. She said applications for most jobs - from dishwashers to civil service positions - are submitted online.

She has worked in recent months to increase the number of books on how to find a job, start a small business or change careers.

"I chose this job because I thought I could be useful," Cohen said. "It's as satisfying as it's ever been. But I can feel that times are tougher. There's a nervousness that people have over the economy. I'm happy I'm in this position to be helpful."

**Popular picks at the library**

The most frequently checked-out books, CDs and DVDs at San Francisco public libraries in 2008:

**Fiction books**

"Lao Fuzi," by Wang Ze

"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," by J.K. Rowling

"A Thousand Splendid Suns," by Khaled Hosseini

"The Yiddish Policemen's Union: A Novel," by Michael Chabon

"The Kite Runner," by Khaled Hosseini

**Nonfiction books**

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/27/BA4814U7KK.DTL&type=printable
"The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals," by Michael Pollan

"Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia," by Elizabeth Gilbert

"The World Without Us," by Alan Weisman

"In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto," by Michael Pollan

"Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life," by Barbara Kingsolver

**DVDs**

"Ba qian li lu yun he yue (Eight Thousand Li of Cloud and Moon), part 2"

"The Little Mermaid"

"Ba qian li lu yun he yue, part 1"

"SNL (Saturday Night Live)"

"Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix"

**Spoken word CDs**

"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," by J.K. Rowling

"Ying yu jiu bai ju xing; English 900," by Edwin T. Cornelius

"A Thousand Splendid Suns," by Khaled Hosseini

"Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets," by J.K. Rowling

"Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," by J.K. Rowling

**Music CDs**

"Loose," Nelly Furtado

"Too Late," Norah Jones

"Stevie Wonder: The Definitive Collection"
More people using libraries in tough times

"Help!" the Beatles

"Love," the Beatles

Source: San Francisco Public Library

E-mail Julian Guthrie at jguthrie@sfchronicle.com.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/27/BA4814U7KK.DTL

This article appeared on page B - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle
Library changes

Dear Editor:

The Contra Costa County Library recently released its fiscal year July 2008 highlights report to the Board of Supervisors. Unquestionably, the library has merged the traditional activities of past generations with technological savvy befitting a wired, on-line generation.

The library used generous outside funding to expand user markets. A $70,000 grant from the Lesher Foundation established a library at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility and a $118,000 federal grant created a reading and literacy program at the Juvenile Hall Library, with library cards issued in the lobby to visiting families.

Grants for $337,000 were received for the pioneering U.S. book dispensing machine, Library a Go Go, at the Bay Point BART station. Target offered $30,000 for the first annual Reading Festival, attracting 50 authors and 2,600 patrons. The Mental Organization for Disabilities awarded the Antioch branch $1,000 for its exemplary service of people with disabilities.

Circulation exceeded 6.1 million this year, surpassing by 13 percent the 2006-7 record of 5.4 million. New readers were welcomed with Project Second Chance delivering 218 learners 7,407 hours of literacy instruction, 6,379 second graders were visited and 2,040 library cards issued at 80 schools. A Harry Potter release party was celebrated county wide. Fifty-eight Stories to Go volunteers visited 35 preschools presenting 2,100 story times. A new baby reading program was launched.

Teens enjoyed book clubs, movies, study, game and soundproof music rooms.

The senior community enjoyed a Film Noir Club and genealogy, elder care, scrapbook, photography, fitness and computer training sessions.

Small business and tax consultations flourished and 531 attendees attended workshops on topics ranging from How To Publish Your Book, Making the Most of Your Money, Owning Franchises, to Invention to Marketplace.

Technology flourished. Podcasting was introduced as a means of broadcasting audio content over the Internet, including online story times and author interviews. Online readers see and post reviews through a Wiki. YouTube broadcasts library events, including video contests for teens. Photographed library events are posted on Flicker.

Large print and audio books are available. Online offers a nationwide selection of newspapers, e-books, subject guides and term paper friendly databases of opposing arguments, sans the clutter of Google. From home, you can get a library card, reserve a library computer, tap the catalog, and order delivery from any branch.

Local, state and federal agency documents, references of over 3 million International corporations and 5 million executive bios and new business listings are available.

Students can get on-line homework help 1 to 10 p.m. through "Help Now" with real-time tutors. They can also avail of writing labs and skill development.

Best yet for the local scene, Antioch has unveiled plans for a $2 million Gateway Learning Center at Prewett Park. It would be a relatively lean-machine library annex, but it is a terrific start and is expandable. It would serve all age groups, addressing particular urgency for our under served youth. Excitingly, funding would come from grants, corporate sponsors and private donors.

Unquestionably, the library is a dynamic and relevant institution changing with the times.

Walter Ruehlig

Antioch Library Commissioner
As the nationwide recession continues to take its toll on businesses and pocketbooks, libraries are emerging as a shelter during the economic storm.

Foot traffic and circulation have gone up in recent months, thanks to people who opt to borrow materials instead of buying them at stores, library officials say.

Palm Springs resident Lu Bucknell searched through back issues of Consumer Reports at the Palm Springs Library recently to find information on vacuum cleaners.

"We'd rather just come in and utilize these than buy it," said Bucknell, 70. "It's extremely beneficial. Sometimes we come here to get movies instead of renting them."

The library's circulation went up from 31,012 items in December 2007 to 37,804 items last month, one official said. About 33,150 items were borrowed in November 2008, nearly 4,000 more items than a year earlier.

"As the economy got worse and worse, more people have come in," library spokeswoman Julie Warren said.

Free materials aren't the only resource that a library can provide for people in tough economic times. Workstations are available for use by those searching for job information or looking to prepare their resumes. The Rancho Mirage Public Library installed its first workstation last week.

"These are good days to get a lot of free information," Library Director David Bryant said. "We have a lot of objectives here at the library, but for people in need of employment, we can be a good start to clean up their resumes."

Palm Springs library staff say their workstations are always occupied.

"Just so many people were needing that type of service," Warren said. "We have time limits on computers because so many people are using them, but we wanted to make sure people applying for jobs had a longer period of time."

The Riverside County Employment Development Department's most recent data released in October indicates local unemployment shot up in the latter half of 2008. Palm Springs' unemployment rate, for instance, increased from 7.2 percent in July to 7.7 percent in October. Coachella's rate went up from 15 percent in July to 15.9 percent in October. Libraries have developed programs to assist the unemployed, such as adult literacy programs available at any Riverside County Library System branch.

"It's designed to help them with their personal goals," Riverside County Librarian Nancy Johnson said. "It's very individualized."

She encourages people to visit local libraries to obtain information that will benefit them during these hard economic times.

"As time goes on, you'll probably see more responses to specific situations," Johnson said.

Bermuda Dunes resident Ana McGraw, who teaches English as a Second Language at College of the Desert, brings her students to the Rancho Mirage library for materials and information, she said while looking at DVDs there Friday.

Since they have to spend money on other school supplies, they've benefited from the library, McGraw said.

"They did not know it was free. They did not know they had so many things," she said.
Libraries Busy in Faltering Economy

Public System Affected by Budget Cuts

By Ben Preston

Thursday, January 8, 2009

As economic troubles have swept the nation, many who might normally turn to cable television or rented movies for solace are finding that the public library offers a more economical escape from everyday life. Already busy, Santa Barbara’s library system has been receiving an exceptionally high volume of visitors lately, as area residents flock to the free books, DVDs, and Internet access. However, economic strife has also affected a number of public institutions as city, county, and state budgets have been cut, and public libraries are no exception. “That is the irony of it all. Whenever the economy is bad, people turn to the library for entertainment and [online] job searches, but next year is going to be difficult and we’re looking at reductions,” said Irene Macius, director of the Santa Barbara Public Library System.
opulation served by each branch. Other funding comes from the municipality in which a library is located, and the county contributes about $7 for each of the system’s approximately 231,000 users. Furthermore, all of the libraries have support groups that raise money by holding book sales and soliciting donations. “It’s very complicated because we’re dealing with so many municipalities,” Macius explained.

Despite cutbacks of staffing and hours at the Central and Eastside libraries — which are financed largely by the City of Santa Barbara’s general fund — Goleta City Manager Dan Singer said that although the City Council has not yet discussed the library budget for this year, he does not anticipate cuts for the Goleta Library. “We’ve been looking for about two years now at how to increase service levels and increase revenue, but we have no expectation of cutting the library budget,” he said. Since 1980, Goleta residents have paid a special parcel tax — first to the county and now to the relatively new city — which currently stands at about $19 per residential parcel. “[The parcel tax] has provided Goleta with a higher level of service, but the value of those dollars has eroded,” said Macius, though she noted that the tax rises with increases in the cost of living portion of the consumer price index.

“We provide them with funding for things they wouldn’t normally have money for,” said Horowitz.

Depending upon the locale, the “friends groups” — nonprofits formed to raise money for the libraries — can be a significant source of funding. Corinne Horowitz, president of Friends of the Goleta Library, said that her organization raises between $25,000 and $35,000 per year from book sales, and Macius said that the Friends of the Montecito Library enjoys generous members, with roughly $70,000 raised for the Montecito Library last year. “We provide them with funding for things they wouldn’t normally have money for,” said Horowitz, adding that because most of their money is raised by selling used books throughout the year at one or two dollars each, it is unlikely that they will see their source of income flag. “We work very hard, and have volunteers at the library every day sorting through book donations,” she said.

An added bonus to Santa Barbara’s library system are the two higher-education libraries in town. While the city’s libraries may have curtailed hours, library patrons have the option of using resources available at SBCC and UCSB. Anyone can go to these libraries and use materials onsite, but there are fees associated with borrowing. According to UCSB’s Web site, members of the public can purchase a one-year library card for $100, or for $25 if they join the $40 UCSB Affiliates. SBCC’s library cards are considerably less expensive — joining Friends of Luria Library carries a $10 annual fee and guarantees full access to the materials in SBCC’s campus library.
Folks Are Flocking to Libraries, Cozy Places to Look for Jobs

BY JIM CARLTON

TRACY, Calif.—The financial crisis has caused a lot of withdrawals at the public library.
A few years ago, public libraries were being written off as saviors. The Internet had made them irrelevant, the argument went. But libraries across the country are reporting jumps in attendance, such as 65% over the past year, as new users flock to branches to fill out resumes and scan ads for job listings.

Other recession-weary patrons are turning to libraries for cheap entertainment—tiling time with the free computers, video rentals and, of course, books.

Last Friday, there was a particularly long waiting list of 157

Continued from Page One.

...employement compensation.
And, she says, “there’s something about the library that helps you think, at least for me.”

At the Ferguson Library in Stamford, Conn., “it’s not unusual for us to have 40 or 50 reserves on a popular book,” says spokeswoman Linda Avellar. At the Randolph County Public Library in Asheboro, N.C., a 25% increase in visitors over the past six months from a year ago has been hard on 14-year-old carpeting that officials say needs to be replaced now rather than in six years, as planned.

This isn’t the first time library attendance has spiked in a downturn. The 1987 and 2001 recessions saw similar jumps, librarians say. But few people thought that libraries would again be in such favor after so much information flooded the Web.

One big draw: Most libraries have free computer access and Wi-Fi service. And they’ve begun stocking DVDs and videogames. With the recession weighing on them, “people recognize what a great value the public library is,” says Jim Rettig, president of the American Library Association in Chicago.

Librarians are turning into job counselors—and even social workers—as they have to deal with a sometimes-desperate new class of patrons. “They are frustrated, overwhelmed and thought they would not be job hunting again in their lives,” says Jan Perrier, head of reference and adult services at the Roxbury Public Library in Scarborough, Me.

This left the library in a bind. When no one woman just so overwhelmed she sat in front of the PC and cried.

Many jobless people are reporting to the library as they used to report to the office. Career books are in particularly great demand at the Morris County Library in Whippany, N.J. “The shelves are bare,” says Lynne Olver, chief librarian there. She says attendance in “Career Resource Seminars that the library has held for many years jumped to 745 in 2008, from 472 in 2007.

Others come in to escape their troubles for a while. Wesley Martin on Friday tapped his hands to the beat of a hip-hop video he was watching on one of the Tracy library’s computers. “This is just a chance for me to get out of my house,” said the 33-year-old, who lost his job at a discount store a month ago.

The sheer numbers of jobless visitors are overwhelming some libraries at a time of funding cuts by cash-strapped local agencies. The library in Winter Park, Fla., reports a 25% increase in checkouts of its books and other materials over the past 15 months, even as its budget for stocking new items has been cut 12%. Some libraries are cutting their hours, reducing staff or even being closed altogether because of budget problems. The Schenectady County Public Library in Schenectady, N.Y., says it has had to furlough four librarians who have left in the past two years. “As a result, we recently found that it is taking up to five days to reshelf books, as just one tiny example of the impact,” says Karen Bradley, a reference librarian there.

The Randolph County library in North Carolina can’t afford to replace those rugs: “We are just going to have to live with the worn carpet for now,” says Suzanne Tait, the library’s director. An average of 230 people a day line up to use the library’s 27 computers. To help manage the traffic, the library has taken to bumping users off if they try to stay on for more than an hour.

But the patrons keep coming. “Many times a day there is a line of people waiting to get on one of our computers,” says Mary Wright, director of the Marks-Quinlan County Library in Marks, Miss., who says many of the new patrons are laid-off workers from nearby casinos.

Tracy library officials have ordered nine more Internet-access computers. For now, patrons have to line up in a shack to make a reservation to use one of the 12 existing terminals, says Kathleen Buffelen, the supervising librarian.

A checkout counter nearby...