CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
AGENDA ATTACHMENT 3

MEETING DATE: Thursday, January 28, 2010
AGENDA ITEM #: 9
ITEM: CORRESPONDENCE

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

• None
I've been a Lafayette resident for the past ten years, and during that time an enthusiastic patron of the Lafayette branch. I want to bring to your attention a minor shortcoming of the new Lafayette library, opened just two months ago. It is a wonderful space, but I won't go into its many attributes here.

My concern regards my discovery a few weeks ago, that there is no book-return slot available at the main entrance (facing Mount Diablo Boulevard) for after hours. In order to return a book when the library is closed, I must descend to the parking lot at the southeast corner of the building.

In considering how the architects have given you a wonderful, welcoming, exterior landing at the main entrance, a place that is the primary access point for four destinations (the cafe, the auditorium, the grand stairway down to the lower level, and the library's main doors), and considering how much importance all this architectural attention implies, I find this absence of an after-hours return slot there baffling. It is as though the architect forgot the principal purpose of his efforts. Since making this discovery, I have encountered others there who found themselves in the same, puzzled predicament.

How did this occur? Is there some way this might be remedied? While understanding, funding is always a constraint, it occurs to me that a simple (if unusually) remedy might be to cut a slot in one of the exterior walls at the landing, and to place a simple cardboard box on the other side: cheap, practical, but above all, useful to your patrons. The box could be removed when you open the doors for the day. (This is like what was used at the old location.)

If this decision not to have after-hours return slot there was made by the architect, I would think it appropriate to inform him (or her) of his mistake, and to request that he provide you gratis a design for this small correction.

Name: Thomas Swartz
email: caffenero@dslextreme.com

Anne Cain/staff/cccl
01/07/2010 12:40 PM
To caffenero@dslextreme.com
cc okelly@ccclib.org, Susan Weaver/staff/cccl@library
bcc
Subject Fw: Commission mail, Lafayette branch: lack of after-hours return slots

Thank you for your e-mail about the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. You are correct - the only book return off of Mt. Diablo is inside the lobby, which of course is locked after hours. We also offer 2 choices for returning books on Golden Gate Way - the drive-through and a manual book return located in the outside parking lot.

I will share your concern and suggestion with the Library Commission at their next meeting. Meanwhile, Susan Weaver, the Senior Community Library Manager at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, will put this topic on the agenda for the next meeting between the library, the city and the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, the partners in operating the new library.

Either Susan or I will get back to you following this discussion. Thank you also for your kind comments about the library - it is truly a wonderful facility for the community and we appreciate suggestions about changes we can make to better serve you.

Please feel free to contact me at the contact information below or Susan Weaver at sweaver@ccclib.org

thanks

Anne Cain
County Librarian
Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd
Pleasant Hill CA 94523
(925) 848-6423
acain@ccclib.org
To the Director:

As you’ve no doubt heard, the Association of Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) has merged with Friends of Libraries U.S.A. (FOLUSA) to become the premiere “citizen” division of the American Library Association (ALA). We are very excited about this and we believe it has enormous potential for America’s libraries – including yours! The new ALA division is called the Association for Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations – or ALTAFF.

So why is this good news for you? ALTAFF has already begun developing toolkits, training sessions, and other materials that will help its Trustee and Friends members become even better informed and skilled library supporters. For example, our newsletter, The Voice, has been expanded to 24 pages and includes “news you can use” – tips and articles on library policies, information to protect your board against conflicts of interest, information on national library trends, as well as lots of tips for Friends to help them raise more money and learn best practices from other groups across the country.

Most importantly, ALTAFF will be focusing a lot of effort on developing resources and materials to ensure that your Trustees and Friends can become strong advocates for your library.

Because ALAFF so strongly values the contributions that Trustees and Friends make to America’s libraries and because we know that by uniting their voices for libraries we can create effective advocates at the local state and national levels, we have developed a special price structure that enables your Trustees and Friends to have full access to all of our and ALA’s resources. Please see the membership brochure that is included with this letter.

America’s libraries are critical to a democratic society. For well over 100 years they have been entrusted to citizens to ensure that they stay viable and responsive to the communities they serve. Today’s libraries face many more challenges than they did in the last century and their role has become even more critical. We hope you will join us so that, together, we can work to keep your library well funded, well respected, and well governed in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Sally Gardner Reed

Sally Gardner Reed, Executive Director
109 S. 13th Street, Suite 3-N, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Toll Free: (800) 545-2433, ext 2161   Fax: (215) 545-3821
Web: www.ala.org/altaff   Email: altaff@ala.org
Chris Tang-Chairman of the Contra Costa Library Commission

Dear Mr. Tang:

I am concerned about the intent of the commission to send a letter to the superintendent of Juvenile Hall, apparently to “apologize” for my brazenness in daring to question the choices of the library staff there. I believe this would be inappropriate and out of the scope of the commission. As I noted when we spoke Thursday evening, my letter was meant to convey my viewpoint, not that of the commission as a whole. I did not use commission letterhead. The commission is composed of individuals representing different areas of Contra Costa County, and each is entitled to his or her own opinion. The presentations made before the commission are open to the public, and I didn’t have to be a commissioner to see them. We as commissioners represent the public of the areas that send us. We are not obligated to present a united front or act as a group only. I took the same action that I would have taken as a private citizen. I stated in the letter that I was on the commission, however. This is a fact. I also stated that the commission acts only in an advisory capacity and has no authority to change library content, which is also true. As a private citizen I would also have had the right to request that the superintendent review library content, as I did.

It is appropriate, if the members of the commission desire, to affirm their appreciation for the efforts of Ms. McKee and the library staff as a whole. She provided an interesting presentation and I appreciated the opportunity to hear what she had to say. I do feel that she expressed a lack of concern for my point of view when I commented during the meeting, and the reasons given for the book choices seemed rather weak. For that reason I sought further information from her superior. He provided information on selection criteria which probably should have been included in her presentation initially. It was not in our September packets. Even if she has provided the information before, the members of the commission change. This is basic information the commission should have, and I felt it was appropriate to supply it as an agenda item along with the supporting letters.

In his letter Mr. Pelle referred, in his defense of the Demonata series, to R.L. Stine’s Goosebumps series, indicating that it was in the same vein. I have not heard commendable things about the Goosebumps series either from those who make a study of occultic books and their effects on children. According to Michael O’Brien, author of A Landscape with Dragons, this series is “gruesome” and contains title such as Headless Halloween and Return to Horrorland. He states:” For sheer perversity these tales rival anything that has been published to date. Each is brimming over with murder, grotesque scenes of horror terror, mutilation. . .”

Mr. O’Brien also observed in his book: “If a child’s reading is habitually in the area of the supernatural, is there not a risk that he will develop an insatiable appetite for it, an appetite that grows stronger as it is fed?” Many violent crimes are now being committed by those who claim to “hear voices” or have other supernatural experiences. Juvenile Hall should not be a breeding ground for this.
I do not oppose this literature being available in the general circulation library, as I have said before. There is other fantasy literature that might be more appropriate for a juvenile detention facility, however. Books by J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, for example, are well regarded by those familiar with child psychology. Perhaps these are already in the library.

The commission seems to have some members who believe it is their duty to protect the ability of librarians to choose books over the public’s right to question these choices. A librarian’s choices, particularly in specialty libraries, are generally scrutinized by someone such as a superintendent. In church libraries, for example the pastor often has the final say on what is included. It is rare for a librarian to have true autonomy in most situations.

I hope the meeting minutes will establish the fact that there was vigorous discussion without detailing the vehement nature of some of the comments. Objectivity about the issue seems to be affected, to some extent, by longstanding personal relationships.

I would appreciate the opportunity to review any letter that is sent out on this matter before it is sent. As I stated above, it is appropriate to affirm support for the librarian and thank her for her presentation. It is not appropriate to criticize my actions or apologize for them in any way.

Yours very truly,

Penny Prater
November 27, 2009

Alison McKee
Librarian
Juvenile Hall & Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility
Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94531

Dear Alison,

Thank you for your presentation to the Library Commission on September 24 describing the scope of services offered by the libraries at Juvenile Hall and Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility.

Your presentation opened many of our eyes to the extent of your work there and the quality of your service to these young people.

We also appreciate your follow-up letter, which we requested, describing ways our cities and Friends groups can assist with donations.

The Commission compliments you on your efforts. Your competence, enthusiasm and dedication are obvious.

The Commission also congratulates you on your promotion. You will truly be missed at Juvenile Hall and Orin Allen.

Sincerely,

Chris Tang, Chair
Contra Costa County Library Commission

cc: Bruce Peile, Superintendent of Juvenile Hall
    Anne Cain, County Librarian
    Library Commissioners
November 24, 2009

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Public Library Foundation (PLF) Preservation

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

As you prepare the 2010-2011 budget, on behalf of the Contra Costa County Library Commission, I am writing to request that PLF be preserved during these fiscally challenging budget times.

Throughout the state and our county, usage of library service is at an all time high. Our citizens are streaming into libraries to learn resume writing, research job opportunities, improve their English skills and seek the information they need to manage through this Great Recession.

The funds received from PLF are essential to help preserve public library operations, especially, when local funding is reduced due to the economy. Even though PLF has been slashed over 75% in the past few years, the funds are used to invest in expanded collections and to limit the reduction in hours of service to the public.

A typical day in the Contra Costa County Library (25 community libraries) has over 8,700 people visiting the library. They will check out or renew over 20,000 items, including 87 at the juvenile hall library. There will also be about 3000 Internet sessions, with many of those people posting resumes on-line and doing job searches. The staff at our Antioch Library report they receive 30 job search questions a day plus 12 related to helping customers improve or write their resumes for the first time.

It should be remembered that libraries, like good schools, are an essential part of our state’s infrastructure and provide true economic value to the community. Recent studies show that for every dollar invested in library operations, $4 is returned to the community in economic benefit.

Thus, the Library Commission urges you and your financial staff to preserve the funding of the Public Library Foundation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Chris Tang, Chair
Contra Costa County Library Commission

cc: Christine Kehoe, Chair Senate Appropriations Committee
    Kevin de Leon, Chair Assembly Appropriations Committee
    Senator Mark DeSaulnier, Senate District 7
    Senator Loni Hancock, Senate District 9
    Assembly member Tom Torlakson, Assembly District 11
    Assembly member Joan Buchanan, Assembly District 15
    Assembly member Nancy Skinner, Assembly District 14
    Susan Bonilla, Chair Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
    Mike Dillon and Christina Dillon DiCaro, CLA Lobbyists
    Kim Bui-Barton, President, California Library Association
    Deborah Doyle, Chair, Legislative Committee, California Library Association
    Anne Cain, County Librarian
    Library Commissioners
December 4, 2009

Mr. Chris Tang  
Chairman  
Contra Costa Library Commission  
1750 Oak Park Boulevard  
Pleasant Hill, California 94523-4497

Dear Mr. Tang,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your insights on the work of the Contra Costa Community Library and the role of the Public Library Fund in those efforts. As you likely know from this past year’s experiences, we will face many difficult decisions when it comes to developing the 2010-11 budget. The best way to allocate money to public libraries will certainly be among them.

In the meantime, I appreciate your willingness to weigh in on such an important topic. Please know that I will keep your thoughts in mind this winter and during budget development. Thank you again for your input.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger

/ls
January 7, 2010

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Constituent Affairs
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Public Library Foundation (PLF)

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

As you prepare your 2010-11 budget, please preserve the Public Library Foundation funding. This line item provides cash strapped libraries critically needed funds to help continue their operations.

During this Great Recession, libraries all over the state are being used more than ever. Not only is circulating setting new records, libraries are being part of the economic solution. Here in Concord, on an average day, the library staff fields over 30 questions about resume writing and internet job searches. They also provide workshops on how to use the internet, thereby helping to close the digital divide.

Libraries, like good schools are an essential part of the state’s infrastructure. Thus, we must work together to preserve their services, and PLF is an important source of their funding.

Thank you in advance for preserving the Public Library Foundation in the 2010-11 budget.

Sincerely,

Guy Bjerke
Mayor, City of Concord

cc: Senator Mark DeSaulnier
    Assemblyman Tom Torlakson
    Supervisor Susan Bonilla
January 15, 2010

Assembly Member Nancy Skinner
1515 Clay St. Suite #2201
Oakland CA 94612

Subject: Public Library Foundation (PLF)

Dear Assembly Member Skinner,

Nancy, it was great to meet you last week at the Mayors’ Conference in Pleasant Hill. Thank you for your on-going support of public libraries.

For your background, here is some information about PLF. This was passed in the early ‘80s in the wake of Prop. 13. Its aim is to help provide some general fund money to support public library operations. The law established a formula that is based on population and the CPI.

It is not a mandated expenditure; hence it has never been fully funded. In 2000 it was 85% funded at about $58 million. Since then it has been cut by over 75% and is now just a little less than $13 million. Full funding would be over $100 million. The following table compares the amounts the five library jurisdictions in your district would receive this fiscal year if PLF was fully funded vs. the approximate amount they will receive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Full Funding ($000)</th>
<th>Amount Anticipated ($000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda County</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa County</td>
<td>2,834</td>
<td>323</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In past years Contra Costa Co. received over $1 million. Given the decreasing revenues we have from property taxes, it is critical that PLF be preserved. The governor’s budget that was submitted last week has made no cuts to PLF. However, we need your support throughout the budget process to ensure no cuts are made.

Again Nancy, thank you for your on-going support and I’d be happy to answer any questions.

Best regards,

Alan B. Smith
925.825.5575
January 18, 2010

Hon. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Constituent Affairs  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

During the 2010-11 budget process, please preserve the Public Library Foundation funding. This line item provides cash strapped libraries critically needed funds to help continue their operations.

As a former high school English instructor, I know and have seen the transforming powers of learning to read. In California, over 100 library jurisdictions teach adults citizens how to read through their adult literacy services. This prepares them for better jobs, and hence the libraries are part of the economic solution.

This is just one way, during this Great Recession that libraries are being used more than ever. Indeed, many independent studies have shown that for every dollar invested in library operations, three to four dollars are returned to the community in economic value.

Libraries, like good schools are an essential part of the state’s infrastructure. Thus, we must work together to preserve their services, and PLF is an important source of their funding.

Thank you in advance for preserving the Public Library Foundation in the 2010-11 budget.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Bonilla  
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors