CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
AGENDA ATTACHMENT 3

MEETING DATE: Thursday, May 27, 2010
AGENDA ITEM #: 9
ITEM: CORRESPONDENCE

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- None
February 24, 2010

Cathy Sanford
Deputy County Librarian: Support Services
Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Dear Cathy,

The Library Commissioners thank you and your staff and deeply appreciate the development of ideas and the extraordinary effort that culminated during your marathon website-redesign-and-launch-(holiday?) weekend.

It is always exciting to hear of the latest accomplishments and the newest proposals that keep bubbling up from your group, and it makes us proud to be tangentially involved.

Please convey our thanks to all.

Sincerely,

Chris Tang
Chair, Contra Costa County Library Commission

cc: Anne Cain, County Librarian
Library Commissioners
Subject: Contra Costa County Library Proposed 2010-11 Budget

Dear Chair Gioia,

The Contra Costa County Library Commission unanimously supports the library's budget as presented.

The Commission received a comprehensive review of the library's finances and challenges the library faces during these challenging economic times at its February 18, 2010 meeting.

While it is painful to have to cut the budget (e.g. books, databases and other materials), as presented it does preserve 35 hours of service at community libraries where the cities have partnered by absorbing the facility maintenance costs. Public feedback has consistently shown that open hours is the highest priority for our customers.

Anne Cain and her staff are to be commended for their creativity in reducing costs, yet preserving those services most desired by the community.

The Friends of the Library groups will be working to supplement the materials budget this coming year. The Friends Council members are also holding workshops in March to strengthen their library advocacy skills.

Again, the Commission supports the proposed budget and urges the Board to adopt it as presented. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Chris Tang, Commission Chair

cc: Supervisor Gayle B. Ulikema
Supervisor Mary N. Plepho
Supervisor Susan A. Bonilla
Supervisor Federal D. Glover
David Twa, County Administrator
Anne Cain, County Librarian
Library Commissioners
Commission mail, money

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: I cannot believe that with libraries on shortened hours, etc. because of MONEY that you have spent money on an upgrade of the website with extra security features that were not evident or coached. And by the way, what does 'CHARGED' mean? If it's the same as 'checked out' why don't you say so. Disgruntled

Name: Kristen Bodie

email: sbodie2@comcast.net

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Kristen, thank you for your email.

The library system upgrade was precipitated by aging mainframe hardware that needed to be replaced. Our system vendor who develops the circulation software and public access catalogs ceased development on the older mainframe version of their product and the Library needed to make a decision as to whether to move to the new UNIX version of the same product or move to another library system vendor altogether. The least impact on patrons, staff and the library budget was to move to the new version of the same software. System upgrades and maintenance are budgeted annually and this budget was used to upgrade the system.

In keeping with best practices, the Library reassesses website functionality every couple of years to ensure that we're keeping up with our users' demands, with accessibility requirements, and that we're making the most efficient use of available self-service technologies. With shrinking budgets and open hours it is important that we look for ways to allow people to make use of library services virtually, on the web, at a time when it is most convenient for them or when their local community library is closed. Our downloadable media collection, chat & text reference services and new e-commerce component of the website are all examples of this — allowing users the convenience to access services such as paying fines and fees by credit card online rather than having fines accrue until the user can make it into a library location. The website redesign was developed in-house and was timed to coincide with the system and catalog upgrades to minimize down time and to ensure that both undertakings would benefit from the new features each development offered.

Regarding "charged", you're correct. This is a bit of library jargon that got overlooked and has since been changed to "checked out" and "loans" as appropriate.

We continue to work with our library vendor to make improvements to the online public access catalogs and questions and suggestions like yours do not fall on deaf ears. As you make use of the new website and catalogs, please do send your suggestions and questions to library staff through the "Contact Us" page on the website.

Thank you again for contacting the Library.

Anne Cain
County Librarian
Email Log Entry

Your changes have been saved. The status has changed. If this issue was assigned to anyone, they also received a copy.

Ticket # 1400

Date of original Email: 2/22/2010

Text of Email:
Commission mail, Comments
to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: Well, I wasn’t sure where to leave this comment here or email it to a specific person, but really this message is just my personal take on the new library website. I have to say that it is amazing and beyond what I’ve hoped for. In the past, I used to go on the website lots and lots of times to browse for books to put on hold but at times, it was so inconvenient to create a list of my favorite books and have to email it to myself so as not to forget them. Which is why I’m loving the whole make an account and save a list. Honestly, this website has made using it a delight and convenient beyond belief. Just wanted to say kudos to the people in charge of it. Their efforts have reaped a definite success. Thanks for the hard work!

Name: Deanna
e-mail: naningxoxo@hotmail.com

Assigned to: Cain, Anne (County Librarian)

Status: Closed

Reply Date: 2/22/2010

Reply:
Thank you very much for your kind comments - it means a lot to the staff that their hard work is appreciated. I will make sure that they, as well as the Library Commission, get your e-mail. We’re glad you like the new features! thanks again

Anne Cain
County Librarian
Email Log Entry

Your changes have been saved. The status has changed. If this issue was assigned to anyone, they also received a copy.

Ticket # 1430

Date of original
Email:
Text of Email :

2/23/2010

Commission mail,

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments:
I would like to register a complaint. I live in Vallejo and my grandchildren live in Contra Costa County. One of their favorite outings on the weekends I have them is to go to the Concord Library.

Twice now, I have gone back to return books and the night depository was locked because the library was closed. A note was posted saying the depository was locked on purpose and I will have to come back to return the books. I complained at the returns desk and they said on long weekends it gets full and they don't want the books to get damaged.

So one of the times the depository was locked? People had left books all over the patio on the outside of the library exposed to the elements and potential theft - I would never do that, instead I accumulated another weeks worth of fines.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this out. Their "returns" closet is small and no, it can't hold much -- so LEAVE THE CLOSET DOOR OPEN! So you have a ton of books on the floor? Well they are in the inside, no one can bother them, and they don't get damaged -- and you are not asking people to come back AGAIN. The whole reason for a returns drop is for when you are CLOSED, right?

I know you have had cost cuts -- so has the rest of California -- don't punish your patrons for something we have no control over -- and don't make us waste our time and gas - Come on people!

Brenda Auld

3/1/2010

Reply Date

Dear Ms. Auld:

First, let me thank you for being a frequent library user and library supporter. It is gratifying to hear that a visit to the library is a favorite outing for your grandchildren.

The Concord Library as part of the Contra Costa County Library is experiencing budget cuts. To reduce expenses and maintain services as much as possible, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors instituted 6 unpaid furlough days during fiscal year 2009-2010. The most recent closures that you may have experienced were from Wednesday, December 24 through Sunday, December 28 and from Friday, February 12 through Monday, February 15. During these closure library staff are not allowed to work.

I appreciate your concern about locking the book drop. Ordinarily the book drop remains unlocked during the library's closed hours for the convenience of the public. Unfortunately, it is necessary to lock the book drop during furlough days that result in long closures since the sheer volume of daily returns would clog the book drop and damage materials. During the closure, no fines were charged which was noted on the sign placed over the book drop.

I am sorry our attempts to publicize the closure did not reach you before you came to the library. We tried to get the word out to all our patrons through our website, telephone messages, electronic newsletters, press releases, signs and bookmarks in the libraries. We are evaluating our efforts to reach the community and will use your feedback to help make upcoming furloughs more effective.

I apologize for any inconvenience the closures may have caused. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Maureen Kilmurray
Senior Community Library Manager
Email Log Entry

Date of original Email: 3/4/2010

Text of Email:

Commission mail, Why is this PUBLIC library promoting "Christian fiction"?

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: After long absence, I accessed the Contra Costa County
Public Library online.

When I went to the general catalog page, I saw that the library is
featuring "Christian fiction" as a genre lookup category.

Excuse me, but what is a public library in the United States of
America doing, promoting a religion?

We are supposed to have separation of religion and state
according to the U.S. Constitution.

I note that the CCC Library is not offering helpful links to
collections of Hindu fiction, or Muslim fiction, or any other special treatment of
any other religion.

Perhaps your response is, that you get many requests for
Christian fiction, so as a service, you provide that special link.

Sorry, but it is an improper request of a public institution, to provide
special treatment for a particular religion.

Perhaps the explanation is that CCC is using some privately
developed software programming, and the Christian fiction feature comes
built in.
(I would still argue that it is improper for a public institution to be contracting with services that violate public policy).
But surely you have the ability to turn on or off features of a software
program?

There are too many concessions being made on all fronts in U.S.
society to the illegal, improper, and indefensible demands of the Christianist
political rightwing, and I expect my county government to simply say no to
them -- and Contra Costa County above all, as a county with a
pioneering progressive legacy it should be proud of (first county in the nation to
offer a free public health care plan, and home of the first state Community College campus).

I am sincerely interested in hearing your response.

Daniel Ashby
1511-1/2 Yuba Ave.
San Pablo CA 94806
510 233 2144
proteus@2xtreme.net

Name: Daniel Ashby
email: proteus@2xtreme.net
Mr. Daniel Ashby
1511-1/2 Yuba Ave. San Pablo CA 94806

Dear Mr. Ashby,

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the Subject-Heading derived genre lists (i.e. "Browse Genre") that are available through the Visual Catalog on Contra Costa County Library's web site. There are over five hundred of these lists that help individuals interested in specific kinds of materials easily find them.

You have pointed out that, among these lists is one called "Christian Fiction." You state that "it is an improper request of a public institution, to provide special treatment for a particular religion." Furthermore, you state that there are no lists of materials for people interested in other religious fiction, saying that the library is "not offering helpful links to collections of Hindu fiction, or Muslim fiction, or any other special treatment of any other religion."

A quick scan of the "Browse genre" lists shows that this is not true. Included are lists of "Jewish Fiction," "Bible Fiction," "Occult Fiction" & "Religious Fiction." The Lists are developed by a vendor based upon Subject Headings authorized by the United States Library of Congress (LC). These are not a complete list of all of the LC authorized Subject Headings that the Library uses on a daily basis to help patrons find materials collected by the Library. The Library does collect religious fiction of all kinds, including materials on Hinduism and Islam, and utilizes numerous specific LC authorized Subject headings, such as "Muslims -- Fiction," "Buddhism -- Fiction," and so on. You are correct that the "Browse Genre" area does not include lists that link to every specific set of religious fiction materials that the Library collects. We will be working closely with our vendor to refine the lists. Currently, people interested in such materials are guided by the Library's continued use of LC Subject Headings in the catalog, from which the "Browse genre" lists are derived.

The Library does not promote any specific religion, or religiously as a whole. Its collections include fiction and nonfiction books whose authors touch upon, are influenced by, or promote Atheism, Agnosticism, Christianity of all kinds, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, Wicca and more. In collecting widely, the Library attempts to provide a wide understanding of worldwide culture as it is affected by all sorts of traditions, including spiritual ones, popular or otherwise. Please see page 60 of the Library's Collection Development Plan (available at http://cclib.org/aboutus/ThePlan2.pdf) for a description of how the Library selects Religious materials.

Book lists and displays do not reflect the Library's promotion of any specific religious or political perspective. Displays and book lists are designed in anticipation of demand and reflect commonly asked for materials. They include materials that match Collection Development Guidelines. Displays or lists are designed to help people easily find what they would like to read. Christian Fiction is a high demand genre of fiction, and one that has received much attention due to a growing readership.

As a result of this growing readership, the Library of Congress authorized the Subject heading "Christian Fiction" in 1986, and, since then, the Library of Congress has continued to collect such materials and create sub-headings of Christian Fiction that provide more detail about content. The Library utilizes these headings to help patrons both find these materials, and, in fact, Library users who are not interested in reading books of this nature appreciate the Subject Headings as they allow such patrons to identify Christian Fiction titles in order to be able to not select materials of this nature.

It is important to note that Christian Fiction does not only include conservative content or materials with an evangelical perspective, although many titles may certainly reflect these perspectives. From Christian Fiction: A Guide to the Genre, "Still, there are many Christian fiction writers who don't fit the evangelical mold and yet are clearly Christian fiction writers." Authors of Christian Fiction can come from the broad range of Christian sub-groups, and many of them perceive themselves not to be part of a conservative Christian movement. Many authors (Jim Wallis, for example) argue that it is simply wrong to conflate Evangelism with Conservatism. In regards to fiction, there is a growing sub-genre of African American Christian Fiction that clearly does not reflect a conservative political agenda whatsoever.

Thank you for your interest in how the Library helps patrons find materials. I have determined that inclusion of the Christian Fiction book list on the Library's Visual catalog does not impede the ability for patrons to find the wide range of religious fiction materials that the Library collects, and, in fact, may help some patrons determine what not to read. The Library will continue to develop book lists to help patrons find those materials they want and will refine the lists we now have. Thank you for your input. If you have any interest in discussing this further, please feel free to call me at (925)-927-3220.

Sincerely,

Elliot Warren
Collection Development/Technical Services Manager Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 927-3220
ewarren@cclib.org
**Email Log Entry**

Your changes have been saved. No email notifications were sent to anyone.

Ticket # 1463

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of original Email:</th>
<th>3/10/2010</th>
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| Text of Email:          | new website  
  to: libadmin@ccclib.org  
  comments: I just have to write to give you all great big hugs and praise for the new website. It is so thorough and interesting. It is very user friendly, even for a 74 year old like myself. Please tell everyone involved they are so clever! THANK YOU  
  Name: MJMuller  
  email: gocasey1@gmail.com |
| Assigned to:            | ask@ccclib.org () |
| Status:                 | Closed |

Reply Date : 3/10/2010  
Reply: Thank you for taking the time to write and let us know your thoughts about the new website. Your kind words have been shared with the team behind the new website.  
It is great to hear that you are enjoying the site!  
Susan  
Contra Costa County Library  

Additional Notes:  
Last Updated: 3/10/2010
This message was submitted to the Library Commission.

e-mailmessage: This message was submitted to the Library Commission.

subject: Commission mail, The art works for the new Walnut Creek Library

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: I am an artist (painter) living in Walnut Creek.

My artist friend said that the new downtown Walnut Creek Library (to be opened in July) is looking for the art works to be displayed in the new library. If it is so, can I apply for the project? I have some paintings in acrylic appropriate to public places. Where can I contact to get the information about the application?

Name: Aiko Damrow

email: aikodamrow@att.net

Hi, Aiko:

There was a public process for the public art selection last year and all the permanent pieces have already been selected by the Walnut Creek Arts Commission, including some that the City does not yet have funding for. However, there will be a public art gallery in the new library and here is the link to information about how you can apply to display there:
http://www.bedfordgallery.org/librarygallery.htm

Thanks for contacting us and I hope to see your art on display there!

Cindy Brittain
Senior Community Library Manager
Walnut Creek and Ygnacio Valley Libraries
Email Log Entry

Your changes have been saved. No email notifications were sent to anyone.

Ticket # 1533

Date of original Email: 4/23/2010

Text of Email:

Commission mail, restricted patron

comments: I am very perturbed as I just went to renew items that are
due on Sat. 4-24, and to my utter astonishment I was greeted with a
response of PATRON RESTRICTED.

I consider this to be uncalled for, as a patron of the Antioch Library for
12+ years, all because I returned home with an empty dvd case on last week.
I understood that the library was closed and wouldn't be open until
Monday...so I emailed the library with the information of the empty dvd
case to alert them of this.

My understanding by speaking with the library was that the Restricted
Patron was done as a result of my cell # not working, my granddaughter
dropped it and I just didn't replace it.
They then restricted my library privileges? my email address was available
to them in the email I sent on Sunday and I also gave them my home #, I am
sure of that.

This was just wrong...and shouldn't have happened, they are always
problems with inconsiderate persons at that library whom take it upon
themselves to try and usurp their authority in an irrational matter.

I would hope that these types of matter will be dealt with, it is unfair
for patrons to be treated with such disrespect.

Thank you,
Disrespected Patron

Dear patron,

Your email has been forwarded to the Antioch Library. But do go in person when the library is open, return the empty case and speak to staff.

Thank you for contacting the Contra Costa County Library.

Contra Costa County Library
Bringing People and Ideas Together
http://ccclib.org | ask@ccclib.org
Email Log Entry

Your changes have been saved. The status has changed. If this issue was assigned to anyone, they also received a copy.

Ticket # 1580

Date of original Email: 5/18/2010

Text of Email:

hours & budget cuts

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: I work for the county & understand that budget & service cuts are part of life these days. What I do not understand is why libraries in the lower income communities have fewer hours (more closed days, shorter days, less evening hours) than the libraries in more affluent communities? For example, Lafayette, Danville, Walnut Creek are all open longer than Pleasant Hill, Martinez, Pittsburg, etc. Sincerely, a resident of Pleasant Hill who works in Concord, Monica Mueller

Name: Monica Mueller

e-mail: monica_mueller@yahoo.com

Assigned to: Cain, Anne (County Librarian)

Status: Closed

Reply Date: 5/18/2010

Reply:

Thank you for taking the time to contact the library - we appreciate your interest in the hours that the libraries are open. Contra Costa County provides the same base level of open hours at all full-service community libraries. Currently, the County funds 35 open hours per week. Communities, such as the ones you list, contribute additional funds to keep their library open additional hours.

I will share your e-mail with the Library Commission. Please feel free to contact me if you have additional questions. Thanks

Anne Cain
County Librarian

Additional Notes:

Last Updated: 5/18/2010
emailmessage: This message was submitted to the Library Commission.

subject: Commission mail, Policies on Collecting Fines and use of Debt Collector
to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: I plan to raise the issues discussed at the end of this letter with the Commission at its May 27th meeting. I have mailed a hard copy of this letter to the Circulation Manager.

Dear Circulation Manager:

On March 30, 2010, I received a letter from Unique National Collections that attempted to collect $58.71 from me for a debt alleged to be owing to Contra Costa County Library.

This letter disputes the validity of that debt. I do not owe Contra Costa County Library any amount, for the following reasons.

1) Most obviously, I settled my balance with the library in full on March 27, 2010. I was told that my account was in good standing. The letter from Unique National Collections is dated March 24 and does not reflect the current situation.

2) In fact, when I went in to address this issue of the amount owing, the Kensington library staff found one of the books, [redacted], on its shelf. The library had failed to check the book back in properly, and the employee rightly apologized to me and noted "that is our fault." I never owed the library $58.71, and in fact owed it less than $35 and should not per library policy have been referred to any debt collection agency.

3) When the other title, [redacted], became overdue, I went to the library and spoke with an employee. She said that I would have 90 days from the due date (1/19/10) until I would be referred to collection. Thus she told me to come in around the first week of April to ensure that this matter did not go to a debt collector. (The male librarian that I spoke to on March 27 repeated that I should have had 90 days.) I can see from the library website that purported debts are turned over to a collection agency at 60 days. The library needs to train its employees better so that they are not misinforming patrons.

4) I never received an email, letter, or phone call regarding the fine on [redacted]. The only correspondence that I received was in regard to the [redacted] book that was IN FACT in the library's possession. People can't pay amounts that they do not know are owing; I only inquired about [redacted] on 1/19/10 because I noticed on my own accord that the book was overdue. Please check your records to determine why I did not receive any notices about that book.

Please comply with the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, which is applicable to the library, and do not submit any negative credit report information to any credit reporting agency about me or this alleged debt. Please instruct your agent, Unique National Collections, to refrain from doing the same, and inform them promptly that the debt is not owing. If
the library still believes, I owe it a debt, please treat this letter as
as disputing the debt and invoking my rights under the Federal Fair Debt
Collections Practices Act and the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collections
Practices Act.

Although I believe that all errors here are on the part of the library, I
have written to Unique National Collections to dispute the debt as a
precautionary matter. I have asked that they correct their records and
that they not contact me again or take any legal action against me. I
enclose herewith a copy of the letter that was sent to them on March 31,
2010.

If this matter ever appears on my credit report, I will enforce my rights
to the full extent of the law. I am a law professor at UC Berkeley (go
ahead, Google me) who specializes in debtor-creditor and consumer
protection law.

Finally, as a library patron and taxpayer, I want to make some policy
observations.

1) It is deceptive and ridiculous for the library to characterize Unique
National Collections as a “materials recovery service.”
http://answers.ccclib.org/a.php?qid=447. That is a euphemism at best, and
a sheer lie at worst. That company is a debt collector; they do not
“recover the materials.”

2) Before an account is referred to a debt collector, the library should
check its own shelves. It is illegal to collect debts that are not due and
owing and the library should have procedures in place to ensure the
validity of the debts before it refers an account for collection.

3) The library policy of referring to a debt collector after 60 days over
$35 (which obviously is not well-understood by the library’s own
employees) is unduly onerous. I am happy to pay what I owe and have always
done so. But it takes a while for people to find lost books and to get
into the library—especially when it is closed all the time. NOTE that
today when I got this letter I went in to the library to deal with this
but it was closed for Furlough. I also went to the Kensington Library on
Wednesday March 24th and Sunday March 21st to address this matter but both
days the library was closed. I absolutely understand that small amounts
add up and that the library needs a mechanism for recovering monies owed
to it. But the 60 day policy is unreasonable and unfair. A policy of 90 to
120 days and two letters from the library BEFORE referral to a debt
collector would better serve the citizens of Contra Costa County and is
much more in line with reasonable standards of fair dealing.

4) People find the debt collection process incredibly stressful. The
library should consider the harm that it imposes by collecting so quickly
and having such a low threshold for referral to a debt collector. In my
case, I would have owed just over $35 for having purportedly lost ONE
children’s book, FROGgies (which may still show up on the
library’s shelves or elsewhere). By the time the library lards the account
with its lost book fee, materials recovery fee, etc., virtually any single
book will put a patron over the $35 mark.

I urge the Library Commission to revisit its policy on collections. I plan
to appear at the Commission’s May 27th meeting to speak during the public
portion of this issue on this matter.
Please send a response to this letter that assures me that my account is in good standing. I realize that creates an administrative burden on the Library but as your agent, Unique National Collections, contacted me to collect a debt that I dispute, the burden is now yours to expend additional taxpayer resources to correspond with me about the disputed debt.

Sincerely,

Katherine Porter

Name: Katherine Porter
email: ktpporter@hotmail.com
spambegone: library
Phone: 319-541-9316

To: ktpporter@hotmail.com
Subject: Library Commission mail, Policies on Collecting Fines and use of Debt Collector
From: LBarbero@ccclib.org
Date: Mon, 5 Apr 2010 11:17:06 -0700

Hello Ms Porter,

Thank you for contacting the Library in this matter.

As you state, the letter you received from our materials recovery agency Unique Management Services on 3/30 was sent on 3/24, before payments were made and items returned on 3/27. Accounts are updated automatically in an overnight process and your account has been cleared with UMS as paid-in-full. You will not be credit reported and outside of a paid-in-full letter, you will not receive further communication from Unique.

It is the Library's policy to charge fines and fees on overdue, lost and damaged library materials to encourage their timely return, thereby making returned material available to others. When items become overdue, the Library sends an overdue notice 10 days past the due date by email, phone or U.S. mail depending on the patron's chosen method of notification. Specifically, the process is as follows:

10 DAYS OVERDUE: Library sends overdue notice by e-mail or phone or U.S. mail
30 DAYS OVERDUE: Overdue items are now set to Lost. Library sends a bill by U.S. mail for lost items
60 DAYS OVERDUE: Account balances of $35.00 or more are sent to materials recovery agency
Unique Management Services (UMS); a $10.00 material recovery fee added to accounts.

In your case, notification on the two overdue items on your account were sent as follows:

1/19/2010 - email notification sent to inform that item [redacted] is overdue
1/28/2010 - email notification sent to inform that item [redacted] would soon be due on 1/30/2010
2/07/2010 - email notification sent to inform that item [redacted] would soon be due on 2/09/2010 (it was renewed on 1/19)
2/10/2010 - email notification sent to inform that item [redacted] is overdue
2/20/2010 - email notification that [redacted] is overdue
3/03/2010 - U.S. Mail, overdue bill for [redacted]

You should have also received an overdue bill mailed on 3/11 for [redacted] item however it does not
appear that this was delivered for reasons that have not yet been determined. Your next notification would be a letter from Unique Management sent on 3/24.

In addition to the standard notifications, the library also allows 24/7 access to your library card account information, including a list of the items currently checked out or on request, item due dates, the current status of each item, an itemized detail of any outstanding fines or fees, and an e-commerce payment option through the "My Account" link on our library website (ccclib.org). Another option for remote account access is through the Bookline automated phone system, at 1-800-984-4636. Both of these services can be easily accessed with your library card account number and name.

As you have experienced, there are occasions where items get returned to the Library but are not properly checked in. Library staff have no way to know that this is the case until a patron informs them that there is a problem with their account. Overdue notices help alert patrons to these instances so that if you receive a notice for an item you returned, you can alert staff to the error. Staff in turn can check the shelves for the item and when found, check the item in and cancel any lost fines and fees as appropriate. It is, however, the patron's responsibility to manage their account and items that are listed as overdue and lost, which the patron feels are in error, should be referred to staff so that steps can be taken to ensure these accounts are not sent to collection. As stated on the library card registration application's Statement of Responsibility:

By submitting this form and as the authorized user, I accept responsibility for all materials checked out with this card. I will notify the library of any changes of address. I will report a lost card immediately. I agree to pay all charges for overdue, lost and damaged materials. If I fail to pay any charge I will be responsible for all collection costs.

Staff at Kensington were indeed incorrect about having 90 days from due date before being referred to collection. It is in fact 60 days past due that delinquent accounts will be sent to Unique Management, and staff at Kensington have been reminded of this fact. While this information is available online under My Account and on our Answer-Me-This service ("Find answers and ask questions about the library"), we have also posted it on the website under Library policies "Important information about your library card & account".

The Library's partnership with Unique Management is an important one in that each month more than half of what is collected is in fact recovered lost materials -- either found and returned items or replacement copies of lost items. This allows the Library to keep these materials circulating.

Please be assured that your account with UMS has been cleared and you will not be credit reported.

I apologize for any frustration this may have caused you.

Kind Regards,

Linda Barbero
LINK+ Interlibrary Loan Supervisor, Circulation
Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
phone 925-627-3256
fax 925-927-3223
lbarbero@ccclib.org
Thank you for your response. I appreciate your reviewing my account.

I remain concerned that I did not receive the U.S. mail bill for [REDACTED]. I would also note that the overdue notice by email do not remind the patron of the library's policies and that they have 50 days remaining to settle the balance in full—and they don't give the amount owing, either, making it pretty important that the person receive the US mail bill. Again, hard to pay if you don't know what you owe. That's why the law requires companies to bill people for debts before initiating collection activities.

Further, I do not believe the library complied with its own policies here, and I would like a further apology. Consider below that I got a 10-day notification [REDACTED] was overdue on 2/10/10. And that I was WRONGLY told that [REDACTED] was 10 days overdue on 2/10/10 (it's due date was 1/30/10). Where exactly did I get my 60 days???? Do the math--60 days from 1/30/10 would be at LEAST 3/30/10 (there are only 28 days in February, which I presume the library know). 2 days in January 30 and 31, 28 days in February, and 30 days in March—that would be 3/30/10 to give me 60 days of overdue account. Yet, you sent my account to Unique Management Collections well before the 60 days had expired as I got a letter from them DATED 3/24. That is not 60 days from 1/30. (And this shouldn't have been triggered by [REDACTED], which was due on 2/10 from the 1/19 renewal). Please explain why my account was singled out for collection BEFORE 60 days had elapsed.

I also disagree with your passing off responsibility to me for the library's failed procedures for checking in returned items. The patron's "Responsibility" is to return the items. It is the library's "Responsibility" to check them back in and not pursue debts that are not in fact owed. The law requires that companies have procedures to verify that debts are owed before they begin collecting. Checking the shelf of the library BEFORE the account is sent for collection is the type of verification contemplated by the law.

Please provide a further response to my concerns. It appears that in fact the library is not in compliance with its own policies, and I do not appreciate the quote from the Patron's Statement of Responsibility, which I find patronizing and laughable given the library's own failures in my situation.

I still plan to appear before the Library Board to raise the issue of mislabeling Unique Management Services on the library's website and the library's collection policies and their execution thereof.

Sincerely,
Katherine Porter
Hello Ms. Porter,

In reviewing the library card account in question, I found that on 3/24/2010, the day that library card account number [redacted] was referred to UMS, it met the conditions for referral in the following ways:

- The oldest outstanding fine included in the balance had been assessed on 12/15/2009, and therefore was more than 60 days overdue

- The current balance due was $35.00 or more

The library is always willing to address any concerns and correct any mistakes that might have happened during the course of business. As with any billing you receive, errors do occur from time to time, and when this happens, there is always the opportunity to dispute the billing and expect corrections to be made as appropriate. In this case, the missing book was brought to the attention of our staff, who immediately located the item on the library shelf. The staff member who assisted you realized that this error had triggered the account to be sent to UMS, and in order to correct our error, immediately cancelled the $10.00 UMS fee, checked-in the book, and cleared any associated fines. Circulation Administration staff contacted UMS to make sure the account was cleared and no credit reporting occurred and you were notified that the errors had been corrected and that your account was no longer referred to UMS, and had not been credit reported.

Unique Management Services acts on behalf of the Library and does not own any library debt. The company provides a second tier of billing, which includes contacting account holders both by U.S. Mail and by phone. They do not have the authority to negotiate any matters related to library card accounts, but will instead refer customers to the appropriate library staff to resolve any issues related to their library card account. The library maintains full control of the debt and all decision-making with regard to any outstanding fines, fees, or materials on library card accounts. The library also receives and processes all payment made on delinquent library card accounts that have been referred to UMS. In addition, UMS has the resources to locate current contact information for those accounts for which the information on our records is no longer valid and this has aided the library in recovering a significant amount of materials and outstanding fines. Last year, for example, 67% of what UMS collected on the library’s behalf was in materials alone.

Please also note that referral to UMS does not mean automatic credit reporting. Accounts will only be credit reported when they remain unresolved for 120 days after referral to UMS. The library does offer the option to set up an agreed upon payment plan, and will suspend any further communication from UMS as long as payments are made as scheduled. The library sends daily updates to Unique and accounts that have a $0.00 balance, either because the balance was paid in full and/or adjustments were made to the account by Library staff, are automatically marked as resolved by UMS and their services are considered completed.

In closing, I would just like you to know that library staff work very hard to ensure that all work is done with accuracy and efficiency. They handle a large volume of materials on a daily basis. Unfortunately, mistakes do occur occasionally and should be corrected immediately when patron’s contact staff with concerns about a notice received or with questions about their account. In response to the concerns expressed in your correspondence, library staff have been reminded of current borrowing policy regarding overdue materials and fines and additional information has been posted to the website under About Us / Library policies. See http://ccc.lib.org/policies/libcard.html

Kind regards,

Linda Barbero
Acting Circulation Manager, LINK+
Contra Costa County Library
1750 Oak Park Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
phone 925-927-3256
fax 925-927-3223
lbarbero@ccc.lib.org
To County Library Commissioners and Friends Presidents

From: Charles Reed, Friends' Representative on the County Library Commission
charleskimreed@comcast.net

Subject: Library advocacy

Date: Sunday, April 11, 2010, 10:47 PM

Dear Friends of Libraries,

Commissioner Alan Smith conducted an excellent session on Advocacy for Libraries at the Pinole Library, Saturday, March 20, 2010. The exciting interchange of ideas lasted for an hour and a half.

Present were: Maude DeVictor, Sandi Gensler-Maack, Christine Low, Ira Nelken, Charlene O’Rourke, Charlie Reed, Barbara Winkler, Sandra Wittenbrock, Mary Wollenbecker, Nan Yarbrough, and Commissioner Alan Smith.

Alan gave out the following materials:
- Seven trends in our County library use and needs.
- A dozen “DO's” and half a dozen “DON'Ts.”
- Ten Top Reasons for the Library Community to be Involved!
- A chart of library hours in the County.

Without duplicating those materials, I thought it might be helpful to pass on some notes taken during the meeting. They reflect Alan’s knowledge of political events and efforts over the last few years. All the ideas brought out were germane to our immediate needs in library support. Here (at random) are a few of the points discussed.

- One library placed bricks with the names of donors on each in a prominent place. [The new branch location in Antioch will show a list of donors.]
- Library hours chart note: The County will pay for 35 hours per week for those (and only those) where the city will pay for the facility maintenance (in Oakley it is the Freedom High School that pays, as it is a joint facility.)
- Alan used the term “pillow talk” and illustrated it with a story of where friendships with the spouse of an official led to a positive attitude toward libraries on the part of that official.
- Try E-mailing all the City Council members inviting them to attend our Friends meetings. (The County Library Commission does this on a rotating basis.)
- Include students as pro-library speakers from time to time at city council meetings
- Put on book sales to make the library and its patrons and supporters more visible, as well as to raise funds.
- Put in the local newspaper occasional or regular interviews with people like the fire chief or the mayor on "Books that were instrumental in my life." Or you could publish articles like
"Libraries make our cities safer."

- The Friends group in San Bruno arranged a book appraisal day. People brought old or rare books into the library to determine their worth. A skilled book appraiser served as a volunteer to conduct the event. The small fee charged met some library needs, while engendering good feelings toward the library.

Thanks, Alan, for your excellent presentation. I hope that you can do this again next year and get all the Library Friends groups actively involved with their city and county officials.

Meanwhile, remember that April 16th is CLA's Day in the District. Rather than taking a day to visit the legislators in Sacramento, you can get on his/her agenda on this day at a local office. You can call Corinne Kelly, Executive Secretary at the County Library (925-927-3206) to let her know if you have registered and will attend, or if you have questions.

Thanks to all of you who attended this or the previous advocacy workshop! Let me know if you have any questions or observations on the above or on other matters affecting "Friends."

Charles Reed,
Friends' rep on the Library Commission
charleskimreed@comcast.net

----- Forwarded by Corinne Kelly/staff/cccl on 04/12/2010 04:33 PM -----

Corinne Kelly/staff/cccl
04/06/2010 01:03 PM

To: ckelly@ccclib.org
cc: cc
Subject: CLA & CSLA Legislative Day in the District meetings

To: Library Commissioners
Library Friends and Foundation Presidents
Library Supporters

Date: April 6, 2010
From: Anne Cain, County Librarian
SUBJECT: CLA Legislative Day in the District

The California Library Association (CLA) and the California School Library Association (CSLA) have planned the annual Legislative Day in the District. This provides an opportunity to foster dialogue between local libraries and the legislators who represent the communities served by those libraries.

The following appointments have been scheduled:

4:15 P.M. Friday, April 16, 2010:


**Senator Loni Hancock**: Meeting location: District Office, 1515 Clay St #2202, Oakland, CA (510) 286-1333

Senator Hancock’s 9th District includes: Richmond (part) and San Pablo.

* Because the Senator will be out of town, the meeting will be with Pedro Rosado, Senator Hancock’s staff member.

3:30 P.M. Friday, April 23, 2010:

**Assemblymember Joan Buchanan**: Meeting location: District Office, 2694 Bishop Drive, Suite 275, San Ramon, CA

(925) 328-1515

Assemblymember Buchanan’s 15th District includes: Walnut Creek, San Ramon, Bethel Island, Byron, Diablo, Discovery Bay, Knightsen, Danville, Alamo, Oakley, and Brentwood.

4:00 P.M. Friday, April 23, 2010:

**Assemblymember Nancy Skinner**: Meeting location: District Office, 1515 Clay Street #2201, Oakland, CA

(510) 286-1400

Assemblymember Skinner’s 14th District includes: El Cerrito, El Sobrante (part), Kensington, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, and San Pablo and parts of Martinez, and Walnut Creek.

2 P.M. Friday, May 7, 2010:

**Senator Mark DeSaulnier**: Meeting location: District Office, 1350 Treat Blvd, Suite 240, Walnut Creek, CA

(925) 942-6082

Senator DeSaulnier’s 7th District includes: Antioch, Alamo, Bay Point, Byron, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Crockett, Danville, Diablo, Discovery Bay, Bethel Island, El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Kensington, Knightsen, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, Pacheco, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Port Costa, Rodeo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek.

**Assemblymember Tom Torlakson** is unavailable for an appointment at this time

Assemblymember Torlakson 11th District includes: Antioch, Bay Point, Bayview-Montalvin, Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Crockett, El Sobrante, Hercules, Martinez, Mountain View, Pacheco, Pinole, Pittsburg, Port Costa, Rodeo, Tara Hills and Vine Hill.

Our group will include Library staff, members of the County Library Commission, Library Friends groups, representatives from other libraries and schools, and other library supporters.

Register yourself with the California Library Association to attend this event. It is easy to register online at www.legiday.net. Instructions for registering are provided with this letter.

Please contact Corinne Kelly, Executive Secretary, either by phone at (925) 927-3206 or by e-mail ckelley@ccclib.org and let her know that you have registered and will be attending, and if you have any questions.

Corinne Kelly, Executive Secretary
SEN TinELS OF CIVILIZATION

Leaders of local library districts from across the 25th District came together to meet with Wright, as part of the California Library Association's annual "Day in the District." Sen. Wright talked at length about the state budget with the representatives from the Palos Verdes and Los Angeles County library systems, including discussions about the two small streams of state dollars that currently help supplement local library budgets and provide a small reimbursement for items loaned between library districts. An opinion piece by the Senator on the importance of libraries is set to appear in the third quarter edition of CALTACTICS, a publication serving California libraries.

Sen. Wright joins (l-to-r) Palos Verdes Library District (PVLD) branch operations manager Jennifer Addington, PVLD Board President Frances Wielin, PVLD Trustee Constance Davenport, LA County Community Library Manager Betty Marlow (of East Rancho Dominguez Library), LA County Acting Community Library Manager Judy Weigel (of A. C. Bilbrew Library), and PVLD district director Katherine Gould for the California Library Association's "Day in the District."