Contra Costa County Library Strategic Plan
Research Analysis

Community Engagement: Inclusivity as Ongoing Method

Contra Costa County Library recognizes the importance of regular engagement with county residents to ensure that Library practices reflect changing community needs. To satisfy this responsibility, Library staff regularly gathers statistical and personal input from library users, community groups, and elected officials throughout the county. The Library perceives itself as a community-based organization, and library staff continuously seeks to learn about individual and community needs.

When the Library began the process of creating a new strategic plan, staff immediately recognized that the plan’s success would hinge upon the quality and diversity of input from community members. We sought to validate ideas, adopt new concepts, and put aside initiatives that did not match community input. Because the strategic planning process helps staff systematically identify goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics designed to inspire and guide Library services for at least three years, it was vital that we engage the community broadly, fairly, and immediately.

Due to the diversity of Contra Costa County, staff also recognized the importance of developing methods of input that would allow the information to be used countywide to develop system-wide strategic goals and initiatives, while also helping community library staff understand how to best implement strategies locally. To maximize the value of the process, dozens of Library staff members were tasked with engaging the community in a number of ways. Professional and paraprofessional staff assigned to community libraries across the county gathered qualitative data designed to help identify broad patterns of opportunity and narrower community needs that could be integrated into a new vision of library service for the greater Contra Costa County community.

Qualitative Research Process: Fall, 2013

Qualitative research aims to help the Library develop effective and visionary services by providing an opportunity for staff to improve their understanding of community members’ experiences with libraries. Qualitative research provides Library staff with narrative, subjective descriptions of user experiences that lead to improved understanding of the role libraries can play in people’s lives. It provides an opportunity for the Library to interpret patterns of need throughout the county, while also enabling staff to listen to unique patron viewpoints.
Qualitative research differs significantly from quantitative research in a number of ways. The book *Using Qualitative Methods in Action Research: How Librarians Can Get to the Why of Data* (Cook, Douglas, et al.) states that “Quantitative researchers are concerned with generalizability and reliability of results and therefore conduct research in a sterile, controlled laboratory environment. In contrast, qualitative researchers conduct studies in everyday settings. Looking at a problem as it actually occurs is more important than concerns about standardization.”

The Library’s research emphasizes narrative value of community members. As stated in Cook, qualitative research is... “a systematic approach to investigation of a problem encountered in the daily work environment, using methodologies that foster creating a detailed description of the context as reflected in the words and actions of the stakeholders and the librarian involved and that lead to effective solutions to the problem under study.”

In order to gauge broad patterns while also gathering specific community member input, staff designed a three-pronged approach:

- **Community Survey**: available in English and Spanish languages; on-line and in paper format.
- **Key Informant Interviews**: qualitative, in-depth interviews with people who know the community. Interviews were conducted with community leaders from many different sectors.
- **Community Town Hall Meetings**: These were held throughout Contra Costa County, in each municipality and in a good number of unincorporated areas.

With each of these approaches, the Library reached out to users and non-users, asking what community priorities the library should play a more active role in; what it can do better; who it can partner with to better serve the entire community; and what the Library contributes to the community.

Prior to implementing this approach to qualitative research, the Library’s strategic Planning team performed a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities (SWOT) analysis and developed some initial goals and objectives. By performing qualitative research with a wide swath of the community, the library was able to adapt its initial goals and objectives to better reflect clearly stated community needs and do so in a way that could be easily understood and acted upon by library staff.

**Overview of Key Findings**

In all, 4,615 Surveys, 278 Key Informant Interviews, and 28 Town Hall meetings were completed, with the findings broadly categorized into institutional strengths and areas for improvement. Key themes emerged across all three research platforms.
Strengths

- **Staff:** Staff members as a whole were praised for their excellent customer service, and many were called out by name. Community members described the Library as a place where people seem care about them.

- **Programs:** Library-users value Library programming for all ages. They like the ongoing interaction with other members of the community that programs provide, and they appreciate the opportunity to develop relationships with Library staff through Library programs.

- **Innovations:** The Link+ Inter-Library Loan service and the Discover & Go museum pass program were frequently cited as innovations that add a large amount of value to the library experience.

- **Equity:** People value equal access to library services for all, regardless of income or location of residence. The public expressed a strong interest in ensuring that library services are distributed as fairly as possible throughout the county.

- **Community:** Much of the public considers the Library to be the heart of their community – the community living room.

- **Collection:** The public greatly appreciates the physical collection (books, DVDs, CDs, magazines), calling the Library “a home for books.” People value the Library for fostering a love of reading, education, and life-long learning. The Library is seen as a place of personal exploration.

- **Other:** Free holds, public computers, internet access, and literacy services were also cited as strengths. So, too, were the many of the facilities, especially those in cities, such as Walnut Creek and Lafayette, that have built new facilities.

Areas for Improvement

- **Promotion and Outreach:** Many community members were adamant that the Library should improve its marketing and promotion of services; they believe that many people in the community are unaware of library services other than the lending of books. There was also a repeated emphasis upon the Library needing to reach out to immigrant groups to ensure an improved understanding that the Public Library is a free service for all residents.

- **Programs:** While people love currently offered library programs, they want a greater diversity of program opportunities and want to see programs offered more consistently across communities. Community members repeatedly mentioned their interest in hands-on training for eBook users.

- **Facility Improvements:** Residents believe the Library should improve a number of elements related to facilities: organization, layout and signage; quiet areas and study space; parking; disability access; cleanliness and clutter; and general upkeep. Additionally, those from wealthier communities appreciate their
new buildings, but many are troubled by the lack of newer facilities in socially disadvantaged areas of the county. Furthermore, residents in some areas (such as North Richmond) want full-service library facilities that reflect their population base and community needs.

- **Open Hours:** The public wants more open hours, stating that the Library’s impact is in direct proportion to its hours. They would also like the Library to re-distribute the hours it is open to be more convenient to their busy lives.
- **Collection:** Library-users would like the Library to expand its physical and digital collections. They also cited the poor condition of some audio visual materials.

In some cases, areas of strength were also cited as areas for improvement. In many cases this is because people simply want more of the services they like. They love the Library’s programming and collections, and they would like to see them expanded. In other cases, the comments emphasized the need for the Library -- through better promotion, convenient open hours, inviting facilities and more diverse programming -- to become a community gathering place for all of Contra Costa County’s residents, not just current users.

**Methodology**

From July through October of 2013, Library staff participated in three qualitative research projects designed to ensure that the strategic plan matches community needs.

**Key Informant Interviews**

The purpose of Key Informant Interviews is to gain insight from community leaders and build community partnerships. Key Informant Interviews are qualitative, in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community. These community experts, with their unique knowledge and understanding, are able to provide insight into community issues and give recommendations for solutions.

The Key Informants were chosen by each Community Library and Support Service Group from different community sectors, including: Arts & Culture; Business; Community Organizations; Government; Library Programs; Schools; Seniors; Faith-based Organizations; Healthcare; and Media. An invitation letter was sent to each Key Informant under the County Librarian’s signature, with a follow-up telephone call or email from the interviewer to schedule the appointment. A total of 278 Key Informants were interviewed, including:
• 102 Government contacts (20 City Managers, former City Managers and/or Assistant City Managers; 18 Council members or former Council members; 15 Mayors and/or Vice Mayors; 5 members of the Board of Supervisors; 3 State Senate/Assembly Members; 1 U.S. representative; 1 CAO and 1 Deputy CAO; 4 Police Chiefs; 15 Library Commissioners or former Commissioners)
• 37 Education contacts (5 Superintendents; 13 Principals or Vice Principals; 7 teachers or former teachers)
• 61 Non-profits (community foundations, clubs, historical societies, etc.)
• Commercial enterprises (ATT; Chevron; Contra Costa Times; Shell Oil US; San Ramon Regional Medical Center; etc.)
• Volunteers (Teen; Literacy; etc.)
• Other (Juvenile Hall residents; etc.)

The interviews were designed to be twenty to thirty minutes in length, but often ended up being up to ninety-minute, enthusiastic conversations. They were guided by baseline questions covering the following themes:

• The interviewee’s perception of the library
• What community priorities the library should play a more active role in
• What the library can do better
• Who the library can partner with to better serve the community
• What contribution the library makes to the community

Findings from each interview were reported back to the Strategic Planning Committee to be coded, categorized, and included in the Key Findings noted above. In many cases, lasting partnerships emerged from the interviews, and new ongoing collaborators were identified. In all, the interviews were deemed a wildly successfully way to gather input from a diverse set of constituents with a broad range of perspectives.

Town Hall Meetings

The purpose of holding Town Hall meetings is to gain insight from community leaders and the general public; to build community partnerships; and to develop community goodwill. A total of twenty-eight 90-minute Town Hall meetings were conducted in each incorporated community served by Contra Costa County along with the unincorporated areas of Alamo, Bethel Island/Knightsen, Discovery Bay, and North Richmond. The Town Hall meeting format was piloted at a Library Commission meeting.

Attendance at the Town Hall meetings ranged from a few participants to more than seventy. All meetings were coordinated in tandem with local city councils and/or the Board of Supervisors. In most cases, local officials lent their support to the effort by attending.
The Library promoted the Town Hall meetings in the following ways: articles in the Contra Costa Times; local community newspapers; city newsletters/websites/Facebook pages; Library newsletter/website/Facebook page; Library flyers, and more. Additionally, personal invitations were extended to local officials, Library Friends, and other influential community members.

The meetings were brainstorming exercises. Table groups, led by a facilitator, tackled three questions:

- What community priority should the library play a more active role in?
- What one thing could the library do better?
- What is the single most important contribution the library makes to our community?

Participant first wrote their responses individually, and then shared them with their table group. The facilitators recorded all ideas and worked to bring each table to consensus on one top idea. Finally, each table group’s top idea was shared with the entire audience. All ideas were captured on the participants’ response sheets as well as on flip chart pads, and were subsequently coded and categorized to determine the Key Findings noted above.

**Community Survey**

Library staff designed a community survey that consisted of both open-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to enable a broad array of community members to participate in providing direction for the strategic planning process. Multiple choice and Likert-scale questions covered demographic information and allowed patrons to describe how they currently use the Library’s collections and facilities and what they seek from a public library. An open-ended question, “Is there anything else that you would like the Library to know so it can better serve the community?” was designed to be able to be integrated easily with narrative responses gathered via the Town Hall meetings and Key Informant interviews.

The survey was posted to the Library website, was made available as an immediate link on all library public computers, and was distributed in paper format both within community libraries and at off-site locations throughout the county. The survey was promoted via local news stories, social networking sites, an e-mail blast to thousands of library-card holders, and by library staff performing community outreach. Library staff created a Spanish language translation that was also available online and in paper format.
The Library received 4,615 responses to the survey. Responses were received from throughout the county, and geographic distribution closely resembled the rate of library use in each community. 93% of surveys were answered by people with library cards.

The survey included nineteen questions, many which requested responses to various aspects of library service. As a result, the Library received over 100,000 data points from the survey. In order to facilitate the interpretation and integration of this vast amount of information, coding of the open-ended question was given the highest priority. Staff also analyzed responses to multiple choice questions related to facilities, collections and services, with special attention paid to patterns also seen in the narrative responses.

**Detailed Research Results**

**Town Hall Meetings**

3,423 responses from 28 Town Hall meetings were first coded and then categorized as either a Library strength or an area for improvement.

**Strengths**

973 comments were categorized as a Library strength based on the question:

- What is the single most important contribution the library makes to our community?

The top 8 strengths, listed below along with representative comments, accounted for 80% of all responses, with many of the responses reinforcing each other.

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<th>Strength</th>
<th># of Resp.</th>
<th>Representative Comments</th>
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| 1 Free, Easy, Equitable, Available to Everyone (cited in 25 meetings) | 252        | • Equal access to information for all regardless of ability to pay or social status.  
• Making information and entertainment accessible across all income levels.  
• Making all information available to everyone. The library makes a statement re: who we are and what we value as a society - the great equalizer.  
• Free resources for learning and cultural enrichment for the whole community. |
| 2 Community Gathering Place (cited in 25 meetings) | 133        | • Important gathering place; safe haven.  
• Warm, welcoming place for people which helps to develop a spirit of community.  
• It’s the one place where the community goes to or could go to. It’s the one common denominator destination.  
• The Library is the heart of the community. |
| 3 Knowledge; Resource Center          | 106        | • The Library expands the knowledge and learning opportunities for all levels of the community.                                                             |
| (cited in 21 meetings) | • The People’s University! It creates the opportunity for people to explore interests, better their job skills, improve their school subjects, and inform them of the world around them.  
• Resources and opportunities for learning (space, resources, staff). |
|---|---|
| 4 Personal Place of Exploration  
(cited in 9 meetings) | 66 | • Literacy/books which equals freedom/escape from our troubles, problems, prejudices to a safe place without judgment and with thousands of possibilities.  
• Safe place for kids to come to learn, read, and get exposed to new ideas and topics.  
• Gives people a place to be inspired and use their imagination. |
| 5 General Access  
(cited in 15 meetings) | 56 | • Provides access to a wide range of information and content.  
• Access to information that supports and promotes a literate society.  
• Access to literature and knowledge in one place. |
| 6 Programming  
(cited in 15 meetings) | 47 | • Promotes family bonding and community through programs.  
• Creates an ongoing interaction with the community via programs.  
• Provides a wide variety of activities for all ages.  
• Gathering place for sharing of ideas and education of adults and children through programs. |
| 7 Collections – Hardcopy  
(cited in 16 meetings) | 40 | • Provides a home for books.  
• Countywide access to recently published best-selling books – saves me tons of money.  
• Books for all ages. |
| 8 Literacy  
(cited in 16 meetings) | 39 | • Fosters a love of reading across all ages.  
• Literacy for all ages.  
• Keeps reading alive. |

**Areas for Improvement**

2,450 comments were categorized as areas for improvement. There were many more comments related to areas for improvement than Library strengths, largely because two of the three Town Hall meeting questions asked for feedback on what the Library can do better:
• What community priority should the library play a more active role in?  
• What one thing could the library do better?

The top 8 areas for improvement accounted for 54% of all responses.
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<th>Area for Improvement</th>
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| Promotion and Marketing (cited in 28 meetings) | 288 | • Market in different ways to let others know about ALL the resources.  
• Community awareness that the library is open to everyone.  
• Market the relevance of the library in this age of technology.  
• Market to non-users, especially internet computers, job search, health care exchange, etc.  |
| Open Hours (cited in 26 meetings) | 276 | • Library impact is in direct proportion to hours.  
• Expanded hours of operation.  
• More hours or redistributing the hours we do have.  
• Longer open hours that include evening or weekend hours for households that work.  
• Convenient hours (more evening hours)  |
| Facility and/or Facility Condition (cited in 26 meetings) | 261 | • Improve library layout so that it is more user friendly.  
• Make or create a space in the library that is better for studying, a quiet place.  
• Make the signage and placement of different functions clearer.  
• More community spaces for meeting/studying/reading.  
• Disability access/ADA services and technology.  
• Take pride in the appearance of the Library.  
• Provide dedicated spaces for patrons with differing needs.  
• General upkeep. Maintain the facilities.  
• More inviting.  
• More parking.  
• New/improved facility.  
• Improve physical safety in and around the library facilities.  |
| Programming (cited in 26 meetings) | 149 | • More homework help.  
• More summer programs.  
• After school programs for children/teens; senior activities  
• Activities for all ages.  
• Try to have programs that are inclusive of all the various ethnic/immigrant groups.  
• We have a diverse community. Our library needs to continue to develop relevant programs that reach out to youth, ethnic groups, and seniors.  
• Electronic/technical support. A Technology librarian, especially for seniors.  
• More family programs.  |
| 5 | Community Gathering Place  
(cited in 23 meetings) | 106 | • ESL programming.  
• Training and orientation on how to use the library.  
• Provide a hub for consistent activities and information.  
• Finding areas of common interest in the community to encourage citizens to work together and solve common problems.  
• Space to foster community.  
• Being a community gathering place embodying the spirit and diversity of the whole community.  
• Bring together the local community, all ages and interests. Be a meeting place for discussions and enrichment.  
• Turn it into more of a town center. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Knowledge, Resource Center  
(cited in 20 meetings) | 95 | • Keep community informed; enable an informed citizenry.  
• Better dissemination of information for public interest.  
• More learning opportunities for all interests and levels. |
| 7 | Collections – Hardcopy  
(cited in 15 meetings) | 88 | • Greater selection of books.  
• Keeping an up-to-date collection that is easy to access for readers/researchers.  
• Bigger selection of books, DVD's, CD's, references, etc. including online items of same.  
• Re-establish a rich and more complex periodical collection.  
• Bi-lingual materials and materials sensitive to the community |
| 8 | Outreach (Service to populations who might not have access)  
(cited in 18 meetings) | 68 | • Bring books to where people are instead of being a destination.  
• Bookmobile.  
• The ability to access library resources from multiple venues - community centers, school library, vending machines, senior centers, senior residential, even families. |

**Key Informant Interviews**

1,309 responses from 278 Key Informant Interviews were first coded and then categorized as a Library strength or area for improvement.

**Strengths**

361 comments were categorized as a Library strength. The top 8 strengths accounted for 63% of all responses, and once again, many of the responses reinforced each other. In particular, Staff Skills/Abilities and Customer Service were symbiotic.
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<th>Strength</th>
<th># of Resp.</th>
<th>Representative Comments</th>
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| 1 Programming                    | 63         | • The Library is perceived as a site for creative and diverse community programming for all.  
• The Library does a great job of providing children’s programming and support for immigrant communities and the disenfranchised.  
• Innovative programs, such as PAWS to Read, help to build relationships with the library and with reading/literacy, starting at a young age and lasting a lifetime.  
• Storytimes are valued by the community. |
| 2 Collections – Hardcopy         | 28         | • The collection is well-balanced in terms of genre and format.  
• The Library has a wealth of children’s resources and books.  
• The Library has a good collection of materials in different languages.  
• The “new book” section in the Library is a key to discovering books. |
| 3 Staff Skills and Abilities      | 28         | • Library staff members are talented and dynamic and play a vital role as community partners.  
• Staff members are vibrant and actively involved members of the community.  
• The Library has trained staff to help people with their research and information needs.  
• Library staff members are helpful and friendly and take good care of patrons. |
| 4 General Customer Service       | 27         | • The Library is perceived as having a welcoming atmosphere supported by a strong customer service ethic.  
• The Library is an innovative organization, setting the standard for delivery of online services.  
• The public appreciates “fluid” services (e.g. ifloats, holds, and customers welcome in multiple locations).  
• The Library is doing many great things and offers a lot of really good service. |
| 5 Catalog – Holds and Link+      | 26         | • There is great value in our convenience – our ability to send material throughout the county and to order material from around the state.  
• Ordering books on-line is an important contribution the Library makes to our community.  
• Link+ service is incredibly valuable.  
• The hold system is great and gives people access to |
Facilities and Location

- The newer Library facilities and those that have undergone capital improvement are impressive.
- It is good to see Libraries close to service providers such as East Bay Works and CC College.
- Walnut Creek (downtown) and Lafayette and even Orinda are great examples of libraries being integrated with downtowns/communities. There is a strong impact on both sides of the equation when the Library is situated such and is part of the community center.

Community Gathering Place

- The Library is a community center, and oh by the way there are books there too!
- The Library is the “heart” of the community, both as a local gathering place and a point of connection with the rest of the world. It’s all here at the Library.
- The Library is a no-conflict zone open to all.
- As an immigrant, one of the first places to visit that was safe and had easy access was the Library.

General Reading and Literacy

- Public Libraries are a place for all people to be on equal footing in their pursuit of reading and the lifelong skill of literacy.
- The Library is a starting point for parents to teach kids to read and to get information.
- The kids at OAYRF benefit enormously from the Library. Kids who have never read before are now reading on a daily basis.
- Reading is fundamental to teaching children to love literature and excel in school. Libraries play a critical role in early learning.

Areas for Improvement

948 comments were categorized as an area for improvement. The top 8 categories accounted for 69% of all responses.

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<th>Area for Improvement</th>
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<th>Representative Comments</th>
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| Promotion and Outreach     | 199        | - Online services like holds, museum passes, eBooks should be promoted heavily.  
- We could do more to market our different collections such as DVD’s, CD’s and online databases.  
- Be more visible to post-Baby Boom generations that are very technologically savvy and might not think of the Library as a useful place/service for them.  
- Advertise what the Library does. Use local blogs, Linked |
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<td>in, Patch. Know the editor of the CCTimes local section to encourage more feature stories – not just calendar announcements.</td>
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<td>• Need to talk up the great services provided – knowledgeable staff, Link+, Discover &amp; Go, public computers, Project Second Chance.</td>
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<td>• Need better publicity and awareness in the community of what the Library offers.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>141</td>
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<td>• Programming is good, but is it too safe? Approach programming like technology innovators approach their work – not afraid to fail when trying new things.</td>
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<td>• Strong need within the community for programs that entertain, educate, and inspire children and teens.</td>
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<td>• Library programs on employment, careers, computers, and technology are necessary and important.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Have more cultural diversity in programming. There is a need for more tolerance among different cultures and the Library can help with this.</td>
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<td>• More Storytimes and more Homework Help.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Facilities and Location</td>
<td>117</td>
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<td>• Explore Satellite Libraries in communities like North Richmond for book pick-up, computer use, programming.</td>
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<td>• Some Libraries are insufficient for the communities they serve – not enough computers, too small, poor ADA access, limited meeting space.</td>
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<td>• Facilities need to be updated. People would frequent the library more if it felt newer and cleaner.</td>
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<td>• Parking is an issue in many communities.</td>
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<td>• The Library needs to be accessible to more of the community and easier to access by public transportation. It should be centrally located.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Open Hours</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>• Increased open hours with additional Sunday emphasis would improve the Library’s ability to serve the public.</td>
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<td>• The Library should be open at least one evening a week.</td>
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<td>• Existing schedule of open hours is confusing to the public.</td>
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<td>• Shift hours to be open when people want to visit.</td>
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<td>Collections – Hardcopy</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>• The Library’s collection should meet the needs of a diverse community – expand the foreign language collection.</td>
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<td>• More books on CD should be available for kids with reading difficulties.</td>
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<td>• A lot of material is in poor condition, especially the DVD’s and Books on CD.</td>
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<td>• Get more copies of best sellers so the wait isn’t so long.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Funding</td>
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|   | • Explore more joint use partnerships and funding with colleges, schools, community centers, and cities.  
|   | • Funding is the Library’s biggest challenge. More services and materials would be available if there was additional money.  
|   | • Businesses should step up to help with donations or programs. |

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<th>Literacy</th>
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|   | • Literacy is a fundamental component of a healthy community. The Library should reach out to segments of the community that it is not currently reaching.  
|   | • The Library should focus its efforts on literacy. There is an increasing population of non-English speakers who need help with conversation, literacy, and culture.  
|   | • The Library should play a more active role in getting books into the hands of children. |

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<th>Community Gathering Place and Personal Exploration</th>
<th>24</th>
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|   | • The Library should be a place young people are drawn to, not only to be among themselves but also to interact with other age groups.  
|   | • The Library should help people understand what citizenship means and what it looks like to be part of a community.  
|   | • To be relevant in the future, the Library needs to focus on making itself a ‘community hub’ and real destination place for people. |

**Community Surveys**

1,561 open-ended comments were coded to reflect perceptions of Library strengths and areas of improvement. Many patrons used the comments area to touch upon multiple topics and some patrons included both positive and critical comments in their responses. Where appropriate, multiple codes were applied to individual comments.

A large number of responses were very positive in a general manner, such as the following few comments:

- *I truly believe that Libraries are a critical resource in our community and should be supported.*
- *just wish to add that I am very grateful for ONE GOVERNMENT SERVICE which really works for the benefit of the community and the individual!*
- *thank you for being here. I have loved my library since I was 5 and got my first library card. Your staff is friendly and helpful. The new library is gorgeous. Thank you, thank you.*

That said, in many cases, the comments area provided an opportunity for respondents to provide greater detail about something specific they would like to the library improve
upon. There were a greater number of comments that articulated a specific area of service that needs improvement than there were comments about specific library strengths.

**Strengths**

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| 1 Staff     | 66         | • One of the best things about the library are (sic) their people skills. I usually go away laughing about something - always go away with a smile. GREAT people. In today's electronic world it is hard to find that one on one help/conversation in public places. A place where they really seem to care about you and their community.  
• I re-discovered the library, thanks to your services, selection, facilities. I had not been in a library in 30 years and now I go at least twice a week. The staff is always friendly. i wish my employees were as such with my customers. Thanks for all you do and how you stretch your limited resources. |
| 2 Programming | 30         | • Ms. J is AMAZING! She has really inspired my two young boys. Her storytime is creative and fun and my kids look forward to Tuesdays just for storytime. Also, the boys love seeing M and L and feeling like the Kensington library is an extension of their home. It is a safe and comforting place for them  
• Storytimes at the Pleasant Hill library are spectacular! I've gone to storytimes at other libraries and they are boring and we don't always feel welcome. I feel ashamed to bring my children to some of the other libraries. The Pleasant Hill library lets my children act like children. |
| 3 Collection | 25         | • This library has been a great asset to our family by being a great source of reading material for our children who now are avid readers. I believe the convenience of use and location of Clayton library are great  
• I'm actually very happy with the library just as it is. It's very convenient, here in El Cerrito within easy walking distance. Books of interest are usually available within the county system, and the "hold" system works well in getting materials from other branches |
| 4 Innovations | 16         | • Link+ is a godsend -- brilliant! Thank you to whoever put that program together.                                                                                                                                        |
• *CC library is doing a wonderful job! We love Discover & Go, though we wish there were more East Bay sites to visit.*

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<th>5</th>
<th>Catalog</th>
<th>12</th>
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| • *We use the Hold feature religiously. It’s the best! I have two young kids and it’s wonderful to know that we can come in and the books they want will be there waiting for them.*
| • *I really love the ability to search the entire catalog of books available and put holds on books online for pick-up at the library of my choosing. Keep up the good work!* |

### Areas for Improvement

Survey responses overwhelmingly focused upon the need for facility improvement, with a large degree of emphasis upon two elements: the differences between facilities (perceived as inequitable) and parking problems. Respondents often also mentioned the need for dedicated quiet space.

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<th>Areas for Improvement</th>
<th># of Resp.</th>
<th>Representative Comments</th>
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| 1 Facilities          | 440        | • *Fix your system. The libraries in the different communities could not be a more blatant illustration of the divide between "haves and have-nots" in this county. Poor kids see that what the county thinks they deserve are understaffed libraries full of old computers and ratty books, libraries that are closed more than they’re open. Rich neighborhoods meanwhile get the best of the best. Is that what libraries are supposed to be about?*  
• *Make library parking. Trying to find parking is a nightmare. If you do find a spot blocks away, it can be hard toting young children to make it on time to the programs. I finally gave up...*  
• *Our community needs a new library. Decent meeting rooms, computer lab, better place for story time for the little ones, for musical events, for author events. It’s way behind the other libraries in the area.* |
| 2 Collection          | 169        | • *The DVD and CD qualities are really bad most of the time. They don’t play very well with too many scratches specially kids section DVD and CD*  
• *It seems that lately I’m having to request more and more things through Link+. The availability of audiobooks, for example, used to be really good but now* |
I’m finding myself requesting the audiobooks of pretty popular titles such as Hunger Games through Link +
- The Library is great, but I would like to see more books, particularly replacing some of the older ones.
- The library does an amazing service to the community and the staff is always helpful and pleasant. The only thing I would request is more books.

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<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>137</th>
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<tr>
<td>• I’d like to see the Library increase its hours. I live very close to the library, but hardly use it anymore because the hours and days of operation aren’t convenient. I don’t put things on hold there anymore because it can take a week until I coordinate my schedule with the library’s schedule.</td>
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<td>• I especially would like the library to be open on Sundays. I would use it all the time if I could come in on a Sunday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Please please make more open hours a priority especially in communities where cities can’t or won’t support library operations. Unless the libraries are open and staffed with people who care about the community and free services, they do not have the impact that is so critical.</td>
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<td>• I have a flexible schedule so library hours are not a concern for me. but for others on a strict schedule I would like to see more open hours in the library. I love having access to the library.</td>
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<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Noise</th>
<th>63</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Please ensure adequate space inside libraries for patrons who need a quiet atmosphere to read or study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It would be great if there were small study rooms for students to use so that they do not disturb others while working.</td>
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<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>61</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Story time is amazing in some libraries and dismal in others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We love the library’s children’s programs and would love to see them occur more than twice/month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More programs for children in the afternoon, please.</td>
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<th>6</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>54</th>
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<td>• The library thrives, often beyond the point where existing staff and volunteers can keep the workload current. More staff are needed so the library can be open more hours and the “grunt” work can get done.</td>
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Community Surveys: Additional Information

As described above, the Community Surveys included a large number of Likert-scale questions that allowed people to rank services and rank the relative value of library services.

The following is a list of respondents’ top priorities for the Library (respondents were asked to select up to three):

- Expanding Physical collection 44%
- Increasing Library Open Hours 43%
- Expanding Digital Collection 28%
- Improving Library Facilities 17%
- Library Programs 15%
- Develop New Library Services 13%

The following is a list of the top six reasons people use the Library (respondents could select up to two):

1. Borrow Materials 83%
2. Discover New Authors & Titles 24%
3. To Use Computers 20%
4. It’s a quiet place to read/study 17%
5. Programming 9%

Survey respondents showed a very high satisfaction in library customer service (97% good or excellent), ease in checking out materials (90% good or excellent), convenience to their home (89% good or excellent), comfort/cleanliness (84% good or excellent), ease of finding materials (84% good or excellent) and availability of materials (73% good or excellent).

Ranked lower, but still relatively high, was satisfaction with hours of operation (64% good or excellent), technological advances (57% good or excellent) and literacy promotion (56% good or excellent—although with many respondents not answering).

The area with the highest percentage of respondents ranking a service as poor was hours of operation (10% poor).

When asked how respondents would prefer to be made aware of library services, the top two responses were via Library e-newsletter/email (59%) or the website (46%).
Community Survey: Ongoing Work

Because respondents were asked to identify both community of residence as well as the libraries they most often use, survey finding specific to each community library will allow community library staff to develop community library tactical plans that reflect local responses.

Use of Qualitative data

Gathering and analyzing community input remains an ongoing element of the everyday work of Library staff. The three-pronged qualitative research process is designed to jump-start collaborations and help library staff identify countywide and local trends so that initiatives are most likely to successfully fulfill wide-spread and local community needs. The library recognizes that the qualitative research process, due to the primacy of narrative information and the diversity of research methods used, is necessarily interpretive. It relies upon the Library’s ability to invest good-faith effort into fairly weighting all inputs.

With each of the three methods (community survey, key-informant interviews and town hall meetings) used to gather qualitative data, consistent coding was utilized by library staff. Library staff analyzed results both for patterns of response as well as for articulations that could be considered representative or uniquely articulated.

Findings were then discussed by staff in reference to tentative goals and objectives. These goals and objectives were then significantly transformed to reflect community input, including both broad patterns and unique articulations. All library staff were then tasked with brainstorming strategies and tactics to help achieve goals and objectives.