



## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: February 28, 2008 REPORT NO. 08-030

ATTENTION: Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee  
Agenda of March 5, 2008

SUBJECT: State of the San Diego Public Library

### SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

### BACKGROUND

Public libraries are important community assets where people come together to share ideas, expand their experiences and gain understanding. Libraries provide vital public services created to ensure the long-term accessibility of recorded information and knowledge. They acquire, catalog, process, organize, offer for use and preserve publicly available material irrespective of the form in which it is packaged.

Libraries play a major role in educating children, assisting adults with life-long learning, bolstering economic prosperity, coping with information overload, closing the digital divide, supporting cultural activities and institutions, promoting literacy, and helping people upgrade their skills to remain competitive. Libraries have a role of preserving cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations. Public libraries also act as a central social forum for their communities. In short, libraries enhance the quality of life for all who live and work in the City of San Diego, whether they personally use the Library or not.

### DISCUSSION

The modern public library has evolved to serve a variety of roles:

- Popular Materials Library, where collections of current materials are maintained;
- Formal Education Support Center to assist students at all grade levels;
- Children's Learning Center, where children's natural curiosity and innate desire to learn are nurtured;
- Reference Library for on-site and remote assistance (telephone, email and live chat) to

- help people find the information they need;
- Research Library, where scholars and researchers conduct in-depth studies;
  - Independent Learning Center to assist individuals who seek information for self improvement, job related development, or hobbies; and
  - Community Center, where people gather to experience cultural activities ranging from exhibitions and lectures to musical performances.

The San Diego Public Library provides services to the residents of San Diego through the provision of a Central Library and 35 branch libraries. The Mission of the Library is to:

- R**espond to the information needs of San Diego's diverse communities.
- E**nsure equal access to local, national and global resources.
- A**nticipate and address the educational, cultural, business and recreational interests of the public.
- D**evelop and provide welcoming environments.

### Advisory and Support Groups

The Library receives input from the Board of Library Commissioners, which represents the community and advises the Library Director and the City Council via the Mayor on Library issues. The Library also receives input from the Friends of the Library, which serves as a sounding board and communications resource, and also provides support for library programs and services.

The San Diego Public Library Foundation was established in 2002 and, with the Library's Development Team, serves as the Library's primary fundraising arm. The Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. A memorandum of understanding outlines the responsibilities and relationship between the City and Foundation and includes guidelines on the solicitation, reporting and use of gifts to the Library.

### Partnerships

One of the strengths of the San Diego Public Library system is its participation in cooperative efforts to extend services and share resources with other libraries at the local, state and national level. The Serra Cooperative Library System is a network of public libraries within San Diego and Imperial Counties which was established in 1966. Cooperative projects include reciprocal borrowing privileges, training programs, physical delivery of library materials among the member libraries, and the Summer Reading Program. The Serra System Research Center is located at the Central Library and uses its extensive and unique resources to answer reference questions from member libraries.

The San Diego Public Library also works cooperatively with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), a nonprofit membership library service and research organization with members throughout the nation and world. OCLC provides access to and bibliographic control of electronic information, telecommunications linking, strategic planning in libraries, new

technology issues and research.

Library staff also enters into a number of community partnerships to benefit its customers by providing additional resources and services. The Library has developed partnerships with San Diego schools, museums, The City Club, San Diego Council on Literacy, the Small Business Administration, Star/Pal, various corporations, Sister Cities and many others.

The partnership with the Society of Baseball Research, has resulted in the San Diego Public Library providing the premier collection of baseball material west of the Mississippi. KPBS and the San Diego Public Library have joined together for *One Book, One San Diego*, a community-wide initiative designed to encourage all San Diegans to read the same book at the same time. San Diego Public Library is also partnering with San Diego State University's Common Experience, a reading initiative created to stimulate an ongoing conversation around a common theme inside and outside the classroom.

The City Club of San Diego and the San Diego Public Library co-sponsor The Great American Writers Series. From its inception the series was designed to celebrate the whole genre of American writing -- fiction and non-fiction. Since its inception in 1999, more than 50 events have been held, and have included such notable authors as Jane Smiley, Nora Ephron, George Plimpton, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Bernard Cornwell, Bill Moyers and many others.

#### Library Services Provided in FY 2007

The San Diego Public Library provides service to the public with more than 74,000 service hours annually at its 35 library facilities. In FY 2007:

- Library facilities were visited more than six million times
- Approximately 209,000 patrons borrowed nearly 7.2 million items
- More than 1.6 million reference questions were answered by staff
- Over 1.7 million books, periodicals and newspapers were used inside the library but not checked out
- Attendance at library programs grew to more than 188,000
- There were more than 1.6 million sign-ups to use Internet computers
- Nearly 700,000 online database searches were conducted by library customers

Meeting rooms in libraries are often in use during all open hours, and in some locations in the evenings after closing. The concern that the growing availability of personal computers in homes would render libraries obsolete has not materialized.

#### Elements Necessary to Provide Quality Library Service

Quality library service can be broken down into four main elements:

1. Staff
2. Collections
3. Library facilities

#### 4. Technology

The following is an overview of these four elements as they relate to the San Diego Public Library.

##### **1. Staff**

The Library has a total of 388.36 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to provide public service at the Central Library and 35 branch library facilities and to provide the support services needed to order and catalog library materials, maintain facilities and equipment, and oversee the administrative and business operations of the department. In addition to paid staff, volunteers provide the Library with a valuable resource, contributing more than 117,889 hours in FY 2007 at an estimated value of over \$2.2 million.

Twenty-seven percent of the total FTEs are librarians, including Central Section and Branch Managers, and Youth Services Librarians. Librarians supervise staff and oversee facility operations, select library materials and conduct programs. Perhaps most importantly, librarians are community information specialists who assist customers to find and use information.

The programs and collections of the San Diego Public Library have changed over the years in order to serve the needs of San Diego's changing population. Since 1987, San Diego's population has grown by nearly 29 percent, with the largest growth being in the Hispanic community. More than 100 languages are currently spoken in San Diego households. Recruiting staff members who reflect the diversity of the public and providing programs and collections to serve the needs of this diverse population are greater challenges than for library systems that serve less diverse communities.

##### **2. Collections**

The collections of the San Diego Public Library are the major intellectual resource south of Los Angeles for the general public. The Library has more than 3 million books and audio-visual materials available for patrons to use or check out at its 36 locations.

Individual branch libraries have collections ranging in size from 40,000 to 115,000 items. Materials are acquired and circulated to meet the immediate needs of a particular library and should be replaced over a five to ten year cycle. The branch books and media collections are supplemented by the more in-depth collection of the Central Library.

Central Library staff has developed a collection of tremendous depth and breadth which includes over 778,000 books and audio-visual items for adults, young adults and children. It also has 1.7 million government documents, 90,000 volumes of bound periodicals, 600,000 microforms and 500,000 pictures. These holdings date in age from 3000 B.C. Babylonian clay tablets to the latest issue of *Time* magazine.

The Central Library has more than half a million unique titles which would be too expensive to

duplicate at City branches or even at other library systems within San Diego County. The Central Library's professionals select not only its own collection, but also shape the resources of the branch libraries. Approximately 600,000 items circulate each year, and over 465,000 items are used in the Central Library.

### **3. Library Facilities**

In 2002, the City Council approved the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library System, a program to build or improve 24 libraries, including a new Central Library.

Guiding principles of the plan included:

- Minimum size of a branch library should be 15,000 square feet
- At least one larger library facility should be located in each Council District
- Community service centers should be constructed at the larger branch libraries where feasible; and
- Implementing the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Rating System for buildings with a Silver Rating goal for as many projects as feasible.

Since this plan was adopted, six new or expanded branch libraries have opened. They are:

- Point Loma/Hervey which replaced at 4,898 square foot facility with a 25,890 square foot library in 2003
- La Jolla/Riford, which expanded the 10,000 square foot branch library to 25,700 square feet in 2004
- College-Rolando, which replaced a 4,430 square foot facility with a new 15,465 square foot library in 2005
- Otay-Nestor, which expanded the 10,000 square foot branch library to 15,000 square feet in 2005
- Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa which replaced a 4,860 square foot facility with a 15,626 square foot library in 2006
- North University Community, a new 15,000 square foot branch library which opened in 2007

In December 2007 construction began on the new Logan Heights Branch Library. Partially funded by a \$5.25 million Proposition 14 grant from the State of California, this new 25,000 square foot facility will replace the current 3,967 square foot facility built in 1927.

### **4. Technology**

The San Diego Public Library was one of the first major library systems in the country to convert its holdings to digital form. In September 2007 the Library 'went live' with its new, web-based, next generation integrated library system (ILS). With its new ILS, the library has an automation system that fully integrates and manages the ordering and cataloging of all library books, periodicals and media. The system offers a web based catalog display of information about the library's books and non-print items at the Central library, each of the 35 branches, and through

the internet.

The Library's website ([www.sandiegolibrary.org](http://www.sandiegolibrary.org)) includes information on library locations, hours, programs and services and serves as a gateway to the library catalog, databases and account access, so patrons can check their due dates and renew their books. Patrons can ask a reference question, request that the Library purchase a particular title or submit a comment or suggestion. Together these online services constitute a 'virtual library' and have proved popular with residents, as they are able to search the library catalog 24/7 from home or office, and with a few keystrokes request that an item be transferred to their nearest branch. When the item is ready for pick-up the patron receives a notice by email--and three days before the item is due the patron receives a reminder email with instructions on how to renew the item online. Currently 67 percent of all notices sent out by the Library are via email, rather than via the postal service. Soon patrons will also be able to receive similar automated notification by phone if they prefer.

Currently the Library offers 84 databases on its website, most of which can be accessed remotely, covering a broad range of subjects including business, health, science and the humanities for various age-groups. Several Spanish language resources are also available. In some cases these electronic resources have replaced traditional print reference sources and periodical subscriptions as many contain full-text articles. These proprietary information sources are produced by trusted publishers, and serve as an important resource for finding reliable information via the web.

Additional Library web-based resources include SchoolRooms and Live Homework Help. SchoolRooms is a web-based learning portal and service designed to help students explore, discover and learn, and it includes resources for parents, teachers, and librarians. This resource integrates thousands of pages of multimedia content, web links, other resources and powerful search capabilities---all organized around the K-12 curriculum. San Diego SchoolRooms, with funding provided by the California State Library helps students find appropriate resources, from the web to books in the library catalog to articles in databases using one easy-to-navigate interface.

Library staff is working closely with the School District to make more students, parents and teachers aware of these electronic resources, including Live Homework Help, which connects students in grades four through twelve with tutors for live, one-on-one help with homework assignments. Students can access Live Homework Help from home or at any City library computer.

The key to accessing SchoolRooms, as well as the Library's electronic databases, is a library card. The Library is working with their partners at the San Diego Unified School District to ensure that all students have at a minimum a Digital Key Card—a card that will allow access to electronic resources—and be encouraged to 'upgrade' the Digital Key Card at their neighborhood library in order to have full access to the library's print and media collections.

Another technological enhancement to customer service is the use of self-check or express-check

machines. These provide library customers with a self-service option to check-out library materials. Currently the Library has six express-check machines at three branch libraries. Further purchases this fiscal year will bring the number of machines to 30. The Library's goal is to place two express-check units in the busiest branches and one in the others. This will require a total of approximately 50 units.

With the addition of the North University Community Branch Library in Fiscal Year 2008, the Library Department has a total of 802 public access computers to access the Internet and other electronic resources. Wireless access is available at all library facilities, allowing patrons to use their own computers or one of the 20 laptop computers which have been provided through grants and can be checked-out for use at several facilities.

#### Economic Impact of the San Diego Public Library

A number of studies over the years have looked at the economic impact of public libraries, and have concluded that they are a good value, providing direct economic benefits to communities which are significantly greater than the cost to operate them. Using methodologies taken from these various studies, it was determined that the San Diego Public Library provided nearly \$5 in service for each General Fund dollar expended in FY 2007. In these times of limited resources it is important to note that the citizens of San Diego are receiving a high rate of return for each dollar invested in their library system.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anna Tatár  
Library Director

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Approved: Elmer Heap  
Deputy Chief Operations Officer

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