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# **The Mendocino County Public Library System**

## **2002/2003 Grand Jury Report**

The 2002-2003 Grand Jury of Mendocino County as a function of its oversight responsibilities has chosen to review the County Library System operations.

### **Review Procedures**

In carrying out the review process, the Grand Jury has interviewed the County Library Director, two members of the Library Advisory Board, an assistant librarian and a “Friend” of the Library. We have also reviewed the Library Mission Statement, the Library Budget Report, and the County Library Statistics, 2002 report issued by the State Library Development Service Bureau as well as bulletins, newsletters and other documents relating to library function.

### **Library System Functional Overview**

The Mendocino County Library Director prepares the budget and administers five library branches and the bookmobile. These branches are Ukiah Valley, Round Valley (Covelo), Coast Community (Point Arena), Fort Bragg, and Willits.

Mandated by California State law, the Mendocino County Library Advisory Board provides guidance to the Library Director. Nine members are appointed, one each by the five County Supervisors and the four incorporated cities in the County.

Each Branch has a Managing Librarian or Library Technician in charge. There are 18.25 employees staffing the five libraries and bookmobile. As approved by the Board of Supervisors, each branch is open 38 hours a week.

The Friends of the Library are separate and independent entities at each Branch as are Volunteers. Together they provide staffing support and various fundraising activities.

## **Findings**

1. The **Mendocino County Library Director** is held in the highest regard for her leadership abilities from all that were interviewed.
2. As of March 1, 2002 there are 41,134 current registered library cardholders comprising about 50% of the total County population of 82,685. (Cards not used for three years are discarded.)
3. There are 18.25 employees, total, staffing the five branch libraries and the bookmobile. This lean staffing means there is no paid backup in the event of illness or for vacations. While volunteers do some of the backup, there seems to be a decreasing number of volunteer hours to do all of the backup necessary. The impact of a 19.2% increase in library patronage along with a County hiring freeze has highlighted the insufficient staffing problems.
4. According to the California Library Statistics, (2002), published by the California State Library Development Services Bureau, Mendocino has 4,850 residents for each full time paid staff compared to a statewide average of 2,976.
5. According to the California Library Statistics, (2002), published by the California State Library Development Services Bureau, Mendocino County

spends only \$15.03 per capita per year against a statewide average of \$23.05 for library services.

6. According to the California Library Statistics, (2002), published by the California State Library Development Services Bureau, for public libraries serving populations of 60,000 to 100,000, Mendocino County salaries for Library Director and all staff positions fall at the **very bottom of the scale**.
7. None of the County Library facilities comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). None of the facilities electrical systems adequately accommodate computer services and other electronics necessary to run the library system. Structural improvements and capital expenditures are needed at many of the library facilities.
8. **Friends of the Library** and **Volunteers** have played a significant role in support of individual county libraries. Friends of the Library raise funds in various ways to supplement the needs of their particular branch. Volunteers help relieve the pressures of staff shortages and also assist in fundraising activities. “**Friends**” and **volunteers** are truly making every effort to help.
9. The 2002-2003 County Library budget has been reduced a total of \$85,767 from both State and County sources.
10. Library services from the **Bookmobile** were initiated in 1965 and have been a popular way of accessing the library books for residents in outlying areas. The current Bookmobile, custom built in 1995, has logged 178,000 miles and because of it’s age, is increasingly undergoing expensive repairs. There are no funds allocated for replacement at this time. The Bookmobile stops within all supervisorial districts, and additionally serves the Parlin Fork and Chamberland Creek Conservation Camps.
11. The **Ukiah Library** average usage is over 500 patrons a day. A great deal of support is given by the **Friends of Ukiah Branch**. The facility has had no

major maintenance or upgrading in 30 years and the space is insufficient for current usage levels. Moisture is present on some of the walls during rainy conditions. Parking meters in the area make relaxed parking difficult.

**12. The Fort Bragg Library** services approximately 10,000 patrons per month.

The “**Friends**” have raised \$175,000 toward remodeling the facility. The **Managing Librarian** has initiated many special programs and is working toward making the library a focal point in the community.

**13. The Point Arena Library** facility is extremely inadequate in most regards.

The Coast Community Friends of the Library are to be commended for raising over \$200,000 for the construction of a new facility. This amount however may be insufficient. Additionally, while the Grand Jury understands the Point Arena residents natural desire to have a library facility in their own community, especially given their success in raising funds and establishing a location, there remains an unanswered question as to whether the demographics support a fixed facility in Point Arena. The County should be a partner in answering this question.

**14. The Willits Library** facility is in great condition and the local “**Friends**” very supportive.

**15. The Round Valley Library**, a rented facility, has had negligent maintenance, the electrical system is in poor condition and tiles have been known to hang from the ceiling. For these and other reasons this library is being given special attention by the County. Friends of the Library have been paying the monthly rent but the \$3,600 needed yearly for this has now been included in the revised budget for 2002-2003.

**16.** As related in the 2002-2003 Budget Report, the Mendocino County Library **website**, <http://www.mendolibrary.org>, allows patrons to access an online catalog from which they can order books and

have them delivered via bookmobile. The site now includes a database to search for and print magazine and newspaper articles. “Q&A Café” on the website is available for patrons to ask reference questions online from 2-9 pm daily. The website also provides current information on upcoming events at the libraries.

## **Recommendations**

- A. Mendocino County Board of Supervisors must find a way to increase staff at the libraries, 18.25 employees are inadequate. 41,134 cardholders, out of a population of 82,685, and an increase in use of 19.2% in one year deserves this consideration. (Findings 2, 3 & 4)
- B. Given the increased mobility of County residents, The County Library Director, the Library Advisory Board and a representative of the Board of Supervisors should formally assess the continuing need for the Bookmobile. Areas of consideration should include: how Bookmobile expenses might better serve library users by way of fixed facilities, increased use of drop-off/pick-up sites, and the use of email orders linked with US mail deliveries. If continued Bookmobile services are determined to be in the best interests of County residents, the Board of Supervisors should properly fund this service to include a replacement vehicle in the near future. (Finding 10)
- C. The Board of Supervisors and The County Administrator along with the Library Director need to develop a capital-spending plan, outside of the operating budget, for necessary improvements and structural repair at all library facilities. These improvements shall include compliance with ADA regulations and installation of adequate

electrical systems. (Finding 7)

- D. The County Library Director, the Library Advisory Board, a representative from the Coast Community Friends of the Library and the Board of Supervisors should initiate a formal study to ascertain the library needs of Point Arena and the contiguous communities, and how best to meet those needs. (Finding 13)
- E. The Grand Jury encourages continued support be given to the Round Valley Library to upgrade facilities and improve services. (Finding 15)
- F. The Board of Supervisors should bring the County Library salary structure into line with other library systems of similar size and provide for this in the budget. (Finding 6)

## **Comments**

The Grand Jury acknowledges and especially commends the County Library Director for her skills, energy and leadership in moving the Library and Library services to levels not supported by the County budget.

The Grand Jury also applauds the staff, the Friends of the Library and all volunteers for their extraordinary roll in providing such a diverse, high quality library system in spite of severe monetary constraints.

Over the last few years, many major accomplishments have been achieved through strong leadership, dedicated and competent staff, and momentous community support.

## **Response Required**

Mendocino Board of Supervisors

Mendocino County Administrator

## **Response Requested**

Mendocino County Library Director

Mendocino County Library Advisory Board