

Checked In: Santa Cruz City-County Library System Follow-up Review

Synopsis

The 2006-2007 Grand Jury followed up on a 2004-2005 Grand Jury review of the Santa Cruz County Library System. In addition to investigating the status of previous recommendations, the 2006-2007 Grand Jury looked into worker safety and hiring practices. The Grand Jury gathered information by interviewing upper management, most branch managers and some employees. The Jury also toured library facilities, including most of the local branches. It was discovered that some previous recommendations been appropriately addressed, while others still require attention.

Background

Prior Grand Jury Recommendations

In 2004-2005, the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury did an extensive review of the Santa Cruz City-County Library System, an investigation which resulted in the following recommendations:

- “The Santa Cruz City Manager should review the Director of Libraries’ job performance according to the Library Joint Powers Authority Agreement.”
- “Library administration should conduct an efficiency study, to find reasonable alternatives to the way staff are located within the library system and are rotated in and out of the central branch.”
- “The Joint Powers Authority Board should immediately begin to find an alternative to the crowded and inefficient location at 1543 Pacific Avenue.”
- “Since the operation of the Santa Cruz City-County Library System depends on Measure B Sales tax revenue that will expire in 2013, economy measures and new funding sources must be found to maintain existing levels of service.”
- “The library staff and Joint Powers Authority Board must develop contingency plans for the future capital projects if a bond issue is unsuccessful at the polls.”

Library System Mission Statement

“Serving County residents since 1917, the mission of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries, California is to provide materials and services which help community residents meet their personal, educational, cultural, and professional information needs. Our mandate is to provide free information services to all residents of Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Capitola, and the County's unincorporated areas.

We do this through a system of branch libraries stretching from La Selva Beach to Boulder Creek, via an Outreach Program serving those unable to get to a library, through

telephone reference services, dial-up access to our computer catalog, and other electronic databases. Our collections are linked by an automation system which tells where any System book or other item is located and whether it is available for checkout.”¹

Library System-Branches-Current and Planned

The following table represents the current status of the branches as of April 2007, and identifies priority projects for improvements.

BRANCH/DEPT	CURRENT FACILITY SQ FT	PLANNED FACILITY SQ FT	AVG DAILY USAGE	PRIORITY **
Aptos Branch (Tier II) *	8000	12,500	600	Deferred
Aptos Branch Parking Lot			N/A	Priority
Boulder Creek Branch (Tier I) *	7500	7,500	250	None
Branciforte Branch (Tier I)	7500	7,500	500	None
Capitola Branch (Tier I) *	4320	7,500	500	Priority
Central Branch (Tier III) *	44,000	55,000	1200	Priority
Felton Branch (Tier I) *	1,250	7,500	300	Priority
Garfield Park Branch (Tier I)	2,343	2,343	150	None
La Selva Beach Branch (Tier I)	2,200	2200	115	None
Live Oak Branch (Tier II) *	12,500	12,500	600	None
Scotts Valley Branch *	5,300	12,500	300	Priority
Pacific Ave Headquarters *	11,450	12,000	N/A	Priority
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

*The Grand Jury interviewed staff and toured branch.

**Priority (Capital Spending)

Definitions

Joint Powers Authority Board

The Joint Powers Authority Board (JPA Board) oversees the operations of the Santa Cruz County Library systems, setting policies and exercising responsibilities delegated to in the Joint Powers Agreement. The JPA Board consists of nine appointed members — two from the Santa Cruz City Council; two from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors; one each from the Capitola and Scotts Valley City Councils; and three at-large citizens appointed by majority vote of the Board representing the geographic diversity of the area.

Lock Box

A secured locked box which contains emergency procedures and keys.

¹ Library Mission Statement, <http://www.santacruzpl.org/libraryadmin/libmiss.shtml>

Tier I Branches

The smaller neighborhood libraries that have neither the space nor the resources to provide complete information services to their communities. Instead, a Tier I provides a popular materials collection, meets the ready reference needs of adults, and endeavors to meet the library information needs of children through the junior high level.

Tier II Branches

Larger branches, serving regional populations. They have bigger collections, provide more reference services, and endeavor to meet the information needs of youngsters through the high school level. The service area of a Tier II branch usually encompasses Tier I branches as well.

Tier III Branch

The single Tier III branch is the Central Branch in downtown Santa Cruz. It serves as system headquarters for the collections, reference and youth services, and has special collections such as local history, California, and genealogy.

Scope

Follow up on Previous Investigation

1. Verified that the change in the job performance review process for the director of libraries is an operational procedure.
2. Verified that the procedure of branch staff rotation is a viable procedure.
3. Investigated if alternatives to the 1543 Pacific Avenue facility were identified, as agreed.
4. Investigated the long-range facility plan to determine if the plan is on track.
5. Verified that a funding process is in place and determined if a financial plan was in place for FY2005-FY2006.
6. Investigated the status of contingency plans for any future capital projects, if a bond issue is unsuccessful at the polls.

Additional Investigation

7. Reviewed the hiring practices for the library.
8. Investigated the safety/worker's compensation issue and actions taken.
9. Toured most library branches to understand their operation.

Findings

1. *Director of Libraries Job Review Process:* In February of 2006, the JPA Board adopted an official procedure for appraising the performance of the director of libraries. A standard written job description, which is part of the City of Santa Cruz personnel system, has been established. It has been verified that the director of libraries' performance evaluations are now current.
2. *Staff Rotation:* Contrary to previous findings, the Grand Jury found that library staff are happy with rotation practices. The library has been practicing staff rotation for more than ten years. The Central Branch circulation and reference staff is rotated in and out of the headquarters facility on Pacific Avenue. They rotate in four-hour shifts based on established work schedules. Staff rotation is in place to:
 - Reduce injuries and stress illness.
 - Cover required workload hours on the reference desk.
 - Provide cross-training and job backup.
 - Offer job enrichment.
 - Improve staff morale.
 - Reduce staff turnover.
 - Reduce worker compensation claims.

Larger branches practice staff rotation internally while some small branches do not have enough staff to rotate. There is 'on call' staff to fill in occasionally if required. Some employees feel that the staff rotation gives most library employees a chance to work directly with customers and understand the public's needs.

3. *Alternatives to 1543 Pacific Avenue:* The Director of Libraries is aware of the urgency for having a plan in place for this location. The city manager noted that they may extend the lease on Pacific Avenue until 2013 and that more financial analysis must be done. In 2006, the director appointed a Capital Projects Priorities Subcommittee. This committee is responsible for developing a long-range facilities plan.
4. *Funding Plans:* A five-year budget plan, "Library Strategic Financial Plan" was prepared in 2006. It was developed with the following funding assumptions:
 - Sales tax revenues will increase 3% per year.
 - County Library Fund increased 7.5% in FY 2006-07 and will increase 5% each year thereafter.
 - Fees, fines and miscellaneous revenues will increase 1% per year.
 - Bequest appropriations will remain at the same level of funding.
 - The library will receive estimated carry over funds, grants, and gifts.

5. *Contingency Planning:* In 2005, the JPA Board adopted a policy that keeping branches open was the “cornerstone” of the budget process and that closing branches should not be considered in contingency planning.
6. *Worker Safety:* An outside consultant prepared a safety recommendations report for the JPA. The Director of Libraries was asked to come back with an action plan on the safety recommendations that were made. Upon review of this report entitled “Promoting Worker Safety at the Library — An Action Plan,” the JPA Board accepted it unanimously. In addition:
 - The library added a “Safe/Ergonomic Practices” section to the standard employee appraisal form to raise the safety awareness of the employees.
 - The library has a safety committee which issues an annual report and periodic updates.
 - According to management, training the staff in ergonomics has reduced the workers compensation claims. Most work-groups have someone in charge of stretch breaks where three or more people use the same circulation desk.
7. *Hiring Practices:* The library does considerable hiring from outside the county library system for higher-level positions. This practice has caused morale problems and has increased costs to the system. Many of the current staff have attended college to get their Masters in Library Science with the sole purpose of advancing their careers but have not found it helpful in getting promoted.

Other Hiring Practice Issues:

- The practice of hiring half-time employees enables the library to stay open more hours to serve the public. It also has some cost-savings benefits. Many of the branches are understaffed, based on the number of customers they serve. However, hiring half-time employees also limits opportunities for full-time staff to be promoted.
 - The branches would like to have more frequent staff meetings, but find it hard to balance this need with the priority of keeping the library open for the public.
 - In April 2006, the library had a meeting for all staff system-wide. The focus of this meeting was on the Central Branch. As a result of the meeting, work groups were formed to address issues. In December 2006, a summary report was sent to all staff system-wide. The employees reported that there was not adequate follow-up in the areas of communication and the update of job classifications. Library employees sometimes stay with their jobs because they like the Santa Cruz community and wish to make a career and home here, not because they feel there are equitable hiring practices or opportunities for job advancement.
8. *Branch Findings:* In at least one branch, emergency lock boxes were not easily accessible.

Conclusions

1. The previous recommendation that the Santa Cruz City Manager review the Director of Libraries' job performance according to the Library Joint Powers Authority Agreement has been met. The Director of Libraries' Job Review Process is in place and operational.
2. In contrast to the previous Grand Jury's recommendations, staff rotation is now a viable process. Staff does not work more than four hours at a time on the reference desk, which relieves stress caused by repetitive work.
3. The recommendation that the JPA Board should immediately begin to find an alternative to the Pacific Avenue facility has not yet been met. Alternatives to this location have yet to be identified. Although the JPA Subcommittee on Capital Project Priorities has produced a plan for capital spending, the plan is very broad and does not provide enough detail for the JPA Board to make a funding decision.
4. While funding plans are in place in the form of a five-year strategic financial plan, new sources of funding have yet to be identified.
5. Contingency planning has not been addressed. In the event of reduced funding, there is no contingency plan in place. Although keeping branches open has been declared as a core service and may be desirable, this policy does not provide for the possibility of reduced funding.
6. The Director of Libraries' emphasis on worker safety and ergonomics and the on-going rotation of staff have had a positive effect on workers' compensation claims and employee morale.
7. Employees are aware of the Safety and Ergonomics Plan, but follow-up training has been overlooked and needs to be addressed.
8. The hiring practices of the library are in dire need of reform. The practice of hiring outside the local library system for the higher-level positions has caused low morale and poor expectations of job advancement.
9. During an emergency, staff at one location could not easily access the lock box key or operate it.

Recommendations

1. *Worker safety* (including ergonomics training), should continue to be a priority. Additional emphasis should be placed on annual refresher courses. An annual training report reviewed and approved by the JPA Board would help ensure the on-going improvement of the program.
2. *Staff rotation*: Because staff rotation is a viable process which has had a positive effect on employee safety, the staff rotation process should be continued.
3. *Annual budget*: The annual budget process is in place and should be continued.

4. *Hiring practices:* The library’s hiring practices should undergo a complete review to determine whether reform is required. If employees felt that there was a career path with the Santa Cruz Library System, morale would improve and good employees would stay. A policy should be put in place which encourages internal employee advancement and incorporates methods such as career and succession planning. Career ladders or job families should be established so that employees can advance “in position” as their levels of expertise increase. Also, library job classifications should be updated.
5. *Capital spending plan:* The JPA Board should identify alternatives to the continued use of the 1543 Pacific Avenue facility. The JPA Subcommittee on Capital Project Priorities should prepare a more detailed plan for capital spending which would help them make an informed decision on future facility needs. For major projects, they should do a detailed financial analysis which discloses all costs, time to execute and return on investment.
6. *Contingency funding:* A contingency funding plan needs to be put in place in the event of a worst-case scenario, such as a bond measure not passing or the revenues from sales tax not increasing.
7. *Emergency procedures:* Branch managers need to review emergency response procedures and verify that all information, materials and equipment are up to date, functioning and accessible.

Commendation

The Joint Powers Authority, City Manager and Director of Libraries are to be commended for establishing current procedures for the job performance review of the Director of Libraries.

Responses Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
JPA Board	1, 3-7	1-4	90 Days October 1, 2007
Director of Libraries	1-8	1-5	90 Days October 1, 2007
Santa Cruz City	1, 3-7	1-4	90 Days October 1, 2007

Sources

Web Sites

- Library
<http://www.santacruzpl.org/>
- Santa Cruz City Manager
citymgr@ci.santa-cruz.ca.us
- The Santa Cruz Library System Facilities Master Plan FY 2001-02 – FY2005/06.
<http://www.santacruzpl.org/libraryadmin/ljpb/members.shtml>
- 2004-2005 Civil Grand Jury Report, “Ready to Check Out? Santa Cruz City County Library System.”
http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/grandjury/GJ2005_responses/
- Joint Powers Agreement
<http://www.santacruzpl.org/libraryadmin/ljpb/index.shtml>

Reports & Memos

- City of Santa Cruz Director of Libraries Job Description
- Joint Powers Authority Memo, January 17, 2006, Director of Libraries Job Description Approval
- Promoting Worker Safety at the Library, An Action Plan, Report, August 2004
- Joint Powers Authority Memo, May 23, 2005, Update on Library Worker Safety Activities
- Santa Cruz Public Library Safety Committee Annual Report 2005-06
- Joint Powers Authority Board Subcommittee on Capital Project Priorities, Report March 28, 2006
- Ready to Check-Out? Santa Cruz City-County Library System 2004-2005
- Memo: All Staff System-wide, Staff Morning Follow-up. December 26 ,2006

Board minutes

- Library Joint Powers Board Minutes June 7, 2004 – December 31, 2005
- Library Joint Powers Board Minutes January 9, 2006 – June 5, 2006