

## IMPROVING THE YOLO COUNTY LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

### SUMMARY

In an era when digital media are rapidly expanding and traditional functions of libraries are changing, the Yolo County Grand Jury (hereafter Grand Jury) decided to examine how public libraries in Yolo County are adapting. Are they addressing the new challenges of the digital age while continuing to address their primary goals of supporting literacy and helping citizens access needed and desired information?

The Grand Jury interviewed county librarians, the librarian of the Woodland Public Library, and a member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. The Grand Jury also visited all eight branches of the Yolo County Library and the city-supported Woodland Public Library. And it examined the *Yolo County Library Facilities Master Plan 2018-2035* and other documents. Overall, the Grand Jury found that the libraries and their staffs are meeting the needs of their communities impressively well, but identified five issues that should be addressed:

- Libraries are frequently unable to provide adequate help to a subset of library patrons who need additional services because of mental health problems or homelessness.
- The county Library Code of Behavior for patrons is not generally displayed prominently and is not easy for library staff to enforce effectively.
- The Mary L. Stephens Library in Davis has a serious shortage of parking for library staff and patrons.
- In West Sacramento, residents of the Southport area do not have easy access to the West Sacramento Library.
- The Yolo County Archives has inadequate facilities and staff to preserve and ensure wide use of the county's historical records.

The Grand Jury recommends that the libraries work with county social service departments to address the non-library needs of residents who have special psychological or economic problems; post the Code of Behavior more prominently in multiple languages and train staff on enforcement methods; increase parking for the Davis library; and speed up construction of a planned Southport library branch. In addition, the Grand Jury recommends that the Yolo County Archives increase its staff, increase hours of service to the public, and acquire a large-document digital scanner and a digital asset management system.

### METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury used a variety of methods to evaluate the condition and performance of the libraries and archives:

- Interviews with seven county librarians, the Woodland city librarian, and a member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors
- Repeated site visits to county libraries and the Yolo County Archives and Records Center
- Study of County library brochures

- Examination of the Yolo County Library organizational chart, the county budget for libraries, and the long-term plan for county libraries, the *Library Masterplan* (see bibliography)

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Yolo County and City Branch Libraries**

Starting with two Carnegie libraries early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one in Woodland and one in the town of Yolo, the Yolo County Library system has grown in tandem with the population growth of Yolo County. Today, there are eight county-supported libraries and one city-supported library, including:

- Arthur F. Turner Community Library, West Sacramento
- Clarksburg Branch Library, Clarksburg
- Esparto Regional Library, Esparto
- Knights Landing Branch Library, Knights Landing
- Mary L. Stephens Branch Library, Davis
- South Davis Montgomery Library, Davis
- Winters Community Library, Winters
- Woodland Public Library, Woodland
- Yolo Branch Library, Yolo

The county library system is funded for approximately 40 full-time equivalents, supplemented by scores of volunteers at each location. (Some of the employees serve multiple roles.) In the current fiscal year (2017-2018), Yolo County libraries had a budget of \$8,840,335, and the Archives and Records Center had a budget of \$177,238. The separately funded Woodland Public Library is funded for 10 full-time equivalents and has an annual budget of \$2,047,178.

### **Yolo County Archives and Records Center**

In addition to the county and city branch libraries, the Yolo County Archives and Records Center (henceforth “the Archives”), located in Woodland, houses historical documents. According to the *Yolo County Facilities Master Plan 2018-2035*, “the Yolo County Archives is the official repository for the historical records of Yolo County that have permanent legal, fiscal, administrative, or historical value. The Archives is the preservation arm of the County and provides guidance and direction for the preservation and retention of County records, and expert research assistance to County departments.”

The Archives, located at 226 Buckeye Street in Woodland (see [archives@yolocounty.org](mailto:archives@yolocounty.org)), is a primary source for anyone wishing to explore the history of Yolo County. It contains thousands of historical government documents: official records of the Board of Supervisors, the County Clerk/Recorder, Superior Court, and the Board of Education, as well as tax rolls, naturalization and immigration records, and property deeds. It also contains diverse subject collections concerning schools, towns, churches, businesses, and cemeteries as well as maps, photographs, yearbooks, community and family collections, and newspapers. The Archives gives patrons free

access to ancestry.com and over 5,000 digital newspapers through newspapers.com. It is an ideal place to learn about the history, people, places, and cultures of Yolo County. Besides providing up to 30 minutes of free research for patrons of the Archives, additional time is available for a fee. Staff-approved digital or physical copies of non-fragile materials can be purchased.

Currently, the cost of staffing the Archives and Records Center is covered by a combination of three funding sources: (1) reimbursement from County departments whose records are stored in the Records Center portion of the Archives, (2) the Yolo County Library fund balance, and (3) donations from the Friends of the Yolo County Archives. Costs for the half-time library assistant and 40-50% of the full-time librarian's salary are reimbursed by County departments who use the Records Center. The remaining costs for the full-time librarian are covered by the Yolo County Library's fund balance. The Friends of the Yolo County Archives are covering the cost of the extra-help library assistant in 2017-2018.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Branch Libraries**

Interviews with the eight librarians revealed that they view their main roles as helping citizens evaluate the validity of various information sources, helping them meet their needs for information and reading-related enjoyment, providing a place where they can meet for lectures and discussions, and helping patrons, especially children, learn to read well. They emphasize that in a period of history rife with misinformation and conflicting information sources, it is important for citizens to understand how to separate fact from fiction. All of the librarians mentioned that physical book circulation has been declining somewhat in recent years, whereas foot traffic and the use of digital information sources have been increasing. There is also increasing demand for space in libraries for study, research, and community meetings and events.

When asked what is needed to improve their services, the librarians mentioned needs for more funding, more space, more hours, more technology, and additional staff, although they were aware of county budget limitations and the legitimate competing needs of other county agencies. The Grand Jury therefore decided to focus on only a few specific issues:

- Dealing with mentally ill, disruptive, and/or homeless individuals and families
- Assuring that all libraries have a visible code of behavior for patrons, presented in multiple local languages, and ways to deal with individuals who violate the code
- Parking congestion at the Mary L. Stephens (Davis) Library
- The need for a second library in the Southport area of West Sacramento

### **Dealing with Homeless, Indigent, and Mentally Ill Individuals**

By their nature, libraries are open and available to all members of the public. The Grand Jury found Yolo County librarians to be admirably sympathetic to and supportive of their diverse patrons' needs. Problems may arise, however, when homeless or psychologically troubled individuals view the libraries as havens from cold or hot weather, use the public restrooms for bathing, or use the floor or a comfortable reading chair for extended naps. Occasionally, indigent families, including small children, find their way into the libraries and are in obvious need of

social services, but there is no established, ready connection between the libraries and the county's social service workers. (See bibliography: "The unexpected role librarians are playing in dealing with capital homeless situation," which applies to Yolo County as well as to Sacramento – the focus of this particular article in the *Sacramento Bee*.) Special-needs patrons place a burden on library staffs. These busy professionals already carry a heavy workload, and most are not explicitly trained to provide social services. Some of the larger libraries have homeless people living, eating, sleeping, and stashing belongings outside the buildings, and staff members must walk around inside and outside the buildings several times a day to make sure there are no serious problems.

Approximately once a month, a patron becomes noisy or antagonistic in one of the larger libraries, and staff members are forced to call the police. To ameliorate this problem, the Woodland Public Library (operated by the city), has hired a full-time uniformed security guard to greet people at the front door and be available to deal with difficult patrons. At present, none of the county libraries has a security guard.

Interviewees suggested that the County find a way for a social worker to visit the libraries on a regular basis and/or have such a professional on call, to address problems created by troubling individuals using the libraries for purposes other than reading and research. This social worker could discuss social-service needs with staff members, help them identify people who need public assistance, inform these people about available services, and check on them later to see whether their situation has improved.

### **Codes of Behavior**

The Yolo County Library system has established an official code of behavior for patrons (see Appendix A). When a patron violates the code, some librarians show the patron a copy and ask him or her to read and sign it. The Grand Jury found that the code is not posted or readily available at some of the libraries, and is not highly visible in others. Moreover, the code is not presented in multiple languages, even though many library patrons speak and read a primary language other than English (e.g., Spanish or Russian).

### **The Davis Library Parking Problem**

The Davis (Mary L. Stephens) library was enlarged and remodeled in 2010, and it was provided with a modest but attractive parking lot. Unfortunately, the lot is often full because it is used by library staff, library patrons, parents dropping off and collecting children who attend nearby schools, people accessing the adjacent park and athletic fields, and homeless people who use library facilities and, in a few cases, sleep overnight outside the library or in their cars in the library parking lot. It is sometimes difficult for even the library staff to find parking spaces, and it is especially difficult for library patrons at certain times of day. Grand Jury members noted that students attending the nearby high school often park at the library early in the morning before the library opens, because the high school lot is full, or its entry is obstructed by a long line of late-arriving cars. On-street parking in the area is almost impossible to find; most of the streets are marked by signs saying, "No parking at any time." Interviewees suggested either enlarging the

parking lot or, at the least, arranging for additional staff parking at nearby facilities, such as churches.

### **Fast-Tracking the Construction of a Second Library in West Sacramento**

West Sacramento, particularly its Southport area, has grown dramatically over the past two decades. The high school has been relocated to Southport, and new elementary schools have been built there. These students must travel a minimum of two miles to reach a public library. According to the *Yolo County Library Facilities Masterplan 2018-2035* (see bibliography) a new library is scheduled to be built for the Southport community during the 2025-2030 period, with a “Library on Wheels” being provided during the 2018-2025 period. The Grand Jury concluded that the new Southport library should be built sooner than planned, possibly making purchase of the proposed Library on Wheels unnecessary.

### **Archives and Records Center**

Interviews with the Archives Coordinator and a review of the *Yolo County Library Facilities Master Plan 2018-2035* revealed significant problems that should be addressed.

#### **Facilities**

The Archives building, according to the Master Plan, suffers from “extensive environmental and space deficiencies, inadequate environmental conditions for archival storage, and high risk for damage and/or destruction to archives and records in the event of fire or flood.” To mitigate these issues, the plan lists several recommendations for the Archives, to be accomplished in two phases: 2018-2025 and 2030-2035. In the first phase, the recommendations include repairs of the building and an HVAC upgrade “to provide appropriate environmental conditions for storage of archives and records.” The recommendations also include installing “compact shelving to alleviate overcrowding in the Archives & Records area” to provide “20-30% expansion,” “installing solar panels,” and “renovating staff areas throughout to correct environmental deficiencies and provide adequate space for staff, meetings, and materials processing.” In the second phase, the main recommendation is “to relocate the Archives/Records Center to provide permanent housing for County Archives” – in other words, to provide a new and better building to house the Archives and County records.

#### **Staffing**

The Archives is open to the public only on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays from noon to 4 p.m., due to limited staffing. It is staffed primarily by a full-time Librarian/Coordinator and a half-time Library Assistant, augmented by one extra-help Library Assistant and unpaid volunteers who help with research, transcribing documents using Excel and/or Word programs, processing collections, search guides for individual patrons, and creating exhibits and displays. The unpaid Friends of the Yolo County Archives, a nonprofit organization that provides financial and other assistance, was created to “preserve, protect, and ensure the widest possible use of the county’s historical records” (undated pamphlet, *Yolo County Archives*).

## **Disintegration of County Documents**

Because the current Archives building is not adequately temperature- and humidity-controlled, many of the large bound volumes of county documents, as well as old newspapers, are decaying and disintegrating. In order to capture the information contained in these documents, as well as their physical appearance, for future generations of Archives users, the materials need to be copied in digitized form. Besides preserving important information, digitization would allow the Archives to make more of its contents available online, which would allow many more citizens of Yolo County to take advantage of it. Discussion of this need with the Archives Coordinator resulted in the Grand Jury becoming familiar with large overhead scanners, capable of dealing with large leather-bound volumes that have thick and brittle bindings, and with oversized blueprints, maps, and drawings. One example of this kind of scanner is the Zeutschel OS 14000 scanner, which (according to the manufacturer) “is perfect for scanning delicate, rare, and valuable books and documents that need to be handled with extra care in libraries and archives. . . [S]canned pages are automatically separated, and the center book-fold is automatically smoothed out to avoid distortions.”

After archival materials are copied in digitized form, the resulting files need to be stored in a form that allows them to be preserved and accessed for decades to come. Digital asset management systems (DAMS) are available that can store, preserve, catalog, and make available, through an internet site, digitized content. The Archives will need a DAMS, in conjunction with a large format scanner, to ensure access to, and preservation of, all the materials that are digitized. The DAMS can help with the preservation of materials in two ways. First, digital copies can be viewed by patrons without their having to touch the original materials. Second, as preferred digital file types change (as has happened with floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, pdfs, etc.), the data stored by the DAMS can be translated into the new forms. Finally, the DAMS includes an accessible indexing procedure that helps end-users locate pertinent items and collections.

## **FINDINGS**

The Grand Jury found that:

- F1.** Patrons use libraries for many different purposes. For some, the library is one of the few open, air-conditioned, and safe places to sleep and use bathrooms. This fact attracts some people with intense needs for social services, causing library staff to deal with situations for which they could use outside social service support.
- F2.** There is an established Code of Behavior for the Yolo County libraries, but it is not always posted in prominent locations, or in multiple languages, and it is not always used concretely to deal with patrons who violate it.
- F3.** The Davis library’s parking lot is often full and congested, and there are few alternative parking spots in the neighborhood during most library hours. This makes it difficult for patrons to use the library conveniently and efficiently and for library employees to park nearby.

- F4.** Given the dramatic growth of the Southport community, there is a need for a second library in West Sacramento, but its construction is not scheduled to occur until 2025-2030.
- F5.** The Archives and Records Center is performing essential services for county administrators and providing important services to citizens of Yolo County who want to know about particular aspects of the county's rich history. But the staff is small, and the hours that the Archives is open to members of the community are few.
- F6.** As stated in the latest long-term plan for the Archives, its facilities have extensive environmental and space deficiencies and a high risk of damage and/or destruction to archived materials in the event of fire or flood.
- F7.** The Archives does not have a large-scale modern scanner suitable for copying archival materials and digitizing the copies. Digitization of archival materials would allow patrons of the Archives to examine high-quality images of the materials without damaging them.
- F8.** If the Archives had such a scanner, it would also need a digital asset management system to store, preserve, and catalog the copied materials, and make the digitized content available online. This material would then be available online to anyone who wanted to use it, and its formatting could be updated whenever new data and imaging formats became available and widely used.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R1.** By December 31, 2018, the Yolo County Librarian, the Yolo County Department of Social Services, and the Yolo County Board of Supervisors should provide for a social worker, either full- or part-time, to assist library staff in dealing with homeless, substance-abusing, and mentally ill individuals and families who appear at libraries. This professional would speak appropriately with such people, establish connections for them with appropriate county services, and advise library staff about ways to deal with such people if and when they present problems for library patrons.
- R2.** By October 1, 2018, all Yolo County libraries should post a code of appropriate behavior for library patrons. This code should appear in large print and in the most frequently used local languages. It should be visible in several places within the library. When a library staff person speaks with a patron about misbehaving in the library, the patron should be asked to read a copy (in the person's primary language) and sign and date it to indicate that it was read.
- R3.** By December 31, 2018, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors should work with the Davis City Council to ease the parking shortage at the Davis library.
- R4.** By December 31, 2018, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors should evaluate the possibility of speeding up the process of creating a library in the Southport area of West Sacramento. (This could be in lieu of purchasing a mobile library.)

- R5.** By December 1, 2018, the Archives Coordinator should work with the County Librarian and the members of the Board of Supervisors to establish a plan to increase the staffing and open hours of the Archives.
- R6.** By December 31, 2018, the Archives Coordinator should work with the County Librarian and the members of the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the proposals in the Facilities Master Plan to mitigate the environmental damage at the existing Archives building by 2025, and to replace the facility by 2035, remain on track to be implemented.
- R7.** By October 1, 2018, the Archives Coordinator and the Board of Supervisors should fund the acquisition of a scanner and a digital asset management system by July 1, 2019 (the new fiscal year).

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows.

- From the following elected officials:
  - Yolo County Board of Supervisors: F1, F3, F4, F6, F7, and F8; R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7
  - Davis City Council: F3; R3

### **INVITED RESPONSES**

- From the following individuals:
  - Yolo County Librarians: F2 and R2
  - Head County Librarian: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, and F7; R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7
  - Yolo County Archivist: F5, F6, and F7; R5, R6, and R7
  - Woodland Public Librarian: F1, F2; R1, R2

**Note:** The governing body indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.



Note: Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Yolo County Library Facilities Master Plan 2018-2035* (prepared for the Yolo County Library by Jennifer Sweeney & Janice Flug in 2017).

“The unexpected role librarians are playing in dealing with capital homeless situation” by Cynthia Hubert. *Sacramento Bee*, January 3, 2018 (see *Sacramento Bee* eEdition).

*Yolo County Archives: Research, History, Volunteers and Community*. (undated pamphlet)

## **RELEVANT PENAL CODES**

Any person who intentionally interferes with the business of the library by obstructing or intimidating those attempting to carry on business in the library or who refuses to leave the library after being requested to do so by the library management is guilty of a misdemeanor crime under California Penal Code Section 602.1.

Any person who defaces, damages, destroys, or steals library property is guilty of a misdemeanor crime under California Penal Code Section 490.5 or Section 19910 of the California Education Code.

All other laws pertaining to behavior in a public place apply, including California Penal Code Sections 314, 415, 647, and 653b.

## **APPENDIX: Library Code of Behavior**

**Yolo County Library** provides access for all to ideas that inform, entertain, and inspire. In order to maintain a clean, efficient, pleasant, and safe environment for everyone using the library, the Yolo County Library has adopted the following code of behavior:

### **LIBRARY CODE OF BEHAVIOR**

- 1. Treat people, material, and furniture with respect.**
- 2. Speak and act in a manner that doesn't disturb others.**
- 3. Leave pets, bicycles, and any large objects outside the building.**
- 4. Young children must be closely supervised by a responsible adult.**
- 5. Honor all library rules and procedures.**
- 6. Immediately report suspicious, unsafe, or discourteous behavior to a staff member.**
- 7. Consume food and drink outside the library or in designated areas.**