

**Director of County Library Services Report
For
May, 2010**

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

As a County Department Head, each year I work with Human Resources and the County Administrator's office to prepare an extensive self-evaluation document that I then discuss with the Board of Supervisors. I am able to let the Supervisors know what is working and what needs more work and to hear their feedback and concerns. There are rarely any surprises since my goals are based on the Library's goals as documented in the Managing for Results document that we prepare yearly with the help of our community support groups. Since this is my last Monthly Report of the fiscal year, I thought that sharing some parts of the evaluation would provide a high-level summary of what MCFL has accomplished this year and serve as a reminder of what we would like to achieve. I've shared most of this information during the year, but seeing it all together is really impressive. The Board of Supervisors has been very supportive of the library and I believe that is because they recognize that our staff and Commission and all of our supporter groups work together as a team to bring high quality service to the citizens of Marin.

Here, in summary (and this is a summary, believe it or not, the original is many, many pages long) is what I shared with the Board of Supervisors.

WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

- Library Use is Booming. As of April 1, circulation is up 10.67% from last year; patron count is up 5.68%; public computer use is up 12.41%; adult program attendance is up 34.49%. As I go from branch to branch and talk with staff and patrons it is obvious how busy we have become and how varied are the ways people use the library.
- Reading is our brand and we are working to maximize that identity
 - One Book One Marin
 - Summer Reading Programs
 - Baby Bounce
 - Story Times at the Farmers' Market
- Spanish Services
- Obtained 4 successful grants
- Dedicated Friends groups and the Library Foundation
- MARINet

WHAT ARE OUR ISSUES AND CHALLENGES?

MCFL continues to have a structural budget deficit of about \$1.5 million, 11% of our expenditure budget. Despite cuts to our discretionary spending for materials, supplies, computer replacements, travel, consultants and capital spending, our staff costs continue to increase at a rate that outpaces those savings. Our current projections show that we will exhaust our operating funds by Fiscal Year 2011/12. To meet this challenge, the Board agreed to put Measure A on the ballot for June 8th - \$49 for 5 years; senior exemption.

Services/Staffing

We have 7.5 vacant positions left unfilled, waiting for a definite result from the June election. In the meantime, based on recommendations from our Staffing Study, we have moved forward in planning how best to transition to a new service model. In the last few months we have, on a pilot basis, revised the reporting structure so that the South Novato Branch reports to the Novato Branch and the Marin City branch is supervised by Corte Madera. We hired an organizational development consultant to work with a cross-organization team to conduct a communications audit and present recommendations. This team is also be looking at establishing the parameters for a “customer service specialist” class of employee that would free professional staff to do more supervising and outreach work.

Buildings

The Bookmobile engine does not meet current emission requirement and we have one year to replace the vehicle. We have been budgeting for a replacement and have the funds accumulated; staff is researching possibilities and will make a decision during this fiscal year. We have been in touch with Public Works as there is also a possibility that Federal grant money may be available to purchase a green vehicle. All of our facilities and programs have been reviewed for ADA compliance and are now part of the County wide transition plan. Our leased buildings are either in compliance now, or are in the advanced planning stage for compliance, but we are not sure if there will be funds available to make the changes necessary. The Civic Center Library space, which we own, depends on changes in the building as a whole to meet compliance, although we may have to make some small interior changes. Novato, Corte Madera, and Fairfax have some interior and exterior accessibility issues. We are planning to address at least the most critical of them as part of a successful ballot measure.

Our 4 owned libraries average about 40 years old and are requiring continual maintenance. We have budgeted only \$130,000 as a capital budget for this year to cover unexpected building repairs. All other projects have been tabled.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

If Measure A passes, the approximately \$2.3 million yearly raised would cover our on-going deficit, allow us to hire staff, bring the materials and program budgets back to appropriate levels, and make critical facility and ADA building repairs. Because the measure has a five year limit, we definitely plan to continue with our long term restructuring goals, rethinking how we deliver services to the public with an eye to increasing self-service and using a more flexible staffing pattern. Physical changes to

buildings will be front loaded to the beginning of the five year plan to take advantage of cheaper money and a beneficial bidding climate. We will allocate 20%, or about \$2.3 million, to ADA, critical repairs and service changes. Staff is working with DPW to develop a list of critical repairs identified in the Services and Facilities Vision Plan (SFVP) and to assign costs to them. Group 4, the architects of the SFVP, have worked with us to define the costs for minor remodeling to increase patron self-service and increase staff accessibility to the public. Based on their extensive experience with libraries and looking at examples from across the country, they are working to find ways to increase seating and study space in our facilities without major remodeling. Once these numbers are quantified we will be able to formulate a comprehensive building plan.

Working out the new staff positions will take some time as we do not intend to fill our vacant positions as they stand. We've done some work with HR to think about what the organization might look like and there is much more to do with the Classification and Compensation staff to detail the positions. A library staff committee is looking at parameters for a general purpose "customer service" position and that too will need to be worked through with HR. Whatever we create needs to be sustainable after the parcel tax expires in five years and also translate well to the larger buildings that hopefully are in our future.

If Measure A doesn't pass, MCFL will need to decrease expenses yearly by \$1.5 million. Three of the possible revenue cuts were part of the Library's Long Term Restructuring proposals: close Saturday at Civic Center Branch; close Sunday at Marin City, Corte Madera and Novato; reduce all open days at the large branches to 1 shift (open either 10 – 6 or 1 – 9 for example) for savings of about \$380,000. I will work with staff, the Library Commission and our local support groups to craft a recommendation to bring to your Board that addresses the remaining \$1million shortfall during the FY 2011/12. Additional savings will have to come from closing more hours (with commensurate staff reductions,) slashing the materials budget and further reductions in all discretionary accounts.

PROGRESS ON THE DEPARTMENT HEAD'S 2009/10 GOALS. (These are based on MCFL's Performance Plan)

Performance Plan Goal 1 2009/2010: "Reach out to community members and organizations to increase awareness of the importance of libraries to communities and to library users." Gail's goal: "Position MCFL to pass a ballot measure in 2010." I worked with the Corte Madera/MCFL Joint Powers Authority to integrate the residents of Corte Madera into the Library District. With the agreement that the Library will collect and keep their tax revenue directly, instead of through the intermediary of the Town, we are able to have only 1 ballot measure for the entire Library District. I developed a coherent series of messages for the Library to use in its public messages and education campaign. I worked closely with the political leaders in the Library District, the Library Commission, the Library Foundation, the Friends of the Marin County Free Library and the 7 branch specific Friends groups throughout the County to educate them about the library's budget issues and to their encourage support of the library ballot measure.

Performance Plan Goal 2 2009/2010: “Provide materials and services that meet the information and recreational reading needs of community members.” In order to maximize the library’s collection development funds we are concentrating in two areas. **System wide selection.** Last year we piloted a system-wide method of collection development to improve the experience of our users while minimizing duplicate work among the branches. On July 1, we will reach an important milestone - all materials will be selected system wide. Our professional staff will still be selecting, but instead of concentrating on their own branch, will be in charge of an area (such as travel, biography, Spanish) for the entire system. This will give them a “bird’s eye” view of what is needed across the system and enable them to allocate funds more efficiently. **Floating materials.** We continued the floating implementation begun last year and by September plan to have virtually the entire collection “shared.” Except for small local specialty areas in each branch, all materials returned to one of our branches will remain there. Although our circulation was up 6.63% this year, the number of items in our delivery trucks has actually decreased 2.27%. This is a major consideration for us, because any substantial increase in our delivery puts us at risk to have to enlarge our vendor contract to include a second truck, an expensive proposition.

Performance Plan Goal 4 2009/2010: “Provide library staff the training, time and equipment they require to provide the excellent customer service library patrons expect and appreciate.” Multi-Year Goal: Continue to implement recommendations from the Staffing Study. I plan to continue implementing as many recommendations as practical, using the Study as a blueprint for our restructuring. As part of the MFR planning, I worked with the staff and support groups to prioritize our needs and have been using that in conjunction with the Study to plan changes. The Study recommended realigning some branches to provide better customer service. Since early October, both the Novato and the South Novato branches have been under the responsibility of the Senior Librarian in Novato. The larger staff at Novato can provide back up and expertise for the smaller branch, including Spanish, children’s and teen specialists and circulation support. As of January, the Marin City branch is under the responsibility of the Corte Madera Senior Librarian. The smaller branch is now more efficiently using its on-site staff and is relying on the large branch for support when needed. In both libraries, a Community Library Specialist is in charge of day to day operations, depending on the larger branch for professional expertise and back-up. This model is quite effective in West Marin and we will be doing a full evaluation of Marin City and South Novato by September. If successful, implementation will allow us to staff both branches more cost effectively.

DEPARTMENT HEAD’S 2010/11 GOALS. (These are based on MCFL’s Performance Plan. This year the Board asked for both staff oriented and customer oriented goals as well as specific markers for progress and success.)

Goal 1: Develop an effective social media strategy to promote library programs and services. **BASED ON MCFL PERFORMANCE PLAN GOAL ONE:**

Reach out to community members and organizations to increase awareness of the importance of libraries to communities and to library users

MCFL needs to develop an effective social media strategy to promote our library programs and services, with an emphasis on their value to our customers’ lives and communities. We need to communicate better what excellent resources we have (our on-line homework tutoring program, for instance) and also to reach out to people where

they already are (Facebook, other community and business websites.) Progress/success of this goal will be measured by usage statistics for our electronic services.

Goal 2: Shift the library organization to more data driven decisions. BASED ON MCFL PERFORMANCE PLAN GOAL TWO: Provide materials and services that meet the informational and recreational reading needs of community members

In order to effectively meet the needs of our communities, the Library needs to be doing a more effective job of collecting data and using it to drive decisions. The library has never had clearly spelled out programming and collection development policies and have staff has begun working on both. Once in place, we will be able to connect the data we collect more effectively with the services we provide and to be able to budget to support documented needs. The challenge as I see it is to effectively provide service to the broader community while not neglecting the needs of smaller segments. Measures of success: Completed policies; increase in attendance at programs; higher turnover of materials.

Goal 3: Increase self-service opportunities for customers in library branches. BASED ON MCFL PERFORMANCE PLAN GOAL THREE: Serve the needs of the public and encourage residents to use libraries by maintaining attractive, safe and sustainable facilities

Whatever the results of the ballot measure, we need to reconfigure our undersized facilities to better meet community needs. In order to move towards a more sustainable staffing level, we plan to move towards a “market place” approach in our branches, as detailed in our Staffing Study. Removing large circulation and reference desks will make room for additional self check machines and for attractive shelving for browsing – like in a book store. If Measure A does not pass, we will still need to make some of these changes, perhaps with funds raised by the Library Foundation or through other support groups. Measure of success: Planning to start in 2010.

Goal 4: As part of our long term restructuring plan, assign responsibility for training. BASED ON MCFL PERFORMANCE PLAN GOAL FOUR: Provide library staff the training, time and equipment they require to provide the excellent customer service library patrons expect and appreciate

Much of our training used to be done on a consortial level and for budget, staff and other reasons that is no longer available. The 2009 Staffing study strongly recommended identifying a staff person to dedicate at least a portion of their time to finding out what training is needed, creating or locating that training and then implementing the training in a cost effective way. Measure of success: responsibilities will be delegated to a training officer; conduct baseline and follow up internal surveys to determine effectiveness.

Goal 5: Improve percentage of evaluations completed. BASED ON EMPLOYEE SURVEY SUMMARY and MCFL PERFORMANCE PLAN GOAL FOUR. While our percentage of evaluations completed is above the County’s, it has fallen since the previous survey and that concerned me enough to include “Raise the number of yearly completed employee of evaluations” as an initiative in the Library’s 2010/11 Performance Plan.

Goal 6: Improve departmental communication by implementing recommendations from the Communications Audit. BASED ON STAFFING STUDY. The 2009 Library Staffing Study indicated that both management and staff felt that communication was not working effectively. Sharing information across 10 worksites has proven a challenge

and this year we engaged the services of a consultant who has worked with a staff committee to assess our communications environment. We expect to see recommendations by June, 2010 and will be able to start implementing some of them during the next fiscal year. Measure of success: Implementation of at least some recommendations; improved communications as indicated by a follow-up employee survey.

And some other items of interest —

NOVATO: The Novato branch was closed until 5 p.m. on May 17th due to a widespread power outage. PG&E could not give us a timeline for restoration, so South Novato was temporarily opened between Noon and 4 to provide service for the community. Power returned in time for Novato to open at 5 p.m. for the evening shift.

VOLUNTEERS:

One of the major initiatives of the Board of Supervisors this fiscal year is more utilization of volunteers and interns. MCFL has always encouraged expansion of our services through the time and talents of volunteers and all of our library volunteers are enrolled in the County's Volunteer Program. The Civic Center Volunteers program, part of Human Resources, helps us recruit and track hours for each volunteer and covers them for Workers Compensation and liability insurance. An additional benefit for the library is that each year in May we receive a "Volunteers Financial Impact Analysis" which gives us a detailed view of our volunteer usage. In 2009, we had 554 volunteers in positions as varied as California Room docents, Literacy tutors, and book menders. They work in branches mending books, shelving, tutoring on computer use; for Library Beyond Walls, connecting with those who cannot leave their homes and bringing them library materials and companionship; they read stories to folks in Assisted Living facilities and adult day care; they care for our bulletin boards; they help make sure our children's rooms have attractive displays and are a most appreciated extra pair of hands during children's programs and summer reading. The 32,000 hours these generous men and women and teens devoted to the Library was worth an astounding \$1,287,215.44!

PUBLICITY:

In addition to the routine Calendar and Library hours mentions (61 total) we had a number of lengthier articles this month. There were 7 "featurettes" – 3 about our Petting Zoo; 1 about the new Overdrive collection that starts soon; 1 about the Friends Supersale and Measure A; 1 thanking all of our sponsors for One Book One Marin; and 1 about the Fairfax Friends raffle. Then there were 4 major articles – the Petting Zoo made the cover of the Novato Advance two weeks in a row, including pictures; 1 about author Paul McHugh's West Marin appearance, including a photo; and 1 about Volunteer Shirley Moyce from Stinson Beach. In addition, Branch Manager Bonny White went on KWMR with Nancy Hemmingway (Community Library Specialist) and Commissioner Leslie Plant to talk about the library Scott Bauer (Deputy Director) participated in a forum at Hamilton which was turned into a podcast. And Commissioner Barbara Madrid and I did an half hour television show with the Soroptomists for Novato Public Access TV (and shared with Comcast Public Access) about the library's budget issues.