

# **THE LIBRARIES OF NEVADA COUNTY**

## **REASON FOR INVESTIGATION**

The Nevada County Grand Jury (Jury) investigated the Nevada County Library system. This was done as a follow up to the 2005/2006 Grand Jury report and also to help identify possible deficiencies in staffing, hours of operation, facilities etc. The review was also done to recognize areas that function well and excel among the counties six branches: The Doris Foley Library of Historical Research. The Grass Valley Library, Royce Branch, The Truckee Library, The Madelyn Helling Library, The Penn Valley Library, and The Bear River Library.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Nevada County Library system recently moved into the Group 3 category from Group 4 based on the county's increasing population. Group 3 is defined as those with county populations between 100,000 and 150,000. These groupings are established by the California State Library Development Services Bureau. There are 7 categories based on population. (Group 4 libraries cover populations of 60,000 to 100,000.)

## **METHODS OF INVESTIGATION**

The Jury interviewed the county librarian for an overall view of the state of the libraries. It interviewed the Director of Human Resources for information on the salary history for the various positions within the library as well as the current salary situation. Members of the Jury visited each of the six libraries for on site inspections and interviews with staff. The Jury reviewed statewide statistics of Group 3 libraries for median numbers relating to staffing numbers, revenue figures, total volumes, attendance, children's usage, square footage and other relevant areas. Hours of operation were also reviewed. Lastly, the Jury reviewed prior years' Grand Jury reports.

## **FINDINGS**

1. The Nevada County Libraries are currently in the Group 3 category with populations of 100,000 to 150,000.
2. The branches offer numerous varieties of volumes including books, magazines, newspapers, audio books, video recordings, music recordings, as well as internet services at all branches. The historical branch mainly carries items such as census

indexes, genealogy records, various maps, past newspapers, vital records, assessor's maps, and extensive information on local history.

3. All branches are vigorously used by the public with total annual circulation in excess of 652,000 volumes. This number is expected to increase by 10% this year.
4. The libraries offer many free programs intended to stimulate an interest in reading and promote cultural awareness and literacy.
5. Children's services are also available and several branches offer special hours and programs for children.
6. Volunteers are a tremendous asset to the libraries for special programs and fund raising.
7. Increased hours at the Penn Valley branch in the form of an additional day of operation with afternoon hours have improved utilization.
8. The Bear River branch, which also serves as the Bear River High School library, is open to the public when school is not in session.
9. The Bear River branch has a "sandwich board" type of sign that is displayed infrequently and therefore lacks consistent/effective signage that shows the location of hours that can easily be seen. This is especially ineffective as the branch is available to the public during non-school hours only..
10. Lack of physical storage and display space within the Truckee, Grass Valley and Madelyn Helling branches results in problems managing computer access stations, card catalog features, and the general mobility of books and accessories. Safety codes require the anchoring of bookcases therefore they are limited to places where they can be anchored.
11. Available parking is a problem at most of the branches.
12. The libraries have an inter-branch system of transferring volumes between each other on a special order basis. However, the Truckee branch has a system that uses UPS shipping and can take up to a week to pick up and deliver to other branches. This creates a storage problem at the Truckee branch that is already stretched to the limit on space.
13. The libraries encourage promotion of personnel from within to the different levels of qualifications in the system.
14. A recently negotiated salary increase has brought all the staff to a more equitable level in comparison with surrounding county libraries. There are cost of living increases for the term of the contract.
15. The libraries have 28.6 full time equivalent employees. This is the same number as reported in the 2005/2006 Jury report.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. There is a lack of adequate space for materials and programs within the Truckee, Grass Valley, and Madelyn Helling branches.
2. The libraries, based on similar statewide numbers reviewed, now fall more in line with median numbers within the state in terms of salaries, as compared to the salaries reviewed in the 2005/2006 Grand Jury report.
3. The library's staff of 28.6 full time equivalent employees is the same as reported by the 2005/2006 Grand Jury. This does not provide for the increased usage in the form of more staffing and hours to accommodate increasing population.
4. The libraries strive to promote from within benefiting from qualified staff people very familiar with the branches in which they work.
5. The Bear River branch cannot be easily located nor hours of operation determined as the result of poor signage.
6. Support from the community in the form of volunteers is a critical element to the libraries ability to provide the many services currently available.
7. Present staffing appears to be adequate to maintain only the current hours of operation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Board of Supervisors should fund for additional library staff as necessary to enable for more hours among the branches and fund more needed literacy programs.
2. The Jury confirms the recommendations of the 2005/2006 Jury that The Board of Supervisors should continue to support the Nevada County Library by augmenting the Library General Fund as specific needs are defined, such as ways to increase space needed.
3. The Board of Supervisors should maintain and improve the state and conditions of the county's libraries by ensuring they are an integral part of the county's Capital Facilities Master Plan.
4. The Bear River branch should erect a clear and visible sign indicating location and hours of operation for the branch located within the high school.

## **RESPONSES**

Board of Supervisors                      September 4, 2008

# COUNTY OF NEVADA

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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July 8, 2008

The Honorable Judge Robert Tamietti  
Presiding Judge of the Nevada County Grand Jury  
Nevada County Courthouse  
201 Church Street  
Nevada City, CA 95959

Re: Board of Supervisors' Responses to the 2007-2008 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report, *The Libraries of Nevada County*.

Dear Judge Tamietti:

The attached responses by the Board of Supervisors to the 2007-2008 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report, dated April 24, 2008, entitled *The Libraries of Nevada County*, are submitted as required by California Penal Code Section 933.

These responses to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations were approved by the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 8, 2008. Responses to Findings and Recommendations are based on either personal knowledge, examination of official County records, information received from the County Librarian, the County Executive Officer, or the Board of Supervisors and County staff members.

The Board of Supervisors would like to thank the members of the 2007-2008 Grand Jury for their participation and effort in preparing their Reports, and their participation in the Grand Jury process.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted S. Owens  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

THE LIBRARIES OF NEVADA COUNTY

*Responses to findings and recommendations are based on either personal knowledge, examination of official county records, review of the responses by the County Librarian and County Executive Officer, or testimony from the Board of Supervisors and county staff members.*

**A. RESPONSES TO FINDINGS**

- 1. The Nevada County Libraries are currently in the Group 3 category with populations of 100,000 to 150,000.**

Agree.

- 2. The branches offer numerous varieties of volumes including books, magazines, newspapers, audio books, video recordings, music recordings, as well as Internet services at all branches. The historical branch mainly carries items such as census indexes, genealogy records, various maps, past newspapers, vital records, assessor's maps, and extensive information on local history.**

Agree.

- 3. All branches are vigorously used by the public with total annual circulation in excess of 652,000 volumes. This number is expected to increase by 10% this year.**

Agree.

- 4. The libraries offer many free programs intended to stimulate an interest in reading and promote cultural awareness and literacy.**

Agree.

- 5. Children's services are also available and several branches offer special hours and programs for children.**

Agree.

- 6. Volunteers are a tremendous asset to the libraries for special programs and fund raising.**

Agree.

- 7. Increased hours at the Penn Valley branch in the form of an additional day of operation with afternoon hours have improved utilization.**

Agree.

8. **The Bear River branch, which also serves as the Bear River High School library, is open to the public when school is not in session.**

Agree.

9. **The Bear River branch has a "sandwich board" type of sign that is displayed infrequently and therefore lacks consistent/effective signage that shows the location of hours that can easily be seen. This is especially ineffective as the branch is available to the public during non-school hours only.**

Partially disagree.

There is a metal sign on Magnolia Road going toward Bear River High School from Highway 49 indicating the location of the library

10. **Lack of physical storage and display space within the Truckee, Grass Valley and Madelyn Helling branches results in problems managing computer access stations, card catalog features, and the general mobility of books and accessories. Safety codes require the anchoring of bookcases therefore they are limited to places where they can be anchored.**

Agree.

11. **Available parking is a problem at most of the branches.**

Partially disagree.

Truckee, Penn Valley and Bear River libraries do not have a parking problem. The Grass Valley and Doris Foley Libraries do not have designated parking, street and city parking lots are used. The Madelyn Helling Library lot is frequently full from general library use, attendees of special programs, Library Community Room rentals, and users of Tobiasson Field during the spring and summer Saturdays.

12. **The libraries have an inter-branch system of transferring volumes between each other on a special order basis. However, the Truckee branch has a system that uses UPS shipping and can take up to a week to pick up and deliver to other branches. This creates a storage problem at the Truckee branch that is already stretched to the limit on space.**

Agree.

13. **The libraries encourage promotion of personnel from within to the different levels of qualifications in the system.**

Agree.

14. **A recently negotiated salary increase has brought all the staff to a more equitable level in comparison with surrounding county libraries. There are cost of living increases for the term of the contract.**

Agree.

15. **The libraries have 28.6 full time equivalent employees. This is the same number as reported in the 2005/2006 Jury report.**

Partially disagree.

The libraries do currently have 28.6 full time equivalent employees. The 2005/2006 Grand Jury accurately reported 28.85 full time equivalent employees for that year.

## **B. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **The Board of Supervisors should fund for additional library staff as necessary to enable for more hours among the branches and fund more needed literacy programs.**

The recommendation will not be implemented at the present time.

The current economic downturn in California is affecting all County departments and operations. This in turn has greatly increased demand on limited County discretionary funds. The Board of Supervisors must balance the allocations of those ever-decreasing funds across numerous programs that include public safety and law enforcement to name a few. Library staff are successfully seeking and securing more grant funds to help support the literacy program. They also have been successful to date in allocating available staff so that branch service hours remain consistent. In fact, they shifted some service hours from a very low utilized branch and time period to a high demand station and time period in Penn Valley, increasing overall service to that community.

2. **The Jury confirms the recommendations of the 2005/2006 Jury that the Board of Supervisors should continue to support the Nevada County Library by augmenting the Library General Fund as specific needs are defined, such as ways to increase space needed.**

The recommendation will not be implemented at the present time.

As mentioned previously, the current economic downturn in California is affecting all County departments and operations. This in turn has greatly increased demand on the limited County discretionary funds. The Board of Supervisors must balance the

allocations of those available funds across numerous programs that include public safety and law enforcement to name a few. The Board has previously increased the Library's general fund allocation in the past for important one time needs. Over the last five years, the Board of Supervisors has provided an additional \$550,000 to the Library to pay for increased internal service costs, for summer interns, and for books and materials. The Board evaluates the Library's needs and additional funding requests as they are presented by the department in the annual County budget process. Capital space projects are included in the County's annually updated Capital Facilities Master Plan which currently includes the Library's space requests.

- 3. The Board of Supervisors should maintain and improve the state and conditions of the county's libraries by ensuring they are an integral part of the county's Capital Facilities Master Plan.**

The recommendation has been implemented.

Library space needs are addressed in the current Capital Facilities Master Plan.

- 4. The Bear River branch should erect a clear and visible sign indicating location and hours of operation for the branch located within the high school.**

This recommendation has been implemented.

In cooperation with the Bear River High School personnel, the public library has installed a universal library sign on the grounds of Bear River High School specifying public library hours..