

Date: August 14, 1997

To: M. L. "Lin" Koester, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Richard D. Rowe, Interim Library Services Administrator

Subject: Responses To Grand Jury Recommendations

The Final 1996-97 Ventura County Grand Jury Report included findings, conclusions and recommendations regarding the Ventura County Library Services Agency. In accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05, the Agency is responding to the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation: 1. Continue to fully inform and involve the public about the progress being made to provide quality library services in order to restore public confidence.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. Information on the hours of library service and the restructuring of the Agency operations will be made available to the public through newsletters, newspapers, radio interviews and television bulletin boards. Informational flyers, bookmarks, posters and banners will be provided to the individual libraries. Special events celebrating new services will be held at the libraries. Staff will continue to communicate progress through 1384 library and adult literacy volunteers. Staff will also network with 10 Friends of the Library groups, the Save Our Libraries group, the Citizens Advisory Council, the local Chamber's of Commerce and service clubs.

Recommendation: 2. Finalize VCLSA restructuring to maintain more staff on the "front line," expand library hours, and trim administrative staff.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. The final restructuring plan of the Agency is anticipated to be completed by October 1, 1997. It will then be submitted to the Library Technical Committee, the Library Implementation Committee, and the Board of Supervisors for review and approval. The plan proposes to reduce support administrative and central service costs, while increasing direct expenditures for the larger branch library operations. This translates to expanded hours of operation. In anticipation of implementing this restructuring plan during this fiscal year, a change in operating hours will be instituted beginning September 2, 1997 to correspond with the opening of the new school year.

Recommendation: 3. Increase the library book budget in order to improve a substandard collection.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. The adopted 1997-98 Annual Budget does not include any appropriations for Agency book purchases. However, an amended Agency budget will be prepared to not only include the redistributed costs for the restructuring plan but also an estimated \$400,000 for the purchase of additional books. It is anticipated that this budget will be submitted to the Library Technical Committee by October 1, 1997 and then the Library Implementation Committee, and the Board of Supervisors for review and approval.

Recommendation: 4. Develop and implement a central purchasing consortium.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. As a member of the Black Gold Cooperative Library System, which includes the Blanchard-Santa Paula Library, and the public libraries in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, we have jointly purchased a number of services and products. These have included a contract with the Information Access Company (IAC) for provision of an online periodical index, the purchase of computer reference services, the acquisition of expensive reference services, and the purchase of computer equipment. At present, the Agency is considering the possibility of joining Black Gold's computerized circulation system. The Agency's initial capital expenditure is substantial. Additionally, our Childrens' Services staff is working with other libraries in Southern California on a cooperative Summer Reading Program. In the future, the Agency will be actively pursuing other opportunities in a consortia.

Recommendation: 5. Pursue measures to generate necessary revenues.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. The Agency actively pursues additional revenues through grants, fundraising, and collaborative efforts with the Friends of the Library groups, non-profit and business organizations. In fiscal year 1996-97 the Agency received \$194,514 from grants. This fiscal year the Agency has been awarded \$60,000 from the State Library for Internet access equipment at six branch libraries. Eight Friends of the Library groups donated \$102,595 in fiscal year 1996-97. Additionally, fundraising campaigns, bequests, business and patron donations and sales of the Summer Reading Program to the Highsmith publication produced \$150,320 in fiscal year 1996-97. Although not an actual revenue

source, it is worth noting that volunteers provided an immeasurable resource of time, talent and advocacy. In fiscal year 1996-97, the 1384 volunteers worked 40,100 hours. The Federal Government estimates the value of a volunteer worker at \$12.53 an hour. Therefore, in fiscal year 1996-97, the monetary value of the Agency volunteer force was \$502,453.

Recommendation: 6. Appoint a Library Services Advisory Board or a Library Services Planning Commission.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. On June 17, 1997 the Board Of Supervisors approved a Library Services Plan which provides for the establishment of an advisory Library Authority with the responsibility of library services oversight and review. Membership on the Authority will be composed of elected representatives from each of eight library service areas to be created. The Authority will participate in the selection and annual performance review of the Library Services Director. The Authority will review, approve and recommend the Library Services Agency annual budget to the Board of Supervisors. Changes to the Authority recommendations would require a 4/5ths vote of the Board of Supervisors. A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) containing these provisions has been prepared by the Office of County Counsel. The document is currently under review by a sub committee of the County Chief Administrative Officer and the seven City Managers with County libraries located within their communities. It is anticipated that the JPA formally creating the Library Authority will be submitted to the elected officials of each of the library service areas for their review and approval by October 1, 1997.

Recommendation: 7. Form a Library Foundation to generate additional funding.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. However, a Ventura County Library Foundation was established on April 16, 1996, when the Board of Supervisors authorized the creation of a Library Fund under the auspices of the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF). As of June 30, 1997, \$17, 865 had been received for the Library Fund in donations.

Recommendation: 8. Continue to pursue full funding of the Special District Augmentation Fund from the State.

Response: The Agency agrees with the Grand Jury recommendation. However, the last year that the Agency received Special District Augmentation Funds was in the 1992/93 fiscal year. In the case of the Educational

Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF), the Agency is cooperating with the County in a continuing collaborative effort for the negotiated return of property tax which was shifted from the Agency to California schools by the State Legislature over the past six years.

c: Marty Robinson, Deputy Administrative Officer
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