

Ventura County Grand Jury 2012 - 2013



Final Report

**Ventura County Libraries
June 7, 2013**

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Ventura County Libraries

Summary

The 2012-2013 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) decided to look into the administration of the Ventura County Library System (VCLS). As a result of financial issues, the Helen Wright library, in Ventura, closed and some cities opted out of the Ventura County (County) system in favor of private contract administration (Camarillo, Moorpark and as of July 1, 2013, Simi Valley). (Att-06) After interviewing library staff and visiting the libraries that operate independently, the Grand Jury found that:

- the Helen Wright Library closure was the result of economic cuts
- with such cuts, it is difficult to contact schools and the public to assure both are aware of the many programs that are, or could be, available and to seek the communities' help toward ways to meet their specific needs
- some important library programs could be initiated to enhance the VCLS (Att-03, 04)
- those cities that have opted out of the VCLS claim to have gained an operation that is more efficient, provides better service and is less costly
- independent libraries tend to offer programs by volunteer presenters that are educational and/or entertaining; these appear to enhance public awareness, involvement and interest in libraries (Att-02, 03, 05)
- employees in the independent libraries believe the previous two statements to be true and further, they claim to be very satisfied with their employment in these libraries
- employees interviewed in the VCLS and the independent libraries seem to be dedicated and service oriented

The Grand Jury contends that the VCLS is functioning as well as possible in the current economy. Although there is no comparison of staff use between the VCLS and the independent libraries, it appears that the VCLS is not overstaffed, but may be understaffed in some areas. Program expansion may be impeded by lack of employees that are qualified and able to seek community assistance. It appears that there is no way to convince the independent libraries to return to the VCLS, but the VCLS deserves the opportunity to enhance its programming and better serve its communities.

The results of the Grand Jury's interviews and observations revealed that certain programs came to light that may improve economics, expand services, and/or initiate new services. Most libraries offer a summer reading program. (Att-04) This appears to be the most successful program offered by libraries within the

County. The children's summer reading program could be significantly expanded by visiting schools and increasing community outreach.

The Grand Jury recommends that the summer reading program be expanded, that volunteer help be pursued to a greater extent and an increase in used book sales for development of new programs. The VCLS should pursue tutoring for remedial English, reading and mathematics. It is also recommended the VCLS develop greater public awareness of student study resources. In addition, the VCLS should expand its outreach to inform the schools, administrators, students and parents as to the available services. The Grand Jury recommends that the Book Mobile program be expanded to serve more of the public with upgraded technology.

Background

The VCLS encompasses twelve libraries within its system, which historically have loaned hard copy books, had reading programs for children and outreach for educational programs. The central administration center is located near the Government Center in Ventura. Over the last 10 years, the development of computers and electronic readers has changed the face of library services. Public funding has not kept up with these changes. The basic mission of the VCLS is to "meet the general reading, life-long learning and informational needs of the people of Ventura County, with special focus on children, youth and families."

Independent libraries have found a way to construct attractive facilities by contributions from the city and private donors that attract the public, as does its methods of reaching the public. However, the technology of the independent libraries does not seem more or less advanced than the VCLS.

Methodology

The Grand Jury began this investigation to enlighten the public as to how the VCLS serves the community and helps to meet citizens' needs. The Grand Jury interviewed staff and management in the administrative center of the VCLS, county libraries and independent libraries. The Grand Jury researched newspaper articles and analyzed library documents, including financial information. Websites were evaluated for content and general information. It also studied periodicals that revealed what other libraries are doing to enhance public awareness of library services. The VCLS provided a complete package of information in response to the questions asked by the Grand Jury. This information was helpful to the Grand Jury as it determined its direction in this investigation. Included are excerpts from this package as attachments. (Att-01, 04, 07, 08)

Facts

- FA-01.** The Helen Wright Library in Ventura was closed November 30, 2009, after cutting hours of operation and it was determined that full closure was necessary due to inadequate funding. Two of the three Ventura libraries remain open. (Att-01)
- FA-02.** There is insufficient staff to conduct community outreach and to formulate new programs. (Att-01, 07)
- FA-03.** Cities that have opted out of the VCLS state that their decision was correct for their community and that they are providing more efficient operation and service at less cost. [Ref-01] (Att-02)
- FA-04.** The above statement is based on the claims of employees and management of independent libraries and do not reflect statistical data. The Grand Jury did not receive any statistical data to the contrary. [Ref-01] (Att-02)
- FA-05.** As observed by the Grand Jury, employees in both library settings appear to be equally satisfied, dedicated and service oriented.
- FA-06.** The Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD) is expending significant funds to provide remedial reading, English and mathematics classes to students who should have gained these skills prior to college.
- FA-07.** In addition to the library closure, hours have been reduced. This may relate to the perception of efficiency in independent libraries, as they tend to be open more hours and days. (Att-01)
- FA-08.** It was found in statistical materials presented by the VCLS, when the Camarillo and Moorpark libraries withdrew from the County system, they represented a greater number of employees that served approximately seven times the number of citizens as the average remaining VCLS library. When Simi Valley withdraws from the VCLS later in 2013, its numbers are also greater than the average VCLS remaining libraries. [Ref-02] (Att-08)
- FA-09.** Municipalities claim that contract administration provides greater efficiency, more services, longer hours at less cost than county administration, according to an article entitled, "Annual Report 2010: Local Government Privatization," published by the Reason Foundation. [Ref-01] (Att-02)
- FA-10.** Independent libraries were found to offer programs that are designed to encourage the public to observe, experience and explore the library, such as professional interest and entertainment presentations. (Att-03)

Findings

- FI-01.** The Grand Jury found that the VCLS is not conducting adequate outreach into the community to gain volunteers. It also limits their ability to meet with school administration in order to demonstrate their available services, and to obtain the assistance of the community to provide specific programming, all due to limited staff. (FA-02, 10)
- FI-02.** Used book sales provide extra income. However, not all of the libraries in the VCLS take part in this venture. Ojai appears to be most successful due to its volunteer base. (FA-02)
- FI-03.** The effectiveness of the VCLS appears to be reduced by budget cuts that cause reduction in hours of operation, employee coverage and by the competition of independent library administrations. (Att-01) (FA-01-03, 06, 10)
- FI-04.** It appears that the VCLS administration is impeded from providing the services to the public that are available in the independent library systems due to budget limitations and lack of County support. (FA-01, 02, 07)
- FI-05.** The summer reading program is very successful. It deserves an opportunity to expand through greater networking. The program would also be enhanced by asking for more volunteer assistance. (Att-04)
- FI-06.** Independent libraries claim that they operate more economically. However, this could not be substantiated by the Grand Jury. (FA-03, 04, 08)
- FI-07.** Based on interviews, observations and analysis of information, the Grand Jury determined that a well-functioning and community-supported library system can potentially provide invaluable services to the community.

Recommendations

- R-01.** The Grand Jury recommends that a strategy to expand the most successful summer reading library program be established.
- R-02.** The Grand Jury recommends that a means to reach out to potential volunteers be initiated. There are a number of programs that could be staffed with volunteers. Also, the VCLS may find that the community will help support the development of new programs, such as:
- used book sales
 - tutoring for remedial reading, English and mathematics, to relieve the VCCCD and enhance the services provided by the VCLS
 - enhanced study programs

- research assistance and guidance
- encourage more help from the list of organizations, identified as “Friends of the Library” and the local public (Att-07)
- provide programs that showcase the library and expand public awareness, such as professional workshops and entertainment (ATT- 03)
- pursue electronic and Internet programs that offer the library participants volumes of information and references that could not be housed within a small library (ATT-05)
- investigate the potential of linking the libraries within the VCLS, whereby every library within the system has total access to the collective information sources of the system libraries
- pursue and encourage book clubs, business groups and organized educational entities to use the facilities in their local library

R-03. The Grand Jury recommends that the library system be viewed on the basis of what it can provide to the community rather than from a monetary position. This may provide the incentive to find a means to allow libraries to meet or exceed the claims of independent systems and to become a credit to the County.

R-04. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCLS administration invite city managers to discuss ways and means to assist in the improvement of libraries within their cities. This may initiate more involvement, enlightenment as to the potential of libraries, new ideas and possibly additional funds and resources.

Responses

Responses Required From:

City Council, City of Fillmore (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

City Council, City of Ojai (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

City Council, City of Port Hueneme (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

City Council, City of Santa Paula (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

City Council, City of Simi Valley (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

City Council, City of Ventura (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01. 02, 03, 04)

Responses Requested From:

Board of Supervisors (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

CEO County Administration (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

Ventura County Library – Director (FI-01, 02, 05, 07) (R-01, 02, 03, 04)

VCCCD (FA-06) (R-02)

City Council, City of Camarillo (FI-03-05) (FA-08-10)

City Council, City of Moorpark (FI-03-05) (FA-08-10)

City Council, City of Oxnard (FI-03-05) (FA-08-10)

City Council, City of Thousand Oaks (FI-03-05) (FA-08-10)

Commendations

The Grand Jury acknowledges that the Ventura County Library management is providing the best services possible under the circumstances of minimized budgets and limited County support.

References

Ref-01. Gilroy, Leonard; Kenrey, Harris; Summers, Adam and Stayley, Samuel. "Annual Privatization Report". Reason Foundation, February, 2011.

Ref-02. Harris, Mike. "Panel urges Simi library be run by firm". *Ventura County Star*, February 9, 2013.

Attachments

Att-01. Ventura County Library, Hours of Operation

Att-02. Annual Report 2010: Local Government Privatization

Att-03. February Activities & Programs 2013 Calendar

Att-04. Ventura County Library, Best programs and numbers at each branch

Att-05. Enjoy Streaming Video!

Att-06. Panel urges Simi library be run by firm

Att-07. Ventura County Library, Individual volunteer and hours at each branch – 2011-2012

Att-08. Ventura County Library, Circulation

Glossary

TERM

DEFINITION

Grand Jury

2012-2013 Grand Jury of Ventura County

Independent Library

Library under the control of a city, not within the VCLS

Privatized Library

A contract library administration, generally associated with an independent library

VCCCD

Ventura County Community College District

VCLS

Ventura County Library system

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Attachment 01

**Ventura County Library
Hours of Operation**

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Ventura County Library
Hours of Operation

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total per Week
Avenue Library 606 N. Ventura Ave. Ventura 93001 643-6393	11 - 1; 2 - 6	2 - 6	12 - 6	2 - 6	CLOSED	10 - 3	CLOSED	25
Fillmore Library 502 Second St. Fillmore 93015 524-3355	2 - 7	2 - 7	10 - 5	12 - 5	12 - 5	12 - 5	CLOSED	32
E.P. Foster Library 651 E. Main St. Ventura 93001 648-2715	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 5	10 - 5	1 - 5	58
Meiners Oaks Library 114 N. Padre Juan Ave. Meiners Oaks 93023 646-4804	10 - 1; 2-6	10 - 1; 2-6	1 - 6	1 - 6	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	24
Oak Park Library 899 N. Kanan Rd. Oak Park 91377 818-889-2239	2 - 8	2 - 8	10 - 6	10 - 6	10 - 5	10 - 5	CLOSED	42
Oak View Library 555 Mahoney Ave. Oak View 93022 649-1523	1 - 6	1 - 6	1 - 6	1 - 6	CLOSED	10 - 2	CLOSED	24
Ojai Library 111 E. Ojai Ave. Ojai 93023 646-1639	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	12 - 5	12 - 5	12 - 5	55
Piru Library 3811 Center St. Piru 93040 521-1753	3 - 7	3 - 7	3 - 7	1 - 5	3 - 7	10 - 2	CLOSED	24

12 Libraries

Ventura County Library
Hours of Operation

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total per Week
Ray D. Prueter Library 510 Park Ave. Port Hueneme 93041 486-5460	10 - 7	10 - 6	10 - 6	12 - 5	12 - 5	12 - 5	CLOSED	40
Saticoy Library 11426 Violeta St. Saticoy 93004 647-5736	1 - 6	1 - 6	1 - 6	1 - 6	CLOSED	10 - 2	CLOSED	24
Simi Valley Library 2969 Tapo Canyon Rd. Simi Valley 93063 526-1735	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	10 - 8	1 - 5	10 - 5	1 - 5	55
Albert H. Soliz Library (EI Rio) 2820 Jourdan St. Oxnard 93036 485-4515	2 - 6	2 - 6	10 - 1; 2 - 6	2 - 7	2 - 6	CLOSED	CLOSED	24
							Grand TOTAL	427

12 Libraries

Attachment 02

Annual Report 2010: Local Government Privatization

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Reason Foundation
February 2011

Annual Privatization Report 2010: Local Government Privatization

By Leonard Gilroy, Harris Kenny, Adam Summers and Samuel Staley
Edited by Leonard Gilroy



Part 7

Library Privatization Takes Hold in California

Amid ongoing local government fiscal challenges, the privatization of public libraries has caught the attention of policymakers in several California municipalities, with several recently opting to contract out the management of their libraries to Library Systems & Services, Inc. (LSSI), a prominent national library operator.

In several cases, municipalities sought out privatization concurrent with moves to withdraw their libraries from county-run library systems that are cutting services and staff amid lingering budget woes. Bob Windrow, LSSI's vice president of business development and marketing, told PublicCEO.com in November 2010 that, "We've had a lot more interest from California cities and counties in the last six months than we've ever had." Jurisdictions taking steps toward privatization include:

- In August 2010, the **Santa Clarita** City Council voted four to one to remove three local libraries from the Los Angeles County Library System and award a six-year contract to LSSI, which has promised to lengthen the hours of operation and increase the books and media budget. However, the library activist group Save Our Library has filed several lawsuits in Los Angeles Superior Court to thwart the LSSI contract, citing privacy concerns.
- Officials in **Stockton** and **San Joaquin County** are considering an LSSI proposal that would increase operating hours in the joint city-county library system by 50%. County officials prompted the exploration of privatization as an alternative to the current arrangement—in which the county contracts with the city to run libraries in unincorporated areas and most of the county's other municipalities—where budget cuts, reductions in hours and the closure of the Fair Oaks Branch library have plagued the system in recent years. At press time, city and county officials were still considering their options, leaving the LSSI proposal open as they continued discussions on a potential new city-county agreement that would address some of the county's concerns with the city's current services.

- Two municipalities in Ventura County may be following **Moorpark**'s lead, which in 2007 withdrew from the county library system and contracted with LSSI. In October 2010, the **Camarillo** City Council voted unanimously to withdraw from the Ventura County Library System and operate as a municipal library managed by LSSI. The city estimates it will save \$600,000 annually through this contract, while affording city officials better control over the Camarillo Library. That same month in nearby **Ventura**, the city council directed city staff to prepare a study on the potential privatization of library operations.
- In February 2010, officials in **Nevada County, California** rejected a proposal to privatize the management of its public libraries, opting instead to reduce operating hours and cut staff to lower costs in the face of severe budget shortfalls. County Executive Officer Rick Haffey suggested that officials explore privatization as an alternative to layoffs and service cuts, though that plan met severe public criticism and was ultimately rejected by three separate committees charged with developing a plan to close the funding gap. A proposal received from the LSSI would have increased library hours of operation and enhanced other programming.
- In February 2010, the **Redding** City Council voted unanimously to extend its contract with LSSI to operate the three libraries in Shasta County for three additional years. According to Kim Niemer, Redding's director of community services, the contract renewal "is recognition of the progress and success of the library in the last three years [...] As a result of the LSSI partnership, Shasta Public Libraries now provide residents in Redding, Anderson and Burney with better service, more convenient hours, new technology, clean facilities, courteous staff, and programs designed by and for their communities." Local library activist Jim Ceragioli, who originally opposed the privatization, expressed similar support, noting that "my advice to other communities' Friends of the Library groups, who may share my original skepticism is, 'Go for it!' With this public-private partnership, our libraries are thriving."

Riverside County became the first municipal government in California—and the nation—to contract with a private library operator in 1997, entering a partnership with LSSI that is still in place today. In June 2010, the county published a report on the first 13 years of the LSSI partnership, highlighting an array of benefits, including:

- enhanced services, with operating hours, circulation and staffing more than doubling;
- decreased operating costs, totaling \$900,000 in the first year alone;
- an expansion in the number of branches from 24 to 33 (a 27% increase);
- over \$15 million invested in new facilities or major renovations;
- increased services and expanded growth while maintaining a flat 1.15% ad valorem library property tax;
- an average 111% annual increase in the collection development budget;

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- enhanced financial accountability, and
- significant investments in new library technology, including the addition of over 200 public-access high-speed Internet terminals.

The pioneering privatization has been a model of success, according to report author Gary Christmas, Riverside County's former chief deputy county executive officer:

We have defied the most outspoken opponents of outsourcing public libraries to a bottom-line-oriented business operation. For the first 86 years of existence of Riverside County libraries, we outsourced the library operations to the City of Riverside. But the effectiveness of that model began to unravel as state funding for public libraries was diverted [...] We had to make a dramatic change in order to save and improve our libraries and gain more control and accountability over policy making and expenditures. And we did so without raising taxes, without massive layoffs, and without foregoing the County's sovereignty. Our libraries remain 100% public and owned by taxpayers and we have more financial accountability and control over our library system than ever before.

California municipalities are not the only governments interested in library privatization. In November 2010, the city council in **Farmers Branch, Texas**, a Dallas suburb, voted unanimously to award a contract to LSSI to operate its Manske Library, rejecting a competing proposal submitted by current library staff. According to Assistant City Manager Shanna Sims-Bradish, "We believe the quality of the services that LSSI can provide will result in an excellent library for our citizens at affordable costs to the City." City officials have estimated an annual cost savings of approximately \$290,000 through privatization.

Attachment 03

February Activities & Programs 2013 Calendar

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February

ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS 2013 CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 2pm Book Club for Adults: <i>Shanghai Girls</i> by Lisa See	4 Book A Librarian Mon-Thurs 10-12pm & 3-5pm	5 11am Little Bilingual Readers	6 10:30am Family Storytime & Crafts 4-6pm Craft-A-Palooza	7 4-5pm Reading Buddies 6:30pm PJ Storytime	8 1:30-3pm Valentine Crafts	9 1:30-3pm 4 Paws Book Club
10	11 4-6pm Teen Movie Monday	12 11am Little Bilingual Readers 4-5pm Teen DIY Valentine	13 10:30am Family Storytime & Crafts 4-6pm Teen Wii Wednesday	14 4-5pm Reading Buddies 6:30pm PJ Storytime	15 	16
17	18 Library Closed for President's Day	19 11am Little Bilingual Readers	20 10:30am Family Storytime & Crafts 4-5pm Teen Book Group: Beautiful Creatures	21 4-5pm Reading Buddies 6:30pm PJ Storytime	22 1:30-3pm Gametime	23
24	25	26	27 10:30am Family Storytime & Crafts 4-6pm Teen Wii Wednesday	28 4-5pm Reading Buddies 6:30pm PJ Storytime	Friends Bookstore open every day!	

Moorpark City Library
 699 Moorpark Avenue
 Moorpark, CA 93021
805.517.6370
moorparklibrary.org

LIBRARY HOURS
 Mon.-Thurs. 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
 Fri.-Sat. 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
 Sunday 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

  

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Attachment 04

Ventura County Library

Best programs and numbers at each branch

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10. Best programs and numbers at each branch.

Our Summer Reading Program is extremely popular. Children read around 30,000 hours per summer.

FY 2011 – 2012		
Avenue Library	Summer Reading Program	136 participants
	Fall Fun Day	18 attendees
	El Dia de Los Ninos	25 attendees
Fillmore Library	Success Through Reading Series	20 participants (average)
	Fillmore Reads Series	13 participants (average)
	Jose Mijangos Guitar performance	19 attendees
	Shawn McMaster Magician	60 attendees
	Reptile Family	75 attendees
E.P. Foster Library	Summer Reading Program	217 participants
	Teens Teaching Tech	10 participants per session
	Halloween at the Mall	1,000 participants
Meiners Oaks Library	Summer Reading Program	767 participants
	Summer Reading Program Kickoff	54 participants
Oak Park Library	Anne Frank Program	41 attendees
	Summer Reading Program	207 participants
	We'll Read Book Club	18 participants
Oak View Library	Summer Reading Program	112 participants
	End of Summer Ice Cream Social	62 participants
Ojai Library	Zombie Night	20 children
	SchoolLinks Homework Center	20 students per day (average)
	Human Library	8 human books, 28 readers
	Knights-in-Training	30 children
	Summer Reading Program	311 participants
Piru Library	Summer Reading Program	82 participants
Ray D. Prueter Library	Spring Children's Festival	190 participants
	Bubble Party & Ice Cream Floats	144 participants
	Summer Reading Program	407 participants
Saticoy Library	Summer Reading Program	73 participants
Simi Valley Library	Mars Science Laboratory Mission	130 participants
	Summer Reading Program	1,500 participants
Albert H. Soliz Library (El Rio)	Summer Reading Program	151 participants
	Swazzle Puppets	20 participants

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Attachment 05

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- British & Irish Literature

- Drama & the Theater
- Elements of Language
- Film & Video
- Introduction to Literature
- Masterpiece Theatre
- Speech & Communication
- World Literature

Music & Dance

- Dance*
- Music Appreciation
- Music History
- World Music

Philosophy & Religion

- Philosophy
- Religion & Spirituality
- World Religions

World Languages

- Chinese
- French
- German
- Italian*
- Japanese
- Spanish

Home & Family

Education

- Curriculum & Instruction
- Educational Psychology
- Foundations
- Special Education

Family & Consumer Sciences

- Child Care
- Culinary Arts

- Fashion, Textiles & Interiors
- Life Skills
- Parenting & Child Development

Guidance & Counseling

- Academic Success
- Character Education & Development
- Dating & Marriage

- Mental Health
- Sex Education
- Substance Abuse

Home How-To

- Cooking
- Gardening*
- Home Improvement
- Popular Cooking Shows

Travel & Recreation

Social Sciences

Anthropology

- Archaeology
- Cultural Anthropology
- Physical Anthropology
- Survey / Basic Concepts

Area Studies

- African Studies
- Asia & The Pacific
- Latin American Studies

Crime & Law

- Criminal Investigation
- Criminal Justice System
- Criminology

History

- American History

- Biography
- European History
- Genealogy
- Military History
- World History

Political Science

- American Government
- Global Politics

Psychology

- Abnormal Psychology
- Applied Psychology
- Biological Psychology
- Cognitive Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Gender & Sexuality

- Introduction to Psychology
- Social Psychology

Sociology

- African American Studies
- Asian American Studies
- Introduction to Sociology
- Latino Studies
- Native American Studies
- Social Environments & Change
- Social Inequality
- Social Institutions
- Social Structure
- Social Work
- Women's Studies

Careers & Trades

Career Planning & Resources

- Career Exploration
- Career Fields
- Job Search Skills
- Job Success Skills

Technical Education

- Automotive Technology
- Building & Technical Trades

- Engineering Technology
- Technical Communication

Science, Mathematics & Technology

Biology

- Animal Biology
- Ecology
- General Biology
- Human Anatomy & Physiology
- Marine Biology
- Microbiology
- Plant Biology

Computers & Technology

- Computer Basics

- Modern Marvels
- Technology

Earth Science

- Geology
- Oceanography
- Weather & Climate

Environmental Science

- Ecosystems
- Environmental Problems & Management
- Natural Resources
- Survey / Basic Concepts

Geography

- Human Geography
- Physical Geography
- World Regional Geography

Mathematics

- Applied Mathematics
- Mathematics & Statistics

Physical Science

- Astronomy
- Chemistry
- Physics

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- Health Care & Treatment
- Health Careers

- Human Anatomy & Physiology
- Nutrition

- Personal Health & Wellness
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LOGIN DETAILS

Attachment 06

Panel urges Simi library be run by firm

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10B » Saturday, February 9, 2013 » THE STAR VE

LOCAL

Panel urges Simi library be run by firm

By Mike Harris
mharris@vcstar.com
805-437-0323

The Simi Valley City Council should hire a Maryland company to run the city's library for the next five years, rather than Ventura County, according to a city panel that reviewed both proposals.

If the council accepts the panel's recommendation at its meeting Monday night, Library Systems and Services LLC will start administering the library July 1. The company, the nation's largest private library operator, already runs libraries in Camarillo and Moorpark.

In a memo to the council posted on Simi Valley's website Friday, Interim Assistant City Manager James Purtee wrote that the panel recommends that Library Systems be awarded a five-year contract with an option for two, two-year extensions, to operate the city's sole library. The panel consisted of city staff and outside library experts.

The panel noted that county officials wanted the city to rejoin the Ventura County Library System, contrary to the City Council's desire to operate the library independently. The city withdrew from the county system in December 2011 over the objections of many residents, but contracted with the county to continue running the library until a permanent administrator takes over.

"Selecting LSSI will provide ... local control of the service levels at the library and enhance the library's position as a community resource," Purtee wrote.



ANTHONY PLASCENCIA/THE STAR

The City Council could decide the fate of the Simi Valley library on Monday.

Library Systems proposed operating the library for \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million per year for five years, paid for by property tax revenue. If the company is awarded the contract, the library will be closed for up to two weeks before July 1 for extensive upgrades, Purtee wrote.

Because the county did not provide a comprehensive cost proposal, the city estimated that the county's library contract would range from \$1.9 million to \$2 million per year for five years.

Library Systems spokesman Mike McCey said the company was pleased with the panel's recommendation and looks forward to Monday's council meeting.

"We're proud of the proposal we put together for the city and also for the patrons," he said.

Jackie Griffin, director of the county library system, said she wasn't surprised that the panel recommended Library Systems over the county.

"We had told Simi Valley that they would need to come back in the library system, that we can't contract with anybody independently," she said. "And we knew that was going to be

an issue for them."

The county system is now down to 12 branches.

Service Employees International Union Local 721, which represents about 20 library employees in Simi Valley, called on the council to postpone its vote on the panel's recommendation to give the community more time to review both proposals. The local sued the city in January 2012, but was unsuccessful in challenging the city's withdrawal from the county system.

"We're extremely disappointed in the recommendation as opposed to contracting with the county," said Nancy Fisher, the local's Simi Valley chapter board president.

The union has cited concerns about its members' jobs if Library Systems takes over the library.

No county library employees lost their job when the company took over Moorpark's library in 2007 and Camarillo's library in 2011, officials from those cities said.

Simi Valley decided to leave the county library system before a state law authored by Assemblyman Das Williams, D-Santa Barbara, took effect Jan. 1, 2012.

The city said the law makes it more difficult for cities to leave a county library system and contract with a private company. The law requires cities to show cost savings before switching to an independent library and bans resulting losses of jobs or benefits for existing library staff.

The City Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, 2929 Tapo Canyon Road.

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Attachment 07

**Ventura County Library
Individual volunteer and hours at each branch**

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5. Individual volunteer and hours at each branch.

FY 2011 - 2012		
	Volunteers	Total Hours for Year
Avenue Library	11	192
Fillmore Library	30	304
E.P. Foster Library	112	1,312
Meiners Oaks Library	1	37
Oak Park Library	88	2,307
Oak View Library	12	7,425
Ojai Library	24	3,552
Piru Library	0	0
Ray D. Prueter Library	69	2,556
Saticoy Library	1	75
Simi Valley Library	109	1,587.5
Albert H. Soliz Library (El Rio)	3	150
Technical Services	2	284.5

6. Names and hours of volunteers groups at each location.

- Fillmore Friends of the Library
- Oak Park Friends of the Library
- Ojai Valley Library Friends & Foundation
- Port Hueneme Friends of the Library
- San Buenaventura Friends of the Library
- Simi Valley Friends of the Library
- Soliz/El Rio Friends of the Library

The hours worked by the Friends are generally included with each library's total number of volunteers and cumulative hours. Many members do multiple tasks at the library such as bookstore or special programming.

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Attachment 08

**Ventura County Library
Circulation**

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8. Number of the public actually using this library branch and materials perhaps by the month or year. Compare to last few years.

Library usage has changed over the past five years. We now see the public utilizing computers, attending programs, utilizing our websites from homes or businesses. People are downloading audio or e-books.

Circulation of materials has always been the standard measure of library usage but it no longer reflects the many ways a library is used.

We are developing methods to better capture the new ways the public is accessing the library.

Circulation			
	2012/2013 (6 months)	2011/12	2010/11
Avenue Library	8,401	15,007 -	16,882
Camarillo Library			322,114 (1/2 year)
Fillmore Library	17,806	36,339 -	38,198
E.P. Foster Library	160,253	285,882 +	277,823
Meiners Oaks Library	7,329	10,759 -	11,518
Oak Park Library	28,829	48,053 -	50,748
Oak View Library	9,066	12,092 +	10,669
Ojai Library	53,364	99,390 -	115,252
Piru Library	3,185	11,721 -	13,691
Ray D. Prueter Library	39,059	69,823 -	75,711
Saticoy Library	12,170	22,059 -	23,918
Simi Valley Library	162,507	342,354 -	413,525
Albert H. Soliz Library (El Rio)	9,530	15,381 +	14,209

The Administration office includes a small collection of items for circulation.

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