

Memorandum 12-115 Budget Request for New Library Software

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M E M O R A N D U M 12-115

TO: MAYOR HORNADAY AND HOMER CITY COUNCIL

THRU: REGINA MAURAS, FINANCE DIRECTOR

FROM: ANN DIXON, LIBRARY DIRECTOR AND NICK POOLOS, SYSTEMS MANAGER

DATE: JULY 16, 2012

SUBJ: BUDGET REQUEST TO PURCHASE NEW LIBRARY SOFTWARE

Many services offered at Homer Public Library (HPL) are managed by automation software, known as an Integrated Library System (ILS). This software handles core functions such as circulation, cataloging, acquisitions, and reports.

The product used by the Library since 2006 is called Symphony and is produced by the SirsiDynix company. Though it was likely the best choice at the time it was purchased, technology has changed considerably in the last six years. Symphony has drawbacks, including cost, that limit the Library's ability to provide optimal service to the public, create efficient staff workflows, and adapt to ongoing changes in technology in a cost-effective manner.

Symphony is designed for large libraries with separate departments for various functions and for library systems comprised of multiple branches. Its complexity is cumbersome for a mid-sized stand-alone library such as HPL, where one person is the Interlibrary Loan "department" and where staff members perform numerous types of library tasks. The system often complicates workflows for staff and does not offer much flexibility. The various function modules do not integrate smoothly with each other. The reports function is daunting and time-consuming.

The current system is not particularly user-friendly for patrons, either, despite the efforts of library staff to improve the public access catalog for patrons. Many people ask for help searching the library catalog. We know that others, who don't ask, leave without finding what they are looking for. This system does not effectively display and integrate all the different types of resources a library these days has available – books, audiobooks, DVDs, magazines, online databases, e-books, and other electronic materials – which further hinders people's searches for information.

The Library's webpages are the most actively used portion of the City's website. Increasingly the public is coming to the Library website from mobile devices. Another drawback to the current system is the difficulty integrating new technologies, such as social media and mobile devices. Even trying to set up e-mail notification for overdue materials has proved frustrating.

In addition to these technical problems, the current ILS system is expensive and costs more each year. Last year's increase of \$781 was typical, from \$11,318 in FY2011 to \$12,099 in FY2012. As well, the built-in fee structure prevents us from making improvements in workflow efficiency and service to the public. For example, there is an additional license fee for a module to enable electronic ordering which would be more efficient than our current procedures. These modules cost \$3000 to \$6000 to initially license and cost \$300 to \$600 annually thereafter. A fee would also be charged, approximately \$1800 for an additional license, to set up a "station" (circulation computer) in the children's room so we could check out materials there during children's programs or designated hours when a children's librarian would be available to help patrons.

Finally, technical support is often difficult to obtain and leaves the issue unresolved or only correctable with an additional cost.

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Library staff and the IT director have investigated numerous options and determined that a more responsive, more efficient, less expensive system can be put into place. After extensive research we have chosen an open-source software product called Evergreen, with technical support from Equinox. It offers the flexibility, integration, and affordability we are seeking. The system is currently being used at the Haines Public Library, as well as the King County Library system around Seattle, and more than 800 other libraries worldwide. The initial expense of \$33,660 includes start-up costs that will be paid back within three to four years through significant savings on annual fees.

The new system should be adequate for at least 5 years. At that time the Library will have saved more than \$25,000 over our current system. It is realistic to expect the new system to last longer than 5 years, garnering additional savings of at least \$13,000 per year. Furthermore, this system will allow the Library to better serve the public, staff to work more efficiently, and improve access to all the types of resources available through the Library.

It is desirable to purchase the software and begin the conversion process before the end of this fiscal year. A typical conversion project takes 4 to 6 months to complete. It is essential to accomplish this task during the winter months, when staff has more time available to work on special projects than during the busy summer season. We will need to start in November or early December in order to be functioning smoothly before the May 1 renewal date for Sirsi and before the summer rush begins. This time frame also works well with updates and projects already scheduled by the IT director with other departments.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve funds from the library reserve account totaling \$33,660 for the installation, migration, and support of new Integrated Library System software.

Related Ordinances **Memorandum - Related Ordinances:** [Ordinance 12-33\(A\)\(S\) FY 2012 Budget Amendment for New Projects from Various Reserve Accounts](#)

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