Memorandum 10-141 Response to Proposed Amendments to the Library for FY2011 Budget

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M E M O R A N D U M 10-141

TO: Mayor and Council

THROUGH: Walt Wrede, City Manager

FROM: Helen Hill, Library Director

DATE: November 15, 2010

RE: Response to Proposed Amendments to the FY2011 Budget

Introduction
In our effort to serve every member of the Homer community, young and old and everyone in between, we offer a mixture of traditional and technological library programs and services. These days, a member of the library staff must still have a good working knowledge of authors and literature, traditional reference resources, and how to present a good Story Hour program. But they must also know when it is best to answer a reference question using a print or an electronic resource, and how to construct efficient searches. They must also stay at least one step ahead of the public and know how best to help patrons troubleshoot software and hardware problems.

In 2009, we checked out (and checked in!) over 101,000 items, which lets us know that books and reading are still thriving in our community. Computers and technology have enabled us to help the public with their information needs in ways we never dreamed possible, but have also resulted in a higher skill set for library employees. Below are responses to the Council's inquiries of why it is necessary for the library to offer computer access free of charge, maintain its modest book budget of $20,000, and pursue training and professional membership opportunities.

Alaska Library Law and Grant Requirements
AS 40.25.140 Public Library Requirements:
"A public library established under this section shall provide at least the following services free of charge to the residents of the municipality or community:
1. Establish and maintain a collection of books and other materials for loaning;
2. Provide access to interlibrary loan services;
3. Provide reading or other educational programs for children; and
4. Provide reference information."

Computer Use in Public Libraries
First, I'd like to clarify my response to the question about charging for computer use at the library. Public use computers have become a standard library service over the past ten years. Computers are viewed as a basic component of the public library in the same way as a collection of books or a pre-school story hour program. As you'll read below, electronic and print resources have become intertwined, and these days, people must have a combination of print and electronic resources to fulfill their information needs. Many patrons who use computers at the library cannot afford a personal computer, don't have access to anything other than dial-up service due to where they live, or don't have access to a computer while they're in town. Asking patrons to pay to use computers in a public library is a barrier to free and open access to information. The format of information and reference

resources might change, but the function of the public library has not, and when we charge for services, it compromises the purpose of the public library as an institution that ensures free and open access to the world's knowledge.

The public library is the community access point for computers and the Internet. Public libraries provide:
• Access to Internet training and related technologies
• Access to E-Government
• Databases and Digital Reference
• Homework Resources
• Digital and Electronic Publications

In 2009, 99 percent of public libraries offered free public access to Internet-enabled workstations. To meet the public's needs, public libraries average 14.2 workstations for public use, a number which has increased from last year. (The Homer Public Library provides 19 public use computers.) Demand for increased community access via public libraries is due to:
• E-Government (see below)
• Shift of educational activities from print to online (for example, online databases)
• Shift of employment activities from print to online (for example, online job applications)

To manage public access demand, 92.3 percent of public libraries have established time limits to ensure equitable access to information needs. The Homer Public Library provides cardholders with two 45-minute sessions per day and visitors with one 45-minute session per day.

Public libraries are experiencing more requests for computer and Internet training, and the Homer Public Library is no exception. The Friends of the Homer Public Library are generously funding basic computer drop-in training for seniors. The free drop-in sessions are so popular that another training session has been added to the schedule.

(Source for statistics in this section is from the "Public Libraries & Access" handout from the Center for Library and Information Innovation)

E-Government
"The irony of the government requiring people to do everything online is that it most affects the people who don't have the resources to go online." (Indiana library director)

The purpose of the E-Government Act of 2002 was "to improve the methods by which Government information, including information on the Internet, is organized, preserved, and made accessible to the public." (Title II, sec. 207). As a result, government services are becoming more digital and in some cases, digital only. A few examples of common online transactions include:
• Filling out disability forms
• Completing Medicare Part D forms
• Making appointments with immigration officials
• Filing court petitions
• Paying fees

State governments are also migrating to online services. The most recent Digital States Survey found that more than 80 percent of states, including Alaska, provide online transactions for:
• Business
• Individual tax filing and payment
• Unemployment insurance applications
• Professional license renewals
• Permanent Fund Dividend applications

In 2010, 79 percent of libraries reported they provide assistance to patrons to access E-Government services, up from 23% in 2009. The Homer Public Library staff has assisted patrons with many State of Alaska transactions such as downloading business licenses, Permanent Fund Dividend applications, divorce certificates, and Public Assistance information.

For the millions of Americans who lack home Internet access, including those in the Homer community who don't own computers or who only have dial-up access due to the location of their homes, the place to conduct

government transactions free of charge is at the public library.

(Source for statistics in this section is from the “U.S. Public Libraries & E-Government Services” handout from the ALA Office for Research & Statistics, June 2010)

Bandwidth
More than 50 percent of public libraries nationwide report that bandwidth is not sufficient to meet patron demand. Without high quality broadband connectivity, public libraries are unable to offer essential public access services on which people rely these days to support their employment, E-Government, and education needs.

The maximum speed in most libraries is 200 kilobits (kbps) per second in at least one direction. This speed is lower than broadband in most other technologically advanced nations. In fact, the United States is ranked 19th in required capacity to meet the definition of broadband. Challenges regarding broadband capacity are availability and cost. “The public access service context, combined with the continually increasing bandwidth needs of new technologies, services, and resources, dictate the need for libraries to continually increase their connectivity speeds, modify their networks, and actively manage their connectivity. Not doing so will leave behind the millions of people in communities who rely on public access technologies and Internet connectivity provided through the public library.”

(Source for statistics in this section is from the “Public Libraries & Broadband” handout from the Center for Library and Information Innovation)

Alaska Online With Libraries (OWL) Project
In September, the Alaska State Library announced that it had received a $5.4 million award from the U.S. Department of Commerce to create a broadband network which will unite 104 public library computer centers in a statewide Internet and video conferencing network (Homer Public Library included). The $2.9 million in matching funds includes generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rasmuson Foundation.

Some of the specific benefits of the network will include promoting public safety initiatives and providing training offered by a diverse group of public agencies, including those involved in health, education, and public safety. The OWL project will also allow Alaskans of all ages throughout the state to pursue individual educational goals. Increased bandwidth will give students access to online digital resources, including Live Homework Help, the Alaska Digital Archives, and the Digital Pipeline (all available on the Homer Public Library’s website).

All public libraries in Alaska will be provided with updated computers and videoconferencing capable equipment. The result of providing increased bandwidth, updated equipment and videoconferencing capabilities will be a network of public libraries that will unite communities and users across the state.

Books
As mentioned above, in 2009 over 101,000 items were checked out from the library’s collection. New books are shelved in the “New” area for six months before they are integrated into the main collection. A book can circulate many times before it either falls apart, is lost or damaged, or becomes out-of-date. Standards and classics remain on our shelves and are used for many years after purchase. Also, library staff are trained in book mending and are able to extend the life of a book for many years.

The library usually receives a 20 percent (or even 30 to 40 percent) discount as well as free shipping on book purchases. The average price of a hardbound book is $25.00; a 20 percent discount will bring the cost of a library book down to $20.00. A book budget of $20,000 would cover the cost of about 1,000 new books for the library’s collection in the following sections:
• Fiction
• Nonfiction (please see attached General Dewey Decimal Categories)
• Juvenile (Fiction, Nonfiction, Easy Readers, picture books, board books for babies, etc.)
• Young Adult (Fiction and Nonfiction)
• Alaskana
• Biography
• Large Print
• Russian
• Reference

The library is able to use the $20,000 book budget funded by the City as a match for collection grants awarded by the Rasmuson Foundation and the State Library. Neither will fund a collection grant for the library if the City zeroes out the library's book budget.

Below are a few comments from the two surveys the library has conducted since moving into the new library.

Book-related comments from HPL's Customer Satisfaction Survey (February 8-22, 2010):
• Need more adventure books, more movies (mysteries!!).
• More materials money please – collection is well chosen but thin.
• More books!
• Very good library but needs more funding to be open more and more purchasing power.

Book-related comments from HPL Community Opinion Survey (Summer 2008):
• More books.
• Keep upgrading the collection.
• Need more books!
• Newer books!
• Larger book selections, more new books.
• Surprisingly a small amount of books to be found in such an enormous space.
• The library building is great – the book collection is not. We need more and better books.
• I was disappointed that there weren't many new titles compared to the old library.
• You need newer editions/books on many subjects.
• Wider variety of books.
• Exchange older books.
• ALL! (In response to the categories listed in question 8: Select the areas you would like to see expanded or improved – Fiction Bestsellers, Fiction Classics, Mysteries, Alaskana, Non-Fiction, Business, Poetry, Science Fiction/Fantasy, Westerns, Health/Medical/Self-Help, Magazines/Newspapers, and Literary Fiction).
• The limited amount of books is very sad. I try to get info, but a lot of times there are no books on the subjects I'm researching. Lack of books is awful.
• I would like to see more books that are true and teach you interesting things.
• More modern nonfiction books on history.
• New non-fiction books.
• Keep up with current best sellers.
• Foreign authors and plays.
• Home building and construction books from this century. All your stuff is old and outdated. This area is a common interest in the Homer vicinity and sorely lacking in your library.
• Culturally specific segments.
• Crafts, needlework.
• Current books on knitting, sewing, quilting, and fiber arts. Most of the ones in the collection are from the early 80's and a LOT has happened since then. Travel seems pretty current
• Animal care books.
• Get rid of some of the old outdated nonfiction, especially the "medical" books. They have grossly inaccurate content.
• Some of the children's non-fiction books are pretty old and should be replaced with newer better books as funds allow (We homeschool.) I love the new library.
• More books, especially children's books!
• Could use more training manuals (SAT and GRE etc.).
• Larger variety of books to use for research and school assignments.
• Christian fiction, home organizing (Real Simple, Better Homes and Gardens). Thanks for making Karen Kingsbury's books available. She is one of my favorite authors.
• Christian literature.
• More Christian Nonfiction.
• The number and range of topics in your magazine section seems limited.
• Investment Publications (ex. Investment Business Daily), Self-Help Audio Books.

Training
State regulations (4 AAC 57.064 under section a. 4.) have an eligibility requirement which requires the library director to complete "every two years at least one continuing education program approved by the state librarian."

However, due to rapidly changing technology and to keep up with best practices in the field of librarianship, I believe that the library director and at least one or two staff members (on a rotating basis) should attend a state, regional, or national conference once a year. In many libraries, attending a conference is part of the annual performance evaluation.

The State Library offers many free training opportunities for library directors and staff in Alaska, and we take advantage of all free training that is applicable to our work in Homer. The State Library also encourages training through Continuing Education Grants (one grant available annually to each library in Alaska for any staff member except for the director). They also send out a monthly list of free online training and keep us informed of paid training as well.

Below is a list of training taken by the library staff in 2010:
Conferences
Conferences provide face-to-face educational, networking, and social opportunities for library staff. In Alaska, this is particularly important because libraries are located at great distances from each other and it is difficult to get together with other librarians for monthly brown-bag lunch sessions and local workshops which are common in the Lower 48. Networking is particularly important for library staff due to technological advances that are rapidly changing our profession. For example, Amy Gordon of our staff attended her first AkLA conference in Kodiak in 2009 and met the IT librarian from the Juneau Public Library. When we needed to replace our public computer use software, Amy was able to correspond with the Juneau librarian and receive advice about how to implement the new software. Since the Homer Public Library doesn't have an IT librarian on staff, we were able to use the expertise of another librarian in the State in combination with the expertise and assistance of our City IT staff. Sending Amy to the conference to attend educational sessions and make useful contacts was well worth the travel costs.

The costs below include transportation, subsistence, and registration fees. Travel is expensive in general in Alaska, and more so from Homer. Whenever possible, we apply for training grants, and share hotel rooms and transportation costs (if driving). All social events costs are borne by the employee. Please note that the PLA and PNLA conferences are usually not held every year and rarely are all held in one year; it is unusual for me to attend more than one or two conference in a year, but this year was an exception.

Alaska State Library Conference in Anchorage
• Four-day conference
• Three library staff attended
• Cost of library director was $1,117.52
• Cost of two library technicians was $354.00 (Awarded Continuing Education Grant of $1,000.00 from State Library)

Public Library Association in Portland
• Five-day conference
• Library director attended
• Cost was $1,816.26

Genealogy Workshop in Anchorage
• One-day workshop
• One library technician attended
• Cost was $116.19

Serials Cataloging Workshop in Anchorage
• Two-day workshop
• Two library technicians attended
• Cost was $1,386.48

Pacific Northwest Library Association Conference in Victoria
• Four-day conference
• Library director attended
• Cost was $1,550.24

Paper Conservation (book mending) Workshop in Anchorage

• One-day workshop
• One library technician attended
• Cost was $267.00

Paid Training
All training in this category was online.

• MARC 21 In Your Library, Part Two, MARC Coding: The Core Codes and Their Functions (TMQ/OCLC)
• Online Research Strategies for Librarians
• Readers Advisory Services
• Web 2.0 Fundamentals
• General Principles and Practices of Cataloging
• Interpreting the MARC Record
• Copy Cataloging with OCLC Connexion
• Basic MARC Tagging for Serials
• SirsiDynix Reports Lab

Training Paid by Grants
All training in this category was in-person.

• Library Customer Service Workshop for Library Staff of the Kenai Peninsula (AK State Library ILC Grant)
• Serials Cataloging Workshop paid by partial grant from the State Library
• Paper Conservation (book mending) Workshop partially funded by grant from the State Library
• Alaska State Library Continuing Education Grant covered all costs for one employee and partial costs for a second employee to attend the Alaska Library Association conference.
• Directors' Leadership Annual Meeting (AK State Library ILC Grant)

Free Training
All training in this category was online.

• The Scoop on Series Nonfiction: What's New for Fall (Booklist Online)
• Nonfiction Fall Announcements Book Buzz 2010 Webcast (School Library Journal)
• MARC 21 In Your Library, Part One, MARC and Bibliographic Information: The Underlying Fundamentals (TMQ)
• Grolier Online: New Book of Knowledge and America the Beautiful (Scholastic)
• BookFlix University (Scholastic)
• Gadgets: Personal Electronics for Your Library (ALA TechSource/WebJunction)
• Let's Get Graphic: Kids' Comics in Classrooms and Libraries (Booklist Online)
• Best Practices in Policies Directory (OCLC)
• RDA Toolkit: A Guided Tour! (ALA)
• Directions in Metadata (ALA TechSource/SirsiDynix)
• RDA and OCLC Webinar (OCLC)
• Digitize Summer Reading with Wikis and Glogs (Texas State Library & Archives Commission)
• Online Collaboration Tools
• Integrating Social Media into Your Website
• How to Make Your Website More Dynamic
• MARC of Excellent Cataloging
• Using Technology to Move Your Small Library Forward
• Continuing Education with SirsiDynix Mentor
• SirsiDynix Windows Symphony Server Administration
• SirsiDynix Windows Symphony Circulation Module
• SirsiDynix Windows Symphony Cataloging Module
• SirsiDynix Windows Symphony Reports Module
• SirsiDynix Windows Symphony Acquisitions Module
• Leadership Webinar (OCLC)
• SirsiDynix Introduction to WorkFlows
• ListenAlaska Orientation (Overdrive)

All City of Homer employees were required to complete:

• National Incidence Management System courses (online and in-person - FEMA)
• Safety Courses (AMLJIA Online University)
• Sexual Harassment: A Commonsense Approach (video - Kantola Productions)

Attending library conferences, meetings, and training has been invaluable. We couldn't accomplish a fraction of what we do without help from professionals and colleagues in the state, region, and nationwide.

Summary
Public libraries have evolved along with technology while keeping the best of their traditional services and are busier than ever, especially during these tough economic times. A public library is able to maintain an unbiased print collection and free and open access to information because it is funded by public, not private funds. Libraries strengthen communities by offering free access to books, ideas, resources, and information, which are imperative for education, employment, and self-government.

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