



# City of Homer

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## Memorandum Supplemental Packet

TO: LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD

FROM: RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

DATE: MAY 17, 2022

SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL PACKET

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### PENDING BUSINESS

- A. Admin Dept. Reorganization: Library & IT Services (LIT) – Responses from LAB Members
  - i. Homer Public Library Strategic Plan 2020-2025
  - ii. **Boardmember Kuszmaul Response Submittal**
  - iii. **“Don’t Give Up Our Seat at the Table” *Public Library* Article**

## Rachel Tussey

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**From:** marcia kuszmaul <mkuszmaul@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 14, 2022 5:54 PM  
**To:** David Berry; Rachel Tussey  
**Subject:** Input on proposed library reorg

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

AUGH! I didn't see my feedback in the LAB packet and to my chagrin, found the mail I had written on 5/6 was stuck in my draft folder. Sincere apologies. Can this be sent out to the LAB prior to the meeting for their opportunity to review and included in a supplemental packet? Just in case it was the attachment that caused problems, I have cut and pasted below. I'll monitor and check in with you on Monday to ensure it has been received.

THANKS  
Marcia

### **Input into proposed combination of Library and Information Technology Services for Homer**

Library Services and Information Technology Services are each large areas of responsibility with sufficient scope, complexity, criticality, and visibility to warrant both being led by full-time professionals with specific domain expertise and experience.

As captured in its mission statement, "the Homer Public Library serves the diverse needs of our community members by providing access to information, promoting literacy, and facilitating lifelong learning. We foster education, personal well-being, cultural creativity, community engagement, and economic development. Our resources are offered without charge to people of all ages and abilities within our service area".

- Homer's first-class library facility and high-quality library services are the result of 43 years of full-time professional leadership. Since the library became a city responsibility in 1979, Homer has had a full-time, fully credentialed librarian who was trained and experienced in developing and managing the library collection, programs, policies, and facility to fulfill its mission. From its founding as a volunteer-led initiative, the library has had the strong support of local residents who are heavy users and, time and again, have made the library a priority.
- IT is essential to the delivery of all city services, not just the library. While having the potential to enhance IT for the library, combining the two functions could be less optimal for both. By design, the leader's attention would be bifurcated between two essentially different but equally important sets of roles and responsibilities.
- The State of Alaska requires that the director of a library serving a community the size of Homer's have an MLIS degree to receive state funds. Unless another professional position is created to lead the library, this would require the Director of a combined Library and Information Technology Services department to be a professionally credentialed librarian. This structure would put unnecessary constraints on recruitment and hiring – a candidate with the optimal IT background likely would not be a professional librarian; the optimal professional candidate to lead the library may or may not have the interest, knowledge base or experience to lead IT.

- In response to an inquiry to the Alaska State Librarian and the Public Library Coordinator, “The only municipality that comes close to the proposed Homer Public Library reorganization is the City and Borough of Juneau. According to John Thill, JPL Library Director. He oversees staff who manage portions of the City and Borough of Juneau’s (CBJ) IT infrastructure, but not most of it. The CBJ webmaster is a library department employee. The library also employs a network administrator who oversees certain city-wide databases, some city-wide switches, and all library networks. CBJ does have a separate IT department that oversees all other technology and network functions.”
- During the COVID pandemic the past two years, the city has redeployed several employees in various roles to bridge gaps in services. We have been fortunate to have a library director who could step in and help with the city’s IT needs. The assumption that this would be an optimal and sustainable model, however, is questionable. Codifying a temporary move made during extraordinary circumstances could be premature, as the library is just now returning to full function. Library leadership is especially critical now with the library reinstituting programs and rebuilding to former levels of use and beyond.
- The library and the LAB have a strategic plan to 2025 with short-, mid-, and long-term objectives for improving efficiencies, expanding the library’s role as a community hub, promoting lifelong learning, and increasing the range of formats in the collection. We also are focused on building library use among under-served groups. All these initiatives require focused leadership with the bandwidth to stay current on best practices and conceptualize, lead, and implement innovative solutions and services.
- Open questions – what would be the specific duties of the proposed Deputy position? Would he/she have the skills and experience to supervise, coach, and evaluate other library staff, including professional librarians? Would the city encourage that person to pursue further training? Would the position be advertised?
- In making this recommendation, what is the city solving for? Lack of budget? Span of control? Is the city not in the position to prioritize IT and hire a full-time IT director? Could the current redeployment be formalized as a time-limited temporary assignment while the city pursues creating a full-time IT director position?


Respectfully submitted Marcia Kuszmaul, 5/6/2022

Here ya go.  
 Sorry for taking it to the wire. Lots of thoughts to share.  
 Busy, busy as everybody.  
 THANKS  
 Marcia

# Don't Give Up Our Seat at the Table

Melanie Huggins / [MHuggins@RichlandLibrary.com](mailto:MHuggins@RichlandLibrary.com)

Melanie is Executive Director, Richland Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

 Melanie is currently reading *Stir: My Broken Brain and the Meals that Brought Me Home* by Jessica Fechter.



**D**uring the last two unprecedented years, I have felt tremendous pride in how our libraries have persevered, fueled by a powerful combination of compassion and creativity. Despite the challenges we've faced during the pandemic, libraries haven't been deterred and have continued to move forward regardless of uncertain and stressful circumstances.

As PLA President, I've tried to highlight the resilience and innovation of our profession when I speak on behalf of public libraries. When I've talked to the media or presented at a conference, I've tried to represent us at our best and champion libraries and all who make them work.

However, to be truthful, I've also found that some of our

behavior has been disappointing and troubling.

When I first started in this profession, there was a fierce debate on whether public libraries were necessary. We complained that we were not included or consulted when decisions were made about issues that we were close to (like education) or on topics where we harbored first-hand, neighborhood-level insight (like health or safety). There was a time when our breadth and reach was not recognized or valued by our elected officials or community leaders, never mind the media, or thought leaders. Early in my career, I recall many conversations with colleagues, where we complained bitterly about not having a seat at the table.

Now, libraries are being asked to help solve community

problems, respond to community crises, and looked to for leadership to help citizens *literally survive a pandemic*. We finally have a seat with our name on it, and some of us are acting like ungrateful guests.

In 1995, the year I completed my library degree, "Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government" by Mark H. Moore, was published. Chapter one opens with a scenario that some newer to libraries may find interesting. The town librarian notices an influx of children in the library, every day after school. Her first response was to nip this behavior in the bud. To write a letter to the newspaper (1995. Am I right?) and create a new code of conduct that prevented the children from coming. Then she thought she could use



the problem to garner more funding or resources for her library; to charge for the service, organize volunteer babysitters; advocate for additional tax revenue to redesign the space to accommodate the new service, all of which would effectively expand the mission of the library. She deemed this a poor idea as well; one that would bring up legitimate questions of appropriateness. The town librarian ultimately realizes that it is within the library's capacity to use and reorganize existing resources to meet this community need. She determined that the needs of the children in her library were not to be seen as an extra duty but as an essential service; one that could be performed "economically, effectively, and fairly, with little cost to other functions of the library that had the sanction of tradition."

The person that introduced me to the book "Creating Public Value" was Eleanor Jo "Joey" Rodger, past PLA Executive Director and CEO of the Urban Libraries Council from 1992-2004. She was an inspiration to me and many others in the formative years of my leadership journey.

It is Rodger's 2009 article for *American Libraries* that I still think about, especially today when libraries are offering such diverse services. "Amenity vs Necessity" summarizes how a library can prove "necessity status for a particular library service" by examining the following

conditions—based on Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle of Value.

Let's use dispensing COVID-19 tests as the service we are evaluating as a necessity. I have turned her conditions into questions, of which a "Yes" response to all indicates necessity.

- Does this service help contribute to or alleviate a shared public condition?
- Can we ensure/prove that this service is available equitably to all?
- Can we provide the services without significant resource costs?

Mark Moore frames the "triangle" this way: Is the service publicly valuable; politically and legally supported; administratively and operationally feasible? If yes to all, then it can be deemed a necessary service for a library.

Whether the community needs are chronic, like the latch key children in public libraries discussion prevalent in the 1980s<sup>1</sup> or acute, like floods, riots, or a pandemic, I believe it is our responsibility—whether long term or temporarily—to be of value to our communities and to be entrepreneurial about how we create that value.

We've been through two years that feel like a decade. We are tired, but who isn't? Our jobs are different than they used to be but name a profession that has not changed.

I believe this need for urgent

## FURTHER READING

### Amenity vs. Necessity.

Eleanor Jo Rodger, *American Libraries*, Vol. 40 nos. 8 & 9, August/September 2009. <https://issuu.com/seanfitzpatrick/docs/0809>.

### When Libraries are 'Second Responders'

*The Atlantic*, May 23, 2019. [theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/when-libraries-are-second-responders/622187/](https://theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/when-libraries-are-second-responders/622187/).

### Value & Vision—Public Libraries Must Create Public Value Through Renewal and Reinvention.

Eleanor Jo Rodger. Reproduced by permission of the American Library Association from *American Libraries* (November 2002), pp. 50-54. [urallibrarydirectors.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/50066994/Value%20%26%20Vision%20by%20Joey%20Rodger.pdf](http://urallibrarydirectors.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/50066994/Value%20%26%20Vision%20by%20Joey%20Rodger.pdf)

### Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government.

Mark H. Moore, Harvard University Press, 1997. [ash.harvard.edu/publications/creating-public-value-strategic-management-government](http://ash.harvard.edu/publications/creating-public-value-strategic-management-government).

and immediate assistance in our communities is temporary. But I hope our reputation of being a valued, necessary, community problem solver, lasts forever. ■■

## REFERENCES

1. In 1988, PLA authored a position paper on public libraries' response to latch-key children and while acknowledging that some had the "not our problem/not our job" response, PLA recognized this community challenge as a way to "offer many as-yet unexplored opportunities for public libraries to carry out their historic mission."