

On the Public Library: How it
can strengthen communities
and serve those in need



**On the Public Library: How it can strengthen communities
and serve those in need**

by
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A Terminal Project

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There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.

— Andrew Carnegie

If the public library does not respond to social needs, it cannot be successful in responding to the needs of individuals.

-Ronald McCabe, Civic Librarianship

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Project Abstract

The economic downturn in this country over the past several years has not only affected private businesses, but the nonprofit sector as well. America's nonprofits have experienced increased demand for services and a simultaneous decrease in private giving. At the same time, public libraries have begun to see an influx of marginalized patrons, such as the homeless and mentally ill. The public library has always been a safe haven, where anyone can come to learn, socialize, and build community. This has especially been true for traditionally marginalized communities. In the current economic recession, nonprofit organizations have seen increased demand for services, as well as decreased resources. With the lack of resources from nonprofits, the library is often seen as a place of refuge. This research explores the relationships between library staff and these communities. Research questions include how library staff feel about these marginalized community members' presence in the library, what staff feel is the role of the library serving the larger Eugene community, and in what ways the library may be changing in the face of new and increasing demands.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Nonprofit organizations have had an interesting history in the United States. At their inception, nonprofits were established as a means for man to help his fellow man. Stemming from this logic was a nonprofit sector that was almost entirely funded from private giving. The Federal Government was largely absent from nonprofit funding until the 1950s. After the end of WWII, government funding for nonprofit agencies grew significantly. The growth was primarily attributed to the development of Federal Aid programs and government contracts with nonprofits to provide much needed social services.

However, another shift in funding came with the Reagan Administration, which adopted a policy of devolution, or shifting the responsibility for nonprofit funding back to the states and private citizens. Devolution had drastic impact on nonprofits, specifically, forcing them to enter the market and compete with similar private service providers. This also meant nonprofits became subject to market forces. With the current economic recession, this has meant severe decreases in private giving, placing many nonprofits in a state of fiscal stress. Coupled with decreased resources has been a spike in demand for services from the public. This perfect storm of factors affecting nonprofits has left a space for creative alternatives to traditional social services.

The Public Library

One such alternative is the public library. The free public library has always been a symbol of equality, especially for those in historically marginalized communities such as the homeless and mentally ill. The library provides disenfranchised community members with otherwise rare opportunities to interact with the larger community. This in turn provides important normalizing experiences that prove especially important for those seeking to better their lot in life. The library can also work to strengthen the community by providing a common space in which all are equal and various societal groups can interact face-to-face.

Research Methods

The information presented here was derived from a series of interviews conducted with over forty staff members of the Eugene Public Library, including one volunteer and four branch employees. Interviews were on an all-volunteer basis, and were conducted at the Downtown Branch of the Eugene Public Library. Interviews lasted anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour. All interviews were conducted in-person, and interviewees were asked a standard set of questions.

Research Findings

The findings from the interviews can be broadly categorized into the following categories: nature of the problem, issues specific to Eugene, the disenfranchised in the library, and library values.

Nature of the Problem

Findings that make of the nature of the problem include the current recession, advances in technology, balancing patron needs with capacity, and bias. The current recession has affected the public library in a similar way to nonprofit organizations in that there has been an increased demand for library resources. According to interviews, the recession has also made the issue of homelessness and mental illness in the library more visible than in the past. Advances in technology have also contributed to an increase in patronage, as many job resources and application are now entirely online. However, some patrons do not make it clear what they are seeking at the library, or if they need assistance with the technology. In addition, several staff members expressed concern over guessing at patrons' needs based on assumptions like their appearance. Those who were interviewed sought to actively bar this type of bias from the EPL.

Issues Specific to Eugene

Issues specific to the Eugene Public Library that were derived from interviews include: the diverse community, the library as a community center, the changes from the new library building, security, and advancement in library services for the homeless. Eugene, while lacking a diverse ethnic makeup, does possess distinctive socioeconomic classes. This diversity affects the library by determining the distinct of information needs of its patrons. Furthermore, this

diversity has become more visible with the construction of the new Downtown Branch of the EPL. This building, located directly across from Eugene's main public transit station, naturally attracts downtown's transient population. Furthermore, the new building incorporated several common areas including a coffee shop on the ground floor. These factors ensure that as diverse as community exists in Eugene, will come in the library and interact. Not everyone in Eugene is comfortable with the location of the new library. However, the library has mitigated certain concerns by hiring security guards to monitor the library. Finally, with the move to the new building there have also been significant advances in the resources available for homeless community members. Perhaps most noteworthy advancement was the policy change which allowed the homeless to sign up for a library card, provided they are receiving local social services.

The Disenfranchised in the library

Disenfranchised community members often have very different information needs that the larger community. They also often use the library for nontraditional resources. These include: meeting basic needs, social service referrals, opportunities to socialize, creating an informal news network, and as a source of empowerment. On a basic level, there are the ways homeless and other disenfranchised patrons use library resources to meet concrete needs. These goals include, but are not limited to, meeting basic needs for survival, obtaining referrals to local social services, and completing job searches. In addition, the library often provides marginalized patrons with less palpable, yet just as critical, resources. These include opportunities for normalizing and socializing, providing a sense of empowerment, and an informal news network. At the intersection of these resources lie the interactions among various patrons, and between patrons and library staff. The protocol governing these contacts is the Eugene Public Library's Code of Conduct (COC). This is an essential document for patrons and staff alike. In the interviews done for this project, nearly every staff member spoke of the COC as being a lifeline for managing disruptive behavior, as well as for clearly outlining expectations for patrons. In this way the COC helps both staff and patrons know their role and what is expected of each

when working and using the library. The patron Code of Conduct can be seen in full in Appendix A.

Library Values

Finally, interview results showed a number of guiding principles that staff adhere to when serving patrons. These values were both institutional and personal. (For a list of official EPL values, see Appendix B). These included a discussion of staff's responsibilities, ensuring equal access, maintaining patron privacy, and offering uncensored information. The general responsibility that staff feels they have to patrons is to treat everyone the same: with basic respect. This includes patrons of all creeds, ethnicities, backgrounds, etc. An extension of that was the idea that everyone should have equal access to library resources. This included discussions of physical barriers, as well as educational and monetary barriers. Once equal access is ensured, staff felt strongly that patron privacy should be maintained. This is especially pertinent to the bank of public computers at the library. As a basic tenet, as long as a patron is not participating in any illegal activities, they have the freedom to do as they wish on library computers. Finally, the information that the library offers should, according to interviewees, be unbiased and uncensored. This is crucial if the library is going to foster the democratic ideals on which it was built.

Recommendations

The five recommendation made at the end of this report are a combination of ideas suggested by interviewees, and thoughts derived from compiling the research. They are meant to be molded to fit the needs of the Eugene Public Library, not to be followed strictly. However, they could also be applicable to other public libraries, provided specific consideration is given to the individual issues facing that community. The recommendations are:

- Administer a community survey to determine needs of the Eugene community;
- Implement a specific marketing campaign to spread the word about the unique social services offered by the EPL;
- Expand community partnerships to increase programming options and reach in the community development arena;

- Increase training opportunities for staff, and make training a regular part of job requirements; and
- Increase Internet access, as it is one of the most popular and important resources offered by the EPL.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Overview

The public library serves both a crucial role in the community development process, from both historical and contemporary standpoints. This is especially true for traditionally disenfranchised members of the community, such as the homeless and mentally ill. The public library has always been a safe haven, where anyone can come to learn, socialize, and build community. This has especially been true for traditionally marginalized communities. In the current economic recession, nonprofit organizations have seen increased demand for services, as well as decreased resources. With the lack of resources from nonprofits, the library is often seen as a place of refuge; often seen as the safest place to go because of its seeming ability to weather economic storms. The following is a review of historical political processes affecting nonprofit social service agencies, an overview of the role of the library in the lives of the disadvantaged, and finally a summary of the historical function of the public library in community building processes.

Devolution

There is no universally agreed upon definition of devolution. Carol J. De Vita (1999) offers two meanings that have become popular in recent discussions of devolution. She describes devolution as connoting “a shift in the locus of responsibility, decision-making, or control from the federal government to state or local levels of government. But the term is also used to imply federal budget cuts (or savings) that potentially reduce or limit the role of government in particular policy areas” (213-4). In the context of this definition, it becomes clear why devolution began in one of the most conservative administrations on record, as Conservatives are traditionally opposed to big government.

One interesting argument for devolution suggests it is a plausible solution for policymakers wishing to have a more localized decision making process. De Vita (1999) perhaps states this idea best when she writes “based on the assumption that decisions are best made by people and governmental units closest to the problem, policymakers have embraced the idea of

devolution as a way to address local needs” (213). The Federal Government is a huge and complex bureaucracy. Some suggest that devolution helps solve the issue of responsiveness to individual community needs by allowing the government, albeit indirectly, to “differentiate its services in response to the heterogeneous preferences of its citizens” (Young, 37).

Historical Context

From the onset of their development, nonprofit social services did not receive a majority of their funding from the Federal Government. Private citizens—through in-kind assistance, endowments, and private donations—provided the bulk of support for social services. Government funding was not completely non-existent, just on a very narrow scale. This limited participation by the Federal Government reflected popular thinking of the early nineteenth century private citizens should shoulder the largest burden of providing social services to their fellow community members, and that the government need only play a very modest role (Smith and Lipsky 1993). Smith and Lipsky (1993) note that what government funding was available was geared towards the “deserving poor”—the ill, elderly, and orphaned children. They claim “agencies serving people who were simply destitute, with no condition to testify to their worthiness, usually received no public subsidies. Such people were regarded as properly the objects of private charity” (48). This thought process inevitably led to an sharp increase in the number of nonprofit agencies serving the poor after the Civil War (Smith and Lipsky 1993).

This trend of limited government subsidies continued throughout the 1950s. The beginning of the 1960s however marked a drastic shift in the relationship between nonprofit social service agencies and the Federal Government. During this time, both the scale and range of support for social service from the Federal Government increased dramatically (Young 1999). This expansion was in part the result of an increased number of federal social service programs (Young 1999), but the vast majority of the growth occurred because of a new era of federal contracts with nonprofit social service agencies. Smith and Lipsky (1993) describe nonprofits as becoming “agents of government in the expansion of the American welfare state” (71). This development continued throughout the 1970s, and by 1980, 65 percent of funding at all levels of social services came from the Federal Government. This is in sharp contrast to the 37 percent

in 1960 (Smith and Lipsky 1993). Young (2007) offers one rationale for the use of contracts. He notes that, in a growing bureaucracy (such as the Federal Government), where administration costs inevitably rise. Eventually you reach a tipping point where it becomes less expensive to contract for services rather than performing them yourself. Thus, it is cheaper to contract with nonprofits to provide social services rather than have the government provide them itself. This rationale would also be used in support of devolution during the Reagan Administration.

The Reagan Administration began with sweeping reform of social service provision. From his first day in office, Reagan made good on campaign promises to “clean up” what Conservatives had come to see as government’s wasteful spending on social programs. In 1980, began what could be viewed as the modern devolution of social services. In his first year, Reagan successfully enacted the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which affected social services and funding for nonprofits including, but not limited to: 1) eliminating the matching requirements for Title XX (which established block grants for social services); and 2) significantly reducing funds for programs such as neighborhood health clinics (Smith and Lipsky 1993). The social policies of the Reagan Administration were based on the assumption that, much as it was prior to the 1960s, as government reduced its funding for social services, the subsequent gap would be filled by citizen volunteers and private donations (Young 1999). The Bush Administration generally followed the policies set by the Reagan Administration (Smith and Lipskey 1993). The lasting effects of these policies will be discussed in further sections.

Privatization & Marketization

Despite being lauded as a means for effectively responding to the social service needs of diverse communities, many researchers have noted the negative effects of devolution. Perhaps the most pertinent to this research is the fact that devolution caused many social service nonprofits to compete in the traditional marketplace, and thus to become subject to market forces. In the current economic recession, a fundamental struggle has developed between the amount of social services that are needed, and the question over whose responsibility it is to provide them. Young (2007) notes, “contemporary government policy toward the nonprofit sector is inconsistent, at once encouraging the growth of volunteerism and private initiative

and at the same time limiting its resource base” (63). With simultaneous increases in the need for social services and competitive nature of providing those services, more emphasis is being placed on efficient use of resources over the quality of service (De Vita 1993). To further complicate matters, government policies regarding the nonprofit sector. Because of this, nonprofits are often dependent on the fiscal health of their states (Smith and Lipskey 1993). “As state economies slump, nonprofit agencies are increasingly squeezed as states try to hold down social spending” (Smith and Lipskey 71). As nonprofits are forced to serve more people on fewer dollars, creative alternatives, like the public library, must be sought.

Economic Downturn

The current economic recession faced by this country has had two primary effects on the nonprofit sector: escalated demand for services and decreased resources. First, increased demand for social services is attributed to high levels of job losses, as well as longer periods of unemployment (Salamon, et al 2009). Furthermore, this trend did not only affect one specific industry, but instead was experienced in everything from food bank programs, mental health services, and employment services (Wilson & Earle 2009). Because of higher levels of demand, a significant number of nonprofit organizations have experienced some level of “fiscal stress.”

A survey administered by the Johns Hopkins listening project reported eighty percent of respondents feeling financially burdened during the worst years of the recession (Salamon et al 2009). This fiscal stress is exacerbated the general decrease in resources that nonprofits have been experiencing as a result of the downturn in the economy. The primary decrease has been from outside donors and contributions from grants. A survey of nonprofits from Guidestar reported that over half of those surveyed had experienced a decrease in outside contributions (McLean & Brouwer). This perfect storm of events is an extension of the nonprofit sector being subjected to market factors, and again as suggested that creative outlets should be sought for filling the needs of those seeking social services.

The Public Library and Disadvantaged Communities

Marginalized community members are a staple of public libraries. Often, the mentally ill and homeless are labeled as “problem patrons” by library professionals. This label is primarily linked, however, to problem behaviors, as opposed to problems with library usage (Ferrell 2010). Recent evolution in thinking has resulted in policy focused more on these behavioral problems, as opposed to categorizing groups as “problems” (Ferrell 2010). This shift comes as more research is produced showing the important role the public library plays in the lives of disenfranchised groups. The important social services the library provides for the disenfranchised will be presented in the findings section of this report. This section is concerned with two relevant roles the public library has traditionally played in the lives of disenfranchised communities.

First, the library serves as a platform for a multifaceted type of community building. These opportunities begin at the brick and mortar level of the library building itself, and extend to the various classes and materials available for lifelong learning. Libraries are offering more social space, as evidenced by an increase in group study areas, in-library coffee shops, and used books stores benefitting library foundations (McCabe 2001). In a more intangible sense, the public library offers a space in which a historically segmented community can come together and strengthen its bonds. Swinbourne (2010) describes a unique aspect of the library: “an absence of an ‘other.’ When people are treated equally, with equal right to use, and are afforded equal respect, there is little possibility of a *them versus us* situation arising” (21). Because everyone is presumed equal within the walls of the library, marginalized and non-marginalized groups are afforded opportunities to interact and learn from one another, a rare occurrence in the outside world.

These interactions are the second benefit of the public library for marginalized communities. Visiting the library offers a prospect for normalizing that is traditionally unavailable. The library is a safe place “in which those on the fringes of society can ease themselves into a fuller participation within society” (Swinbourne 2010, 21). The public library is often touted as society’s great equalizer, and the disenfranchised face far less discrimination within its walls

then they do in the larger community setting (Swinbourne 2010). The library allows for those on the margins of society to overcome social isolation, a critical opportunity for those who want to work towards a higher socioeconomic status.

Chapter Three: Methods

This section will outline the methods used to conduct the study, including the sample, procedures used to collect data, measures, and approach to data analysis. Qualitative data was collected in the form of one-on-one interviews with City of Eugene library staff and volunteers. The purpose of these interviews was to understand how library staff members view their roles as de facto social service providers and the local evolution between social services and the public library.

Sample

The sample consisted of forty-two City of Eugene Public Library employees, including two volunteers and four branch employees. Research participants were entirely self-selected. All library staff was given the opportunity to participate in interviews through a sign-up process administered by a Library Manager.

Data Collection Procedures

The interviews, with the exception of the branch employees, were conducted in-person at the Downtown Branch of the Eugene Public Library. Interviews with branch employees took place at the interviewees' place of work, either the Bethel or Sheldon Branch. Interviews took place in December of 2011 and January of 2012.

Interview slots were made available from 9a.m. to 5p.m., Monday thru Friday during one week in December, and one week in January. In this way, staff members could schedule their own interview on a sign-up sheet, which was available on both the library's private intranet system, and on the office door where the interviews were held. The latter process allowed for last minute sign-ups. Each interview slot was allotted one hour, however actual interview times ranged from twenty minutes to the full hour.

Measures

Each interviewee was asked the same set of questions, written by the researcher (see Appendix A). Participants were not provided with a copy of the questions prior to being interviewed. They were provided with a brief description of the research when the sign-ups were announced, as well as by the researcher at the beginning of the interview.

When appropriate, additional follow-up questions were asked to clarify or expand a participant's answer. In some cases, the order of questions was switched to encourage a more conversational tone. Two additional questions were formally added to the interview script after the researcher noted it being mentioned in nearly every interview (see Appendix C).

Analysis

Interviews were recorded with participants consent. In addition, the researcher took handwritten notes that were later reviewed to determine major themes from the interviews. The primary method of analysis was a review of the recorded interviews. Once major themes were identified, the researcher read back through her handwritten notes to extract the most relevant information, organizing this information under the appropriate overarching theme.

Chapter Four: Findings

In order to fully understand the issues that affect the public library in Eugene, we must first explore the subject of marginalized communities in the library on a more macro level. This chapter presents the findings from interviews of library staff regarding the role of the Eugene Library as a type of social service provider in the community and what public libraries and their staff face when providing for marginalized patrons such as the homeless and mentally ill. Results are grouped into several categories and presented in a more or less order from macro to micro scale.

The Current Recession

The economic recession that has plagued this country for the past four years has had some interesting impacts on the public library. For example, many staff members who were interviewed cited an increase in patrons who had never had, or chosen, to use the library before. While an increase in patrons is generally looked at as a positive, some staff members noted that this particular group sometimes has a certain attitude about the library. Specifically, some patrons exhibit a sense of entitlement when they are not accustomed to using the library for their information needs. The majority of this patron subset is made up of people who now use the library for entertainment purposes. Entertainment is one of, if not the, most sought after resource the library has to offer. Staff members described this as the area where most contact is made between homeless patrons and other community members, and in which that sense of entitlement can cause tension.

The recession has also made marginalized patrons and the issues associated with serving them more visible than in previous years. While the new library building (discussed in the next chapter) allows for more patrons, the recession has also affected the number of those patrons that spend all day in the library. As one staff member stated, “the worse the economy gets, the more people use the library as a refuge from day to night.” This increase in patrons who stay all day in the library leads to a number of different issues, including surges in behavioral issues, burdens on staff time, and stressed library resources. The increased pressure on staff time is

especially problematic as more and more patrons need assistance using the computers for employment related activities, such as writing resumes, performing job searches, and filling out applications. A number of staff members discussed the fact that many patrons who used to be at work during the day were now at the library using the computers to find employment.

Advances in Technology

A major reason job seekers go to the library when searching for employment is because the massive technological advancements that have happened over the past few decades. Specifically, the majority of employment applications are now only accessible online. For those patrons who do not have regular access to an internet-equipped computer, this can be a detriment to their employment possibilities. Furthermore, in terms of equality, library staff must continually balance the needs of those who are in desperate situations (i.e. chronically unemployed), versus those who are who are just “killing time” on the public computers.

There is a constant need for librarians to show people how to use computers (one staff member anecdotally referred to her colleagues and herself as “the free tech. support of the world”), and many staff members cited the struggle of how to best serve the “internet unaware.” Without this help, many patrons would risk being left behind, and thus disrupting the value of equality that the library holds. This concern does not only pertain to job searches, but to a number of other library resources as well. For example, the library catalogue is entirely computer-based and holds for materials are requested through an online system, among other online resources. As one staff member described it, the library “must be careful not to create another marginalized population (the computer illiterate), by leaving them behind when moving to more online and computer-based resources.” When interviewing library staff, it was clear that there is a desire for the library to remain up to date with current technological advancements, while at the same time avoiding widening the gap between those with and without computer literacy.

Balancing Patron Needs and the Library's Capacity

The various levels of computer literacy serves as a good example of the balance library workers must find when serving the disenfranchised. There are a number of obstacles when trying to strike this balance. First, the library is one of the few government agencies that serve all age groups. Because of this the library must offer a wide range of resources to fit the varying needs of patrons at different ages. For example, many younger patrons, who may not have been homeless for long, will be interested in keeping in touch with friends and finding a place to stay. Older homeless patrons will most likely be interested in finding local resources or a job in the area.

Another issue facing library workers is that they cannot determine the needs of patrons without the patrons' help. This may seem to be an obvious issue, but it was one that was brought up in many of the interviews with library staff. A number of those interviewed stated that the majority of homeless patrons would not ask a staff member for assistance. There are many speculative reasons as to why this is, such as they do not know to ask, do not know what exactly to ask for, do not want to be a nuisance, or pride gets in the way. Furthermore, many homeless patrons are not seeking any specific information, but rather simple interactions with library staff. Many of those interviewed stated they were happy to oblige this desire for human contact, but were also quick to note that they were well aware of exactly how much time they were able to spend with each patron (as per library staff protocol). As one staff member put it, "[staff must] find a balance between being friendly, and [becoming] a friend." It can also be the difference between what staff can provide in a regulatory sense versus what their morals tell them to do. Many staff would be more than happy to have long conversations with patrons who lack a certain level of human contact. At the same time they realize that this cannot happen at the expense of other patrons seeking information.

This challenge exemplifies the balance that library staff must find between social worker and librarian. The library is often the first place someone in need of resources goes for help. Because of this, library staff must be prepared to field inquiries regarding sensitive, difficult,

and often vital needs. Furthermore, they must complete this task without any formal social service training. While the library cannot provide patrons with actual social services (such as medical or psychiatric care), they are able to connect those in need to these resources. This is an especially important service that the library provides, particularly in light of the current economic recession. Many staff members spoke of the boundary between social worker and librarian becoming more blurred as outside social services shrink due to economic stress.

Bias

Many staff members discussed bias in relation to serving the disenfranchised, primarily in terms of how to identify those in need. Specifically, there is concern among staff about how to identify those in need without utilizing potentially harmful stereotypes. The primary mitigation technique that the library uses is the patron code of conduct. The majority of those interviewed mentioned the code of conduct, specifically the way it is consistently applied to all patrons. This allows staff to handle disruptive behavior in a general way that avoids labeling any one person as a “problem patron.” There are rarely exceptions made in the code of conduct. One interviewee made it clear that “it is easier to change an entire rule if there is an issue,” rather than to make an exception for a single individual. This statement shows the high level of importance to library places on equally applying rules and regulations with patrons.

A Diverse Community

The City of Eugene has had a historically diverse population. And as one staff member aptly noted, “As diverse of a population [that exists] in the city, comes to the library.” While the diversity in Eugene has been one of socioeconomic status over racial diversity, the library remains an



EPL, Bethel Branch

important catalyst for promoting diversity of all kinds. Many staff members discussed issues of diversity within the library. One staff member noted that the public library has historically played a part in fostering diversity “beyond just black and white.” This is an important function in a traditionally white community like Eugene that in recent years has experienced an influx of small but visible niche communities such as Hispanics in West Eugene. A poignant example of this is the large (albeit now almost gone) Korean population that used to reside near the Bethel branch of the Eugene Public Library. The library served as a pillar of that community, serving as a resource center, as well as allowing that community to interact with the larger community. The library went so far as to include Korean in their signage, including the main outside Public Library sign.

One aspect of diversity is the varying experience (or lack thereof) that each individual patron has had with the public library. This is an especially important consideration in relation to the ethnic minorities who settle in Eugene. Many staff members discussed the fact that, because the public library is a government institution, immigrant community members, both documented and undocumented, may be leery of coming into the library for their information needs. In order to remain a relevant institution in the community, the library must continually stay abreast of the varied information needs of its patrons. This can be a complex task in a diverse community like Eugene. Furthermore, as one staff member stated: “Keeping a finger on the pulse of what the community needs is more than just knowing the demographics [of the city’s population].”

The Library as Community Center

A key aspect of Eugene’s population that was mentioned by a number of interviewees was general support for the library. As one staff member described, Eugene is “really blessed to have extraordinary support for the library. Not all libraries have that luxury.” Never was this support more evident than when community members voted to fund construction of a new library building in downtown (the new library building will be discussed in the next section). In fact, Eugene has had a history of pro-library funding that demonstrates exactly how valued that

institution is in the community. The library is both literally and figuratively at the heart of the city. Many staff members described the library as a cohesive place for the community to come together in a wholly democratic setting.

The library also plays a critical role in recording and preserving Eugene's history. In this way, the library "provides a sense of place, beyond just a brick and mortar building." In addition, many staff members pointed out that the library receives support from the city government as well as patrons. One staff member explained that, while there were furloughs as part of necessary budget cuts, they were spread across everyone equally and there were no layoffs. (Despite some reports that there were in fact layoffs, a number of staff members denied that claim, clarifying that a couple of library employees had retired, and their positions were not filled).

The New Library Building

Despite these budget cuts, the library, because of immense community support, has been able to accomplish enormous improvements in the last decade. The most prominent aspect of Eugene's diversity is in terms of the various socioeconomic statuses that make up its population. A number of staff members noted that Eugene is "a magnet for [transient] populations because of the temperate weather, climate of tolerance, and large number of relatively good social services available." While the homeless community has always used the public library to fulfill some of its information and other needs, there was near consensus among the staff members interviewed that the new library building, built downtown in 2002, increased the presence of the homeless community both in and outside of the library.

However, this increase has been noted in non-marginalized patrons as well. It was noted that the new



EPL old building, 13th & Charnelton

library has a much larger foothold in the community than the old building. It is estimated that 4,000 people a day visit the downtown branch of the Eugene Public Library. In addition, the library has maintained its accessibility (despite budget cuts) by remaining open seven days, sixty-four hours, a week. One staff member suggested that the new building serves as a symbol for Eugene's impending downtown revitalization, something long-term community members have been hoping for. The new building is four times larger than the older one, and boasts energy-efficient and low maintenance features. One staff member proudly stated that the new library "is the kind of place you would take someone who was visiting [Eugene]." With the bigger building size also came increased resources for library patrons. These included public meeting rooms, increased programming, a used bookstore (benefitting the Friends of the Library Foundation), and an extremely popular coffee shop on the ground floor. As one staff member aptly put it, the library has, in a way, become "Eugene's library and study center," and is also a huge source of community pride.



EPL Construction Site, 10th & Charnelton

In addition to the increased building size, the new library building's location has been the source of a number of issues specifically related to marginalized populations. The new building is located on the corner of 10th and Charnelton Streets. To its South is the newly constructed LCC live-

learn building, and to the East, directly across the street, is Eugene Station, the central mass transit stop for the city. Nearly all of the staff interviewed agreed that the location of the new library building across the street from Eugene Station encourages transients, especially teens, use of the library. One staff member suggested that the library has become "more of a waystation for everything that drifts into [the] city center." The library seems to serve as a collection point for anyone in Eugene

who not only find themselves with information needs, but simply in the proximity of downtown as well.

According to those interviewed, the location of the new library building has manifested both positive and negative consequences as they relate to the transient community. Many staff members who were interviewed viewed the increased number of transients in the library as a positive thing. They thought that, with increased numbers, more homeless community members would avail themselves of the library resources than before. However, a number of those interviewed cited an increased number of behavioral issues arising with the upturn of patrons spending the entire day in the library. A few staff members noted that before the move to the new building there was not a clearly defined code of conduct for library patrons. A new code of conduct was developed for use in the new library building, and has, according to those interviewed, been an effective tool to mitigate many behavioral issues. A more detailed discussion of the code of conduct is included in the following chapter.

Finally, those interviewed discussed safety concerns as another issue that surfaced with the move to the new building. Several staff members agreed that, while the majority of the Eugene community was excited about the new building, many people were hesitant to come downtown due to apprehensions about safety, especially around the front and surrounding blocks of the library. One staff member described a “period of time whe[n] [the library] had to fight negative publicity,” specifically about the number of people loitering outside the new library building. However, according to those interviewed, the library took a proactive approach to alleviating these safety concerns, teaming up with the city to implement a number of innovative methods. The library partnered with the City of Eugene, which moved the library’s property line from the front of the building out to the street. This allowed the library to ban smoking and riding bikes in front of the library. The library also began placing a security guard outside the new building to monitor activities. While panhandling and busking (for thirty minute periods) are still allowed, the new security measures allow the library to prevent behaviors that are contrary to library policies. Finally, the library began playing music on

outdoor speakers to “control the emotional tone of the space.” The same cd (mostly Classical music) would play all day, discouraging loitering and making other patrons feel more comfortable entering the library.

Security

In addition to the safety improvements discussed above, the library also hired security guards to monitor the new library building. This was an important step to ensuring the comfort of all patrons. As one staff member stated: “The first mission of the library is to be a library. That means everyone has to feel comfortable and safe.” Another interviewee described the security guards as being “the eyes and ears” of the library, a critical resource for busy staff members who cannot be in multiple places at once. Despite there being consensus among those interviewed about the importance of security guards at the library, there was some debate over the hiring practices used to hire security guards. Security guards at the library are contract workers hired through St. Vincent de Paul. Because of their contract status, guards make minimum wage and do not receive benefits. A few staff members thought that security guards should be hired on as library employees in order to receive benefits and better pay. These staff members also felt that, because it is often the security guards who form relationships with marginalized patron populations, allowing them more job security would also lead to better patron relations. However, many of those interviewed felt that the current system for hiring security guards worked well. Speaking of the concern over high turnover and potential low expectations for contract workers, a number of staff members pointed out that security guards often work at the library for a number of years and that library human resources can, and does, “demand a certain level of service” from contract workers.

Advancements in Library Services for the Homeless

In addition to the new library building, the Eugene Public Library has implemented significant changes in its services for homeless community members. Interview responses made clear that library administration have been proactive in their approach to preparing staff for dealing with marginalized populations, such as the homeless or mentally ill. One way they have

accomplished this is through increased staff trainings with a variety of social service agencies throughout the community. These trainings have covered a range of topics including how to diffuse tense situations with patrons and how to talk to patrons who suffer from a mental illness. The library has also partnered with Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (Cahoots), a crisis intervention service provided through the Clinic in Eugene. Cahoots provides the library with crisis intervention services as well as trainings for library staff.

Perhaps the greatest advancement in services for marginalized communities is the implementation of a library card program that allows homeless community members to receive library cards (and the subsequent privileges that come with being a cardholder), despite not having a permanent address. Patrons who are homeless can receive a card by providing the library with verification that they are receiving social services within Eugene city limits. Homeless patrons must still have photo identification to apply for a library card, which they can get with help from Catholic Services. Many of the staff members interviewed discussed the ability to use the long-term internet computers as the primary reason someone who is homeless would want to get a library card; without a card, patrons are limited to the 15-minute computers.

While the majority of those interviewed agreed that providing homeless patrons with library cards was a positive aspect of library services, many pointed out that the system is not without its problems. For example, one staff member confirmed that there are “significantly more materials lost on [homeless patrons’] cards,” most likely because many homeless people live in shelters that do not allow for storage of personal belongings. Some staff members also expressed concern over the fairness of providing homeless patrons with library cards. Because Lane County is not on a countywide system of libraries, only those who live within the city limits of Eugene are able to receive free library cards. Those who live outside of the city limits must pay an annual fee of \$120 for a library card. This rule also applies to library staff that live outside of the city limits. A few staff members who were interviewed felt that this system is inherently unfair because, technically, homeless community members do not contribute in the

same way other cardholders do because they do not pay taxes. However, the majority of those interviewed were supportive of allowing homeless community members cardholder privileges.

Those on the margins of society have seen significant improvements in their accessible to the Eugene Public Library, especially since the construction of the new library building. Internet access has increased, ensuring job seekers are able to access online job postings and applications. Furthermore, the EPL has developed a program allowing homeless patrons to receive library cards, provided they have verification that they are receiving local social services. This is an improvement of the restricted “homeless cards” that were issued in years past. The current cards are identical to traditional library cards. While some are opposed to this program on the basis that the library is primarily funded with taxpayer dollars, the level of equality given to all patrons is generally viewed as a positive.

How the Disenfranchised Use the Library: Basic Needs

From the moment a patron enters the doors, the public library offers a basic shelter: a dry, warm (or cool), brick and mortar building. This shelter is sometimes the only resource many homeless community members seek from the library. One staff member noted that “many of these [homeless] patrons are just trying to meet basic survival requirements,” and the library fulfills some of those needs *without stigma*. That is an important aspect of the shelter the library provides. Many of those interviewed differentiated the library from other social services because patrons are not expected to be seeking any specific service when visiting the library. They are welcome to spend all day in the library, free of charge, without any requirements for use (beyond adhering to the COC).

In addition, the library has maintained over sixty open hours a week, despite budget cuts. Many group homes and shelters that provide overnight shelter require residents to leave for a certain amount of time each day. The library serves as a reliable option for shelter during these daytime hours. This is especially important in a climate like Eugene’s, where rain is a constant

part of the winter months. In addition, the library offers a level of security that homeless patrons do not experience in their typical lives. For example, at the aforementioned shelters, visitors are usually not provided with lockers to store their belongings. While the library, too, does not provide such a service, homeless patrons can find a sort of relief from carrying all of their belongings with them, by being able to set their belongings down while in the library. It is important to note, however, that the COC clearly states that patrons must stay with their belongings at all times, or they will be considered abandoned.

Not all staff members think these relatively lenient policies towards lingering in the library are in the best interest of all library patrons. One staff member noted that “if anything, [the library] makes it too easy to stay [all day].” According to those who were concerned with marginalized patrons spending all day in the library, there is the potential for other patrons to feel uncomfortable. However, the majority of those interviewed said that because the library is a public place, constructed to serve all community members, that as long as people are following the rules, they should be welcomed.

Social Service Referrals and Job Searches

Besides shelter, homeless patrons often use the library as an informal referral service for other local social services. The Eugene Public Library has been extremely proactive in maintaining up-to-date databases of available social services. They have even partnered with local social services to provide services. One form of thinking behind offering referrals is that, the more the staff can help marginalized patrons get on a path to better their situation, the more likely they are to become taxpayers, and thus to support the library. More than that, one of the core values of the library is to reduce the gap between the different social classes (an in-depth discussion on library values appears in the next chapter). Referring homeless and other marginalized patrons to organizations that can provide them the help they need is a concrete method to realize this principle.

Another way disenfranchised patrons can begin to better their lot is to find a job. Because the majority of job applications are now online, this requires access to the Internet, something many of these patrons do not possess. The library offers one free 15-minute Internet computer on a first-come, first-served basis. There are also public computers with Internet access. Patrons can reserve the computers for up to four hours per day, in 60 or 90 minute increments. These computers require a library card and password. Patrons without a library card can purchase a one-hour pass for \$3.00. Several of the staff members interviewed stated that the majority of patron questions have to do with help using the computers. While some staff found this tedious, they all agreed that it was their job to help where they could. However, they also noted that they are unable to sit with a patron and help fill out applications, write resumes, etc. To fill this need, the library offers several computer classes and resume writing workshops to assist job seekers.

Opportunities to Socialize

Not all the marginalized patrons come to the library to utilize the computers and other resources. According to those interviewed, the majority of the disenfranchised patrons who visit the library come for the shelter it provides. According to many interviewees, when these patrons do interact with library staff, it is often for conversation purposes, rather than to acquire any specific resource. As one staff member suggested, talking with a librarian, even about nothing, “may be the only heartfelt conversation [a homeless patron] may have all day.” While staff members are well aware of the amount of time they can spend on each patron, the majority also seemed willing to indulge in these conversations as long as they did not come at the expense of helping another patron. It seemed to be a core value of the staff who were interviewed that the library should help patrons get what they need, no matter if it is a tangible library resource or not.

According to those interviewed, these opportunities to socialize, with library staff or other patrons, are crucial to providing disenfranchised community members a normalizing experience.

On a basic level, coming to the library and interacting with staff brings marginalized patrons out of the isolation many of them live in. In a more complex sense, the library offers a more organic normalizing opportunity than other social services. This is because the library is mostly free from the “political ideology” and backing of city initiatives that often intimidates and keeps marginalized community members from seeking other services. Finally, the COC, clearly delineated and equitably enforced, forces disenfranchised visitors to follow the same rules as every other patron. However, this also means that they are viewed and treated the same as everyone else, without regard to their socioeconomic status, living situation, background, etc.

Creating an Informal News Network

Beyond socializing with library staff and other patrons, the library also provides a safe and localized space in which members of marginalized communities can network with one another. This is important in communities that often rely on word-of-mouth techniques in order to spread news and offer help to one another. As was stated earlier, the library is often the first place someone in need ends up. In interviews this was cited as a development of the informal news network among homeless community members. According to those interviewed, many patrons in need of social service resources who ended up at the library were directed there by another member of a marginalized community.

The networking opportunity the library provides is especially important considering the transitory lifestyles many marginalized community members live. According to a number of library staff, it is difficult to build relationships with the homeless because many of them are in a temporary situation and can often stop coming into the library for months at a time. Thus having an outlet for networking and communicating with others living transitory lifestyles is crucial for homeless community members. Furthermore, those who are in a potentially temporary situation (versus the chronically homeless), can use this network to gain knowledge of the best local resources for fulfilling their needs and accomplishing goals.

Empowerment

These aspects of the library are important sources of empowerment for disenfranchised patrons. One staff member described the fact that “marginalized groups are so used to hearing ‘no.’ While it may take [library staff] more time to help them understand [...] we can find the ‘yes.’” As was mentioned in the previous section, the library is one of the last remaining places in society that one can go without any motives, and, perhaps most importantly, without any money. Because of this, marginalized community members, like all patrons, can make the library what they want it to be. Its resources are truly malleable enough to fit virtually the needs of anyone, even if they do not yet know what those needs are. Perhaps most importantly, disenfranchised patrons do not have to prove who they are, or what their situation is, when visiting the library. This fact alone distinguishes the library from other social services. Welcoming everyone with open arms, and helping anyone with any need, automatically endows patrons with a sense of empowerment when visiting the library.

Beyond the sense of equality provided by the library, marginalized community members also receive a sense of enfranchisement from the physical resources the library provides. Many of the resources that are available, even without a library card, would be cost-based outside of the library. However, anyone is welcome to come to the library and browse books, use limited computers, and attend the numerous programming opportunities, all without associated fees. This is especially important to homeless community members who typically do not have many of their own possessions. The materials available at the Eugene Public Library belong to the citizens of Eugene, including the homeless. This sense of ownership while in the library is another way in which the library empowers the disenfranchised in the community.

Patron Code of Conduct

The binding force that governs patron interactions in the library is the Patron Code of Conduct (COC). According to the pamphlet given to all patrons when they sign up for a library card, the purpose of the COC is to:

- protect the rights and safety of library patrons,
- protect the rights and safety of staff members,
- preserve and protect the library's materials, facilities, and property.

The current COC is a recent development in the Eugene Public Library's history, with the current form being developed in conjunction with the construction of the new library building. Nearly all of those interviewed agreed that the COC has had a positive impact on patron relations, both with staff and amongst themselves.

In fact, interviews with library staff suggested that the vast majority of patrons do not ever break any rules in the COC. One staff member estimated that "eighty percent of people will not break rules. Those that do are having a bad day, or it is just their way of life." Many interviewees speculated that because the library is an important form of shelter, many homeless patrons were more aware than others of the rules and being polite, for fear of receiving a restriction. A restriction can be as short as the remainder of a business day, and as long as a year. This is the primary consequence of continually being in breach of the COC. A patron can appeal their restriction. The Library Director and another administrator, who make the final decision together, then hear the appeal. According to many of those interviewed, marginalized patrons are well aware of the risk they take when breaking a rule. If they receive a restriction, a significant part of their livelihood is gone.

The COC also takes the pressure off of the staff. Having a clear set of rules, and applying them consistently to everyone, lessens the burden on staff to explain why the person is being asked to stop their behavior or leave the library. A number of those interviewed were clear to note that consistency was a key aspect of the COC. As one staff member described, if the COC is ignored, or too many exceptions are made, "other [patrons] might be discouraged about [staff's] commitment to being a library, and thus [may become] less likely to use the resources." Equitably applying the COC is also important to maintain the library's cultural standing in society. The public library is generally thought of as a place of learning, specifically one that is

open to everyone. When rules are regularly ignored, there is the potential for one group to suffer at the hands of another.

Guiding Library Values

The Patron Code of Conduct, with its emphasis on rules that equally apply to all library visitors, exemplifies a core value of the Eugene Public Library: equality. Historically the public library has been touted as “the great equalizer.” As one staff member described, “even if you do not have a home, you are wealthy within the walls of the library.” Based on interviews done with library staff, in addition to equal access to library materials, other institutional and personal values include sharing resources, maintaining patron privacy, offering uncensored and unbiased information, and fostering lifelong learning.

Responsibility of Library Staff

Many of these values are derived from what library staff views as their responsibility to patrons. The overarching consensus among those interviewed was that staff’s primary responsibility is to treat every patron the same, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, etc. More specifically was the belief that every patron should be treated with respect, civility, and dignity. An important aspect of this principle, especially in light of the COC, is to judge patrons by their behavior, not by expectations of what their behavior should be.

This value is closely tied to the needs of marginalized patrons previously discussed.. Even when patrons come in without specific or tangible needs, most library staff members feel they have a responsibility to welcome them. One staff member clarified, stating that everyone should feel welcomed, listened to, and valued when in the library, even if they just came to have a chat or to socialize. The common belief among those interviewed was that a patron’s reason to coming to the library should not affect the way they are treated. Besides feeling they were responsible for having certain resources readily accessible (such as referrals to local social services), the most important objective was to make everyone feel welcomed and that they had been heard.

One staff member articulated it as “coming from the viewpoint of seeing every individual as a human being.”

Equal Access

Equality, according to those interviewed, means not only treating everyone the same while they are in the library, but also ensuring equal access to library materials and resources. This encompasses a variety of subjects including accessibility for the physically disabled, offering materials for blind and deaf patrons, and making resources for available for all socioeconomic statuses. In the broadest sense, equality in the library means welcoming everyone no matter how they define themselves, or are defined by others. This overarching ideal surrounding equal access is democracy. As one staff member noted, “for democracy to work, people must have access to knowledge.”

One method to promote equal access is by helping people gain necessary skills to thrive, tempered by the responsibility to the greatest number of patrons. Many staff members claimed that it would be wrong to help one person while others suffered. This claim is epitomized in the protocol for receiving a Eugene Public Library Card. As stated earlier, homeless community members are able to receive library cards with verification that they are receiving services from a local social service agency. Detractors believe this system is fundamentally unfair because the library is funded through taxpayer money, and the homeless do not technically contribute. However, many homeless community members never sign up for library cards. Additionally, staff members who were interviewed were clear that, no matter what side of the library card debate one is on, everyone can agree that all community members are welcome, with or without being a cardholder. This includes being able to use the 15-minute Internet accessible computer, meeting in common areas of the library, and free attendance at library programs.

Maintain Patron Privacy

One of the most widely used resources the library offers is a set of public computers. When people visit the library, it is important that they know their information is protected. Likewise,

the staff members that were interviewed felt that maintaining patron confidentiality is a key aspect of their jobs. As a library policy, borrower information is never shared, including children's, and the public computers are set up to protect patron privacy by clearing information every time a new patron signs in. In addition, maintaining privacy means exercising lenient policies in regards to what patrons can use the public computers for. Essentially, anything that is legal is permissible on library computers. (Child pornography, for example, is not allowed, while pornography portrayed with adults, while perhaps frowned upon, is). The primary reason that there are so few qualifications on what is allowed on public computers is the library's foundational belief of freedom of speech and access to information. In addition, those interviewed discussed the inability of library staff to dictate what types of activities are personally meaningful for an individual. For example, playing a computer game or spending time on Facebook may be just as important as writing a resume. These seemingly more trivial activities may actually be a person's only opportunity to connect with friends or experience a form of social interaction.

While there are very few restrictions on what activities are permitted on the public computers, conserving patron privacy means placing certain restrictions on what types of programs are available to use on the computers. For example, there is no built-in email client. This can be a barrier in certain situations, like applying for a job off Craigslist, where you need a built-in email client to respond to postings for jobs or apartments. For patrons who are unfamiliar with the various technological options for getting around such a barrier, the public computers may seem overwhelming and even potentially useless.

Provide Uncensored Information

Despite the emphasis placed on sharing resources, there is not always consensus on what is appropriate information to available for the general public. Despite debate surrounding what is proper material, the library maintains the belief that information should be unbiased and uncensored. This means that no matter what the personal beliefs of library staff, they are responsible for offering materials representative of a variety of viewpoints. One staff member

described this principle as ensuring that the library has sufficient materials to benefit patrons' quest for knowledge, anywhere it takes them. The overarching ideal surrounding this goal is that of democracy. Similarly to the ideas surrounding equal access to information, offering uncensored information is a vital part of a democratic society. "Without egalitarian access to information, democracy fails. We are much less tolerant if we do not see how others thing about things." To ensure that this knowledge is both comprehensive and genuine, information must be uncensored, and offer a wide variety of perspectives.

Foster Lifelong Learning

Along with offering information that is unbiased in nature includes providing patrons with opportunities for lifelong learning. This is a value on which the original public libraries were built, and one that continues to be infused in current models. One way to accomplish this is to offer programming that enriches people's lives. With the move to the new building, the Eugene Public Library drastically increased programming, including author talks, computer classes, and concerts. The abridged mission statement of the Eugene Public Library is to open a world of information and ideas to its patrons. By offering a broad spectrum of accessible information, "from the most practical [needs] up to questions of the spirit," the library ensures that there will always be new ideas to explore, and facts to learn, for its patrons.

Chapter Five: Recommendations

Administer a Community Survey

One suggestion made during interviews was to administer a community survey in order to identify potential resources that patrons would like to see the library offer. The library puts a strong emphasis on keeping a finger on the pulse of its patrons needs. A community survey would be a viable method for pinpointing, as well as classifying, those needs. Because library staff time is currently pressured because of budget cuts, the library should consider hiring an outside consultant to write, administer, and analyze the survey. The University of Oregon's Planning, Public Policy, and Management Program requires a unique service learning course for first-year planning students. In this course (the Community Planning Workshop), teams of students, along with a second-year Project Manager, contract with Oregon communities to complete a variety of projects. This program would be one viable option for completing a community survey.

From a planning perspective, involving community stakeholders is a key component of successful decision-making processes. First, people are more likely to exhibit long-term support of a decision that they had a part in making. Allowing community members to express their desired library resources will help ensure that when they library needs support, for example financial support from voters, it will come from the community. In addition, the EPL prides itself on being a relevant and important part of the community it serves. A fundamental aspect of this is remaining in touch with the evolving needs of the Eugene's populace. A community survey would be the most effective way to assess current information and other needs of library users.

Implement a Specific Marketing Campaign

Based on the research presented here, library staff generally feels that the public does not completely realize the extent of resources the library offers. This is especially true for what is

available to local marginalized groups. To remedy this, the library should consider a marketed plan specifically targeted at educating the community on the wide variety of programs and resources available from the library. If an entirely new marketing plan does not seem feasible, the new plan could be built upon current marketing efforts. Regardless of implementation strategy, the new plan should focus on the far-reaching resources the library offers. Part of the thinking behind the campaign should focus on educating how the library serves those in need. This should include better advertising of various computer classes that are offered, general advertising of referral services, and computer availability. Ideally, this type of campaign would help everyone in the community develop a clearer picture of all the positive aspects of the library, and thus what an important institution it is for fostering a strong community. This is important for establishments such as the library that often depend on the voters for their budgets. If the people of Eugene can learn how crucial the library really is, they will be more likely to vote to maintain it.

This type of marketing plan would have similar benefits, from a planning viewpoint, as the aforementioned community survey. In addition, part of efficacious planning projects is marketing; that is, keeping the community abreast of both plans and results. Similarly, the library could use the marketing campaign as an opportunity to educate respondents on both currently offered, and intended changes in library resources.

Expanded Community Partnerships

As people begin to realize everything the library has to offer, it stands to reason that more people may choose to visit. As library patronage increases, the library will need to utilize outside partnerships to fulfill the needs of the community. One way to do this is by forming partnerships with local community organizations. The downtown branch of EPL already partnered with CAHOOTS to provide crisis intervention for behavioral issues occurring in the library. Because this need is already filled, the library need not seek out partnerships for any sort of crisis intervention. However, some staff members that were interviewed suggested

becoming more closely connected with local social services in order to build a stronger referral service. One way to accomplish this would be an advertising campaign targeted at local social services. Word of mouth among the homeless community is a strong draw for those in need in Eugene. However, the library could further ensure that the library is seen as a viable option for those looking for help in Eugene. This campaign should include a comprehensive list of library resources that could be relevant for people in need of social services including: internet access, computer classes, and information on local community agencies.

Another benefit of additional community partnerships would be expanded programming options. The Sheldon and Bethel branches of the Eugene Public Library are much smaller than the downtown branch. They have already established partnerships with local community centers in order to gain more space to hold larger library events. While the downtown branch does have ample space for library events, developing options for other venues would not only increase available space, but would potentially attract community members who do not frequent the library.

Planning theory details a number of benefits of community partnerships. As mentioned above, partnering with other community organizations, either private or public, allow for an increase in pooled resources, as well as access to more and diverse constituencies. Additionally, by combining the expertise of many individuals in different fields, pressure will be alleviated from library staff to be everything to those in need. Efficiency is also increased when resources are pooled. In planning, community partnerships allow for the maximum use of available resources, something that a government agency like the library, especially in a time of economic cutbacks, could certainly benefit from.

Additional Training Opportunities for Library Staff

With increased library patronage comes more pressure on staff to serve effectively. The people that work that library provide its foundation. They are the face of the library, and first to respond when issues arise. Because of this, training should be an integral part of their work.

This recommendation is also in line with the American Library Association’s Policy 61, which states that efforts should be made to promote “training to sensitize library staff to issues affecting poor people and to attitudinal and other barriers that hinder poor people’s use of libraries” (ALA 2012).

Currently, library staff is offered sporadic training opportunities. These trainings happen off the clock, and are optional. Many of those interviewed suggested having required staff trainings. In addition, there was a high level of interest in having more regular training options. Training subjects could be determined by a combination of staff requests and emerging community partnerships. Increased and broader trainings would also provide distinct benefits for branch staff, which often feel less prepared to deal with issues stemming from marginalized populations. Finally, staff says they have noticed an increase of patrons dealing with mental health issues in the past few years. Having a consistent training schedule, as well as an outlet for staff input on training subjects, the library could ensure that they are keeping pace with evolving community needs.

The study of urban planning is based on having experts in the built environment and communities provide cities with the best advice on how to develop and grow the communities they serve. Similarly, library staff members are often viewed as experts in providing the wide variety of services the library offers. As has been discussed in this report, the library’s role is multidimensional and ever evolving. Just as planners must remain abreast of current trends in the built environment and community building theory, so too must library staff educate themselves on patrons changing needs. Those who serve community members through face-to-face contact—planners, librarians, and clerks at city hall—are stewards of the community, and are expected to be aware of the ways in which the community they serve is constantly changing.

Conclusion

The research above paints a complex picture about an equally complex issue. Homelessness in the library is not a recent development, and much research as been done on the subject.

However, in our rapidly evolving world, especially in terms of economic crisis and swift technological developments, library professionals and researchers will be faced with

The Eugene Public Library supports an informed community, lifelong learning and the love of reading by providing access for all city residents to the universe of ideas and information.

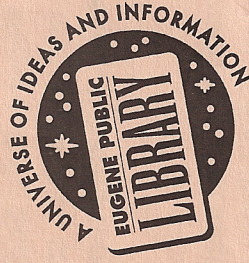
We have a Library Code of Conduct to:

- protect the rights and safety of library patrons,
- protect the rights and safety of staff members,
- preserve and protect the library's materials, facilities, and property.

This Code of Conduct applies to all three Eugene Public Library locations (Downtown Library, Bethel Branch, and Sheldon Branch) including the sidewalk and other areas surrounding the library.

Someone who violates these rules may be asked to leave the Library and not allowed to return to any Library premises for a period of time.

Patron Code of Conduct



541-682-5450
www.eugene-or.gov/library

Downtown Library
100 West 10th Ave.

Bethel Branch Library
1990 Echo Hollow Rd.

Sheldon Branch Library
1566 Coburg Rd.



Library, Recreation & Cultural Services

Prohibited Conduct

These rules are from the City of Eugene Administrative Order No. 57-11-01-F. The italic numbers and letters after each rule refer to that part of the Administrative Order.

- Not complying with a request made by a Library staff member or security officer. (1.015)
- Committing or attempting to commit any illegal activity. Such as engaging in sexual conduct, stealing Library materials, violating copyright laws. (1.030)
- Disruptive behavior that interferes with others' use of the Library or Library operations. Such as: loud noises, abusive or threatening language or gestures, running, offensive body odor. (1.030a)
- Improper use of Library restrooms, including but not limited to bathing, washing hair, preparing meals. (1.030a)
- Leaving a child under the age of ten unaccompanied by an adult. (1.030b)
- Selling, distributing, consuming, or possessing an open container of an alcoholic beverage. (1.030c)
- Being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol. (1.030c)
- Smoking or other use of tobacco. (1.030d)
- Eating food or drinking beverages inside the Library building, unless the beverage is in a closed re-sealable container. The exception is the Downtown Library Entry Garden. (1.030e)
- Bringing bicycles inside the Library building. Riding wheeled devices inside the Library, such as: skateboards, roller blades, wheeled shoes. (1.030f)
- Bringing animals inside the Library building, other than service animals (as defined by the ADA as a dog or miniature horse individually trained to provide assistance to someone with a disability). (1.030g)
- Soliciting, selling, or advertising any goods or services within the Library. (1.030h)
- Entering or remaining on Library premises after posted closed hours. Entering areas posted for use by staff only. (1.030i)
- Using library materials, furniture, or facilities in a way that is different from the intended purpose. (1.030j)
- Parking a vehicle on Library premises for purposes other than Library use. (1.030k)
- Violating the Library's computer use policy. (1.030l)
- Sleeping on Library premises. (1.030m)
- Using electronic equipment, including cell phones, at a volume that disturbs others. (1.030n)
- Being inside Library buildings without wearing a shirt, a bottom garment, or shoes. (1.030o)
- Possessing a weapon or visibly displaying any item that could be perceived as a potential weapon, such as box-cutters, knives, and mace. (1.030p and 1.030q)
- Soliciting, petitioning, or distributing written materials inside a Library building, other than through the use of designated public bulletin boards. (1.035)
- Leaving personal property unattended. (1.040)

Eugene Public Library Mission:

Eugene Public Library supports an informed community, lifelong learning, and the love of reading by providing access for all city residents to the universe of ideas and information.

Eugene Public Library Core Values:

1. Lifelong Learning and Literacy:

The Library supports the lifelong learning needs of community residents as they seek information and materials for personal growth and development, keep informed on topics of sustained and current interest, and engage in the pleasure of reading, hearing, and viewing diverse and intellectually stimulating collections of materials. We actively instill literacy skills and the love of learning in children.

2. Responsive Customer Service and Empowerment:

The Library strives to attain and sustain a high level of customer service, emphasizing the self-empowerment of users through the effective use of new technology. Our collections, programs, facilities, staff, and operations all align to maximize the satisfaction of library users.

3. Organizational and Professional Values:

As a division within the City of Eugene's Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department, the Library reflects and aligns with organizational values, managing and optimizing resources accountably to fulfill a consistent expectation of service. We develop our professional capacities through training and development. In our policies and practices we exhibit the time-honored values of our profession as professional embodied in the Freedom to Read Statement, the Library Bill of Rights and the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association (appended).

4. Community Gathering Place:

The Library is the hub of the community in ways that resonate far beyond the provision of information. The library is also a cultural center, a forum for democratic debate, an after school meeting center, a welcoming environment for those new to our shores and sanctuary of opportunity to the poor and underserved.

Appendix C- Interview Questions

1) Describe your role in the library.

- In this role, what groups/type of patrons do you interact with?
- How would you describe the interactions with these groups/patrons?

2) Based on your experience, and the interactions we just discussed, what do you see as the library's role in the community?

- What values are at the core of the services it offers?
- Are these institutional, personal, or other values?

3) In your time at the library, how has the library's role in the community evolved?

- Has this role also changed in regard to marginalized communities, such as the homeless and mentally ill?

4) What do you think, if anything, the library has to uniquely offer these marginalized patrons?

5) On a personal level, what do you think the library's responsibility is to these patrons?

Additional Questions:

1) What are your thoughts on the status of security guards at the library? Do you think they should be city employees?

2) What are your feelings on the ability of homeless community members to receive library cards (specifically in regards to some library employees living outside of district, and having to pay for their cards)?

Appendix D: Address Verification

Agency use has Required

ADDRESS VERIFICATION to register for Eugene Public Library Card

All information is REQUIRED.

Date (month, date, year):

Registrant's Name:

Registrant's Mailing Address:

A mailing address is required. Acceptable: registrant's workplace, a friend or relative's address, a service agency, a P.O. Box, or anywhere s/he expects to receive mail reliably.

Patron's Residential Address or Specific Location:

A specific location, including the nearest cross streets, is required so Library staff can determine whether that location is inside or outside the limits of the City of Eugene. (There is no out-of-pocket cost for a resident of Eugene to register for a library card; a non-resident must pay a fee.)

Registrant's Phone Number (if available):

I certify the residential address of the person named above.

Program Manager's Signature:

Date:

Program Manager's Name (print):

Agency Name:

Agency Mailing Address:

Agency Phone Number: