



Mendocino County Library Advisory Board

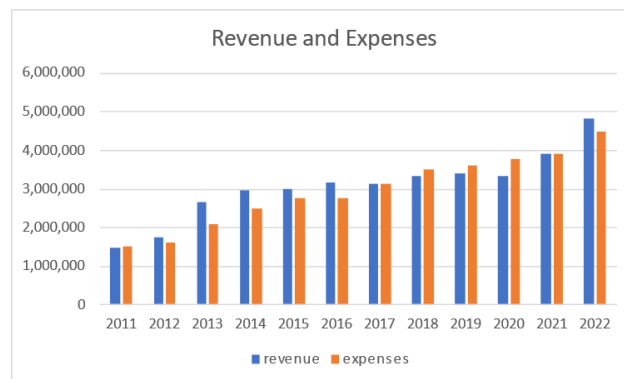
2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

If this report was a novel, it would be filled with mythical heroes working together to deal with the remnants of a plague and warring tribes divided over the future of the country and the world. Since this report is nonfiction, it is filled with local heroes collaborating to support the existence of libraries in the aftermath of covid and divisions over the future of the country and the world. Despite these difficult times, this has been an exciting and positive two years for our county libraries. Mendocino County Library branches have been open full-time since May 2021 and are serving even more patrons than before the pandemic. The A-87 overcharges have been resolved for now and the county library fund has been credited with those amounts. The 2019 Library Advisory Board Strategic Plan, to (1) develop a capital improvement fund, (2) improve or replace the Ukiah Library, and (3) develop long range plans for all current and future library branches is in motion. Although our County Library Director has resigned, she developed a Mendocino County Library Five-Year Strategic Plan that will serve our libraries well.

MEASURE O 2022 —CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND

In 2022, the citizens of Mendocino County passed Measure O to permanently dedicate 1/4 cent of the county sales tax to the library for materials and services, and to ensure that 40% of those funds would be available for much needed library building improvements. The attached chart shows the revenues and expenditures of the county library over the last 12 years which alone are not sufficient for capital improvements.



This measure was as a citizens' initiative, which meant county citizens gathering more than 4,500 signatures over three months while sitting at card tables with pens and petitions asking people to support our libraries. People were very supportive, and the initiative got on the ballot as Measure O and passed in November 2022. Funds started becoming available in July 2023. The LAB with the County Librarian began prioritizing the capital improvement needs of all the branches, and the LAB is responsible for recommending these Measure O funded projects to the Board of Supervisors for their approval.

UKIAH LIBRARY PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT OR REPLACEMENT

Measure O funds can be used for a feasibility study for to determine improvement or replacement of the Ukiah main branch. The branch has no community room, the staff offices are overcrowded, and the LAB is recommending that the Board of Supervisors give direction to county staff to proceed with a feasibility study for the Ukiah main branch. Attached is the Ukiah Library Needs Assessment, done in 2021, which has recommendations that could be a starting point for the feasibility study.

LONG RANGE PLANS FOR OTHER EXISTING AND FUTURE LIBRARY BRANCHES

The LAB has recommended, and the Board has approved the use of Measure O funds to replace the Willits Branch Library roof and install solar panels with battery backup. Willits has already received a California State Library grant for the project, and Measure O will provide the matching funds.

The Fort Bragg branch is in the midst of an expansion project, with the next-door lot purchased by the Friends and ready. The library has applied for a California State Library grant of \$3,000,000 which has a matching requirement which the LAB has recommended Measure O funds for. The Friends will donate \$500,000 in matching funds with the library capital improvement funds of approximately \$1,000,000 towards the project. The results of the grant application will be announced soon.

There will be other recommendations for use of the Measure O capital improvement funds coming up. The Five-Year Library Strategic Plan, which the LAB fully supports, looks at priorities for capital improvements for our libraries. Since this is permanent funding, it's possible to make long range plans that could include more local branches.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY AND WORKING GROUPS TO HELP FUND LIBRARIES

The volunteers who make up the Friends of the Library groups in Mendocino County are fierce supporters and advocates of our libraries. The Friends are often also the Working Groups since they are often made up of the same people. These groups support their branch library by raising funds for child, teen, and adult programs and sometimes, when funds have been scarce, for materials and building improvements. In the past few years, the Friends groups have collectively raised more than \$240,000.

It is the Friends' members and other county citizens who donated funds to the Citizens Initiative Committee to create and maintain awareness of the citizens' initiative that became Measure O, and it is Friends and others who sat outside grocery stores and post offices gathering signatures. It is the Friends and the supportive community members in Mendocino County who made the Measure so successful.

Some of the activities that the Friends are involved with include:

Round Valley Branch Library Friends provide a \$10,000 unrestricted yearly stipend to supplement the branch librarian's budget. In 2023, they are providing free reflective five numeral address signs for seniors, disabled, and low-income individuals. They also sponsor the Round Valley Farmers' Market every Friday on the premises and sponsor for The Round Valley Blackberry Festival, The Round Valley Skate Park Project, and The Round Valley Community Radio Project KYBU 96.9 FM.

The Friends provide a no cost meeting space for community groups including the Round Valley Area Municipal Advisory Council, the Fire and Disaster Preparedness Working Group, CalTrans Town Hall review of proposed improvements to Highway 162 Commercial Street.

In Laytonville, the Friends over the last five years raised the funds to rent and renovate a building that is now the newest library in our county, with its opening celebration in March of 2023. The Friends are also providing Grab'n'Go bags for kids in partnership with Healthy Start and having film and game nights.

The Ukiah Friends have recently worked with the library staff and Acting Director Barb Chapman to ease the overcrowding by creating more staff space in the library basement as a solution while the feasibility study is being done and a more permanent solution is implemented to improve the branch. In addition, the Ukiah Working Group is developing a Curb Appeal improvement Project to include a mural and is advocating for

new landscaping.

In Fort Bragg, the Friends have been raising funds for the library expansion onto the lot next door and have hired a consultant to help with architectural plans and the permitting and rezoning process and to assist with the grant application for the expansion.

In Point Arena, the Coast Branch Library Friends purchased two acoustic partitions for use by patrons who need to use Library Wi-Fi to participate in virtual meetings. They presented three Lifelong Learning programs, funded in part by a grant from the Gualala Community Center centered on the Great Courses video lecture series. Our ongoing building maintenance duties last year included a major repair of the Annex skylight.

The Willits Branch Library Friends advocated for the much-needed leaky roof repair in favor of the grant application by the library staff, and after the heavy rains this winter advocated for the full tarping and sandbagging of the roof to prevent damage to the interior of the library building. The next improvements for Willits include new carpeting and a new circulation desk.

The Bookmobile continues to visit 24 spots twice a month throughout the county in remote areas of our county that have no library close by, from Piercy to Gualala and from Westport to Hopland.

CONCLUSION

The Library Advisory Board will continue to work with the next County Librarian to determine the priorities for building improvements for all our county library branches and make those recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for approval. The LAB will also keep a watch on these projects to ensure they are on track with any grant requirements. It has been an exciting year to have the Measure O funding available, and we look forward to improving all of our branches. We thank our heroes, those who staff the branches and continue to provide our patrons, children, teens, and adults, with ideas, information, knowledge, and a sense of community. We thank our Friends of the Library groups, who raise the funds for the many programs that their branches provide for children, teens, and adults. And thank you to our County Librarians past and present and future, and to the Board of Supervisors for their support.

-Library Advisory Board