

Mendocino County Library Advisory Board 2021 Annual Report

Introduction: A Year Unlike Any Other

Like everything else in our experience during the last fifteen months, library operations have been framed by the impact of public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been almost two years since a Library Advisory Board Annual Report was presented to the Board of Supervisors. The last in-person meeting of the Library Advisory Board took place in January, 2020. At that time, the calendar for the six yearly meetings was approved as per custom. The LAB met on the first three of these dates in March, May and July on ZOOM in an ‘information only’ format - no actions were taken nor were minutes recorded. Then, in September, 2020, formal meetings resumed with the agenda posted 72 hours in advance and public access made available to the ZOOM meetings. The Library Advisory Board welcomed Library Director, Deborah Fader Samson, on January 25, 2021. The Library Advisory Board welcomed Larry Riddle as the Pt. Arena City Representative in January, 2020. The District 1 seat has been open since January, 2021.

On March 17, 2020, all library branches closed their doors in accordance with pandemic-related public health guidelines. During this period, services to patrons continued in the form of on-line requests and programs, to-go activity kits, and curbside pickups. Notice of these services was regularly posted on social media.

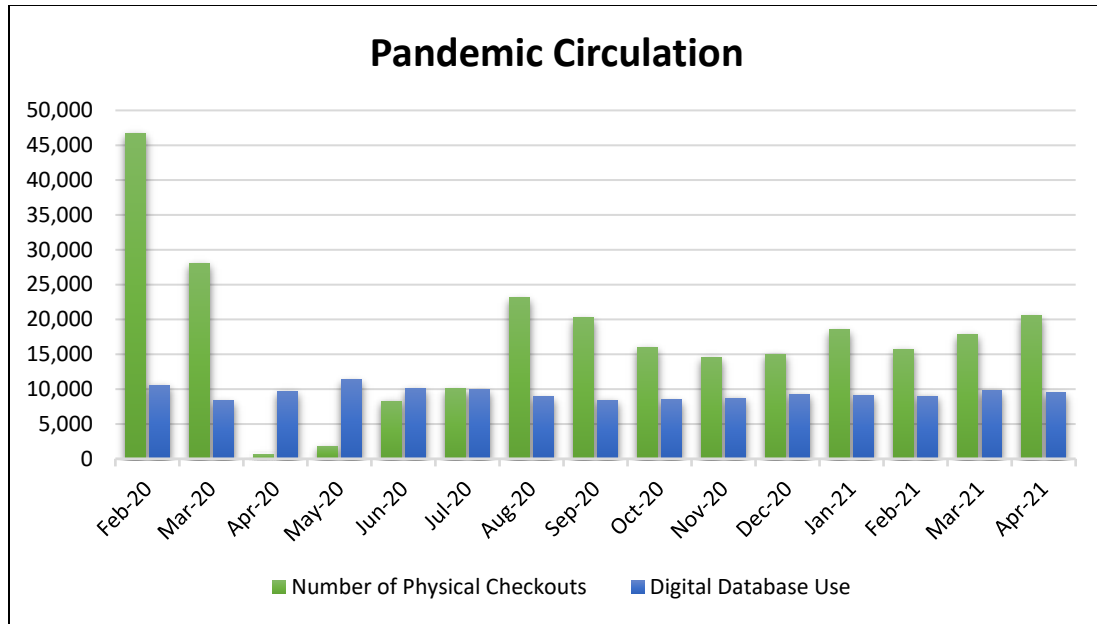
COVID-19 LIBRARY RESPONSE HOURS			
According to Webapps Time Sheets			
Employee	Total Hours	Hourly Cost to LB	Estimated Total Cost
1	373.00	\$53.42	\$19,926.83
2	103.00	\$31.75	\$3,270.67
3	3.50	\$47.61	\$166.63
4	34.25	\$56.74	\$1,943.36
5	177.75	\$23.34	\$4,148.22
6	510.00	\$13.61	\$6,943.41
7	50.00	\$57.50	\$2,874.81
8	201.00	\$29.02	\$5,833.67
9	102.00	\$36.25	\$3,697.97
10	92.00	\$56.95	\$5,239.81
11	37.00	\$99.23	\$3,671.55
12	177.75	\$51.82	\$9,210.36
13	6.00	\$27.55	\$165.30
14	79.50	\$28.87	\$2,294.85
15	234.25	\$30.35	\$7,109.40
16	80.00	\$38.28	\$3,062.08
17	142.00	\$22.58	\$3,206.79
18	5.00	\$13.61	\$68.07
19	471.25	\$40.95	\$19,297.81
20	171.25	\$31.73	\$5,433.44
21	168.75	\$34.84	\$5,879.69
22	53.50	\$21.14	\$1,131.24
23	92.75	\$41.13	\$3,814.53
24	1209.18	\$31.96	\$38,644.21
25	15.75	\$34.68	\$546.27
Grand Totals	4,590.43	\$954.93	\$157,580.97

Library employees served in pandemic-related tasks and positions as re-directed by the County, under the provision that they support county-wide emergencies. We ask for reimbursement of \$157,580 to the library budget for their hours of service in this capacity, from FEMA and the general fund.

On March 29, 2021, the libraries began opening to the public, two afternoons a week at 25% capacity for short grab and go visits.

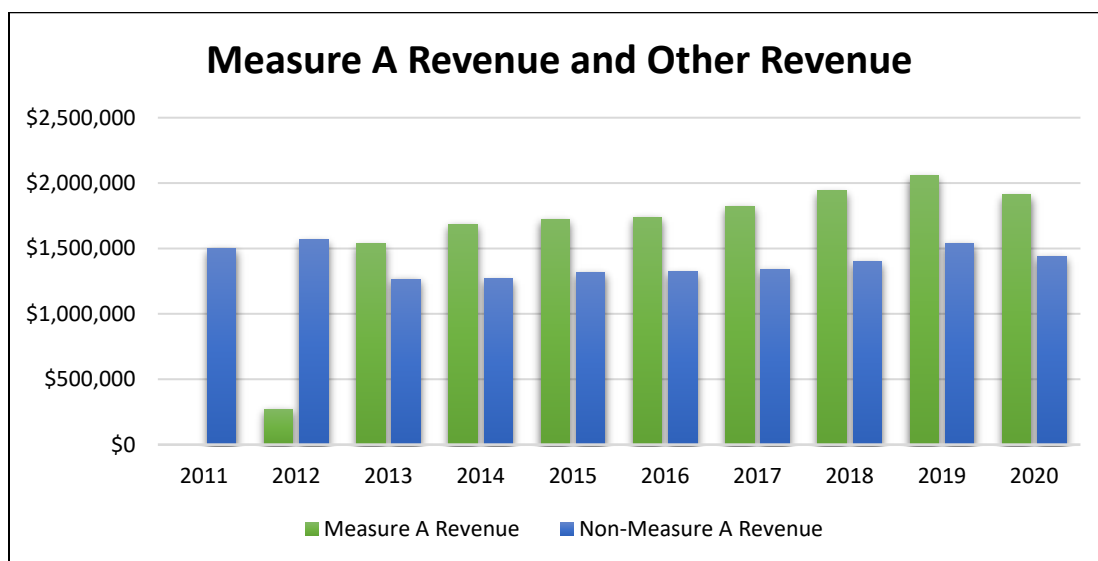
On April 22, the library branches began operating five afternoons a week at 50% capacity for up to 45 minutes. And on May 18, libraries plan to open five days a week, 6

hours a day, at 100% capacity for up to one hour visits with some outdoor programming. The libraries will continue to require masks and social distancing. Data shows that patronage, county-wide, is trending up towards pre-pandemic levels (*see graph next page*).

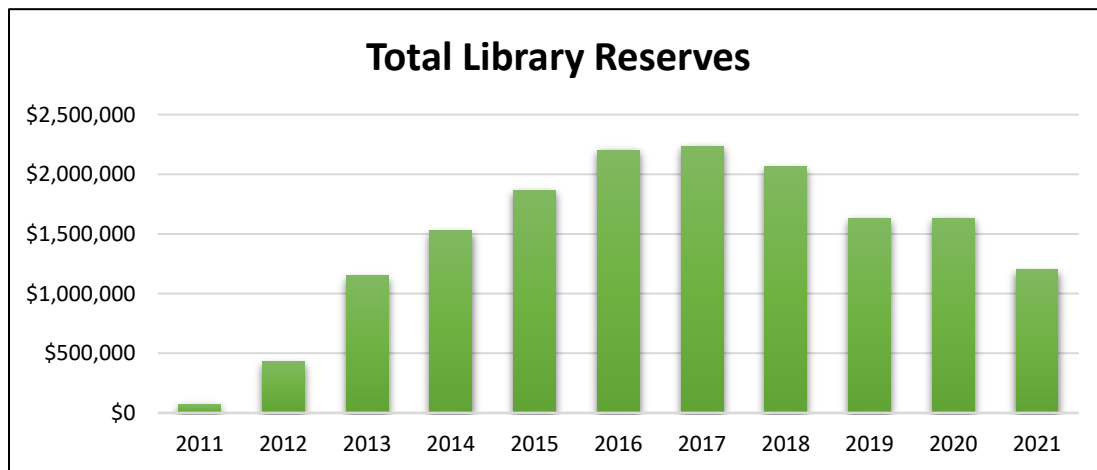


Budget

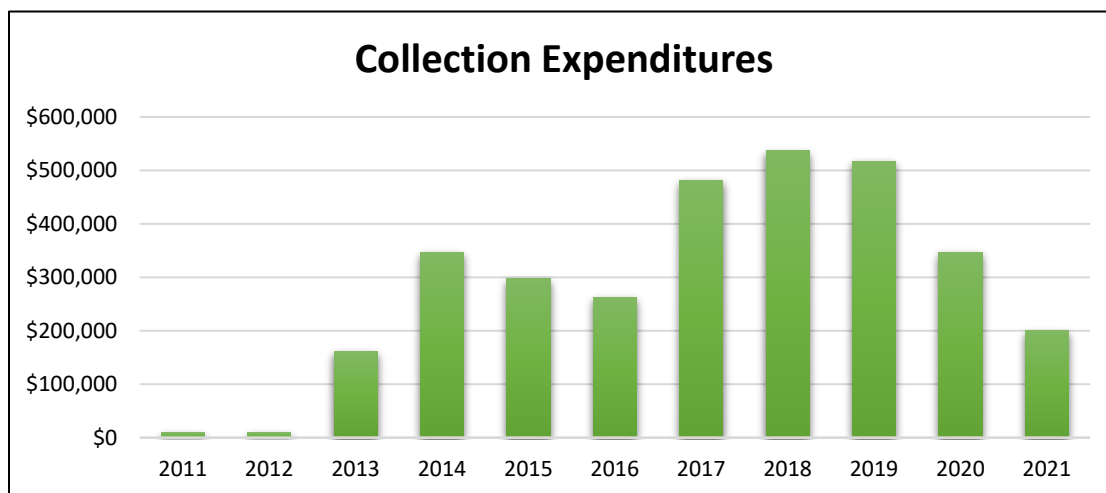
The Mendocino County Library system would look very different today had it not been for the passage of Measure A in 2011, with an overwhelming 73% of the vote. Funding from Measure A has meant that all branches and the bookmobile remain open; a materials budget exists; libraries are well staffed and children's librarians have returned!



Today, a decade later, the current operating budget shows that reserves that peaked in 2017, have declined dramatically since then.

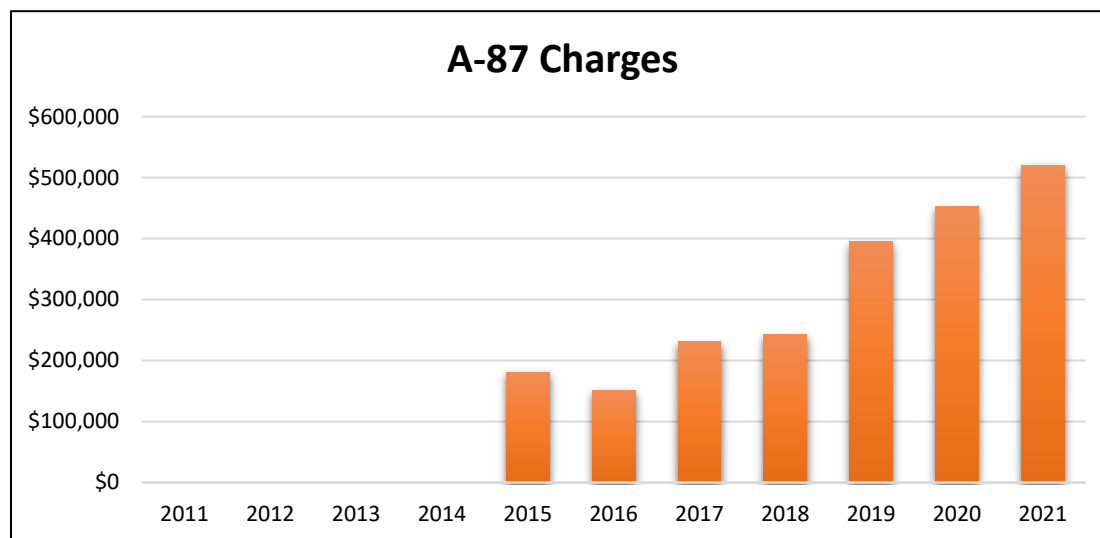


The allocation for collections has declined in the last two years as well.



Contributing factors appear to be routine and deferred maintenance costs and A-87 costs. The A-87 charges have increased significantly from year to year. As we consider this, the question

arises: are A-87 capital improvement and depreciation costs being incorrectly charged to the library budget?



To address these concerns, we advise the Board of Supervisors to recommend the formation of an ad hoc committee, composed of members of the Board of Supervisors, the Library Advisory Board and County staff.

Historically, the County has had no mechanism in the library budget for capital improvements. Recognizing this, the *Mendocino County Library Strategic Plan* was developed by the Library Advisory Board and presented to, and approved by, the Board of Supervisors at their last joint meeting in 2019. The three goals of the plan are:

1. Develop a capital improvement fund dedicated to the long term capital improvement of all the library facilities in Mendocino County.
2. Develop a long term plan for the improvement or replacement of the Ukiah Library.
3. Develop long range plans for all branches and future branches.

Renew Measure A 2022

As citizens as well as Library Advisory Board members, we are moving forward with a community-driven initiative to renew and extend Measure A in perpetuity by an additional 1/8 of one cent, for a total of 1/4 of one cent, in November, 2022. If adopted, the revised Measure A will dedicate 80% of the new revenue, or 40% of total revenue, to capital improvement expenses.

As pandemic-related restrictions allow, we plan to hold meetings in every community in the county to roll out the proposal to renew Measure A in 2022; to raise public awareness, and to gain support. We will encourage citizens to join with us to gather signatures to put the initiative on the ballot in November 2022, and then work together with us to pass the measure with the same success that Measure A achieved in 2011.

Friends of the Library and the Working Groups to Improve Libraries

The role of the Friends of the Library in Mendocino County cannot be overstated. The primary purpose of these citizen groups is to support their branch library by raising funds. County-wide, their collective efforts have exceeded \$2,500,000 over the last several years. A few highlights follow to illustrate the tremendous impact of their efforts.

The Coast Community Branch Library building in Pt. Arena and the Round Valley Library building in Covelo, were both purchased outright by their FOLs. The Friends of the Coast Community Library provide the branch building, maintenance, and capital improvement free to the county, including a \$500,000 seismic retrofit in 2016. The Friends of the Round Valley Library rent the building to the County and provide maintenance and capital improvements. The Friends of the Long Valley Library have raised over \$70,000 in the last five years to realize their goal of establishing a satellite library in Laytonville.

When the Board of Supervisors approved the *Mendocino County Library Strategic Plan*, they recommended that every branch form a Working Group to improve their Library. Their purpose was to identify long-term capital improvement needs. Predictably, members of the branch FOL and the Working Group are often the same citizens in each community.

In the following section, you will find a summary of the work each group has undertaken to support and improve their library, written by a member of their Friends of the Library.

The Coast Community Branch Library by Nancy Ruth Morin, FOCCL & Larry Riddle, Pt. Arena City LAB

Two of the six stated purposes of the Friends of Coast Community Library are to support and maintain a public library that is available free of charge, for Point Arena and the surrounding community and to initiate, support, and cooperate with the Mendocino County Library system in developing library programs, services, and facilities for the community.

Fundamental to these is the maintenance of a space that is functional and comfortable in which the collections can be housed and programs can be offered. To this end, FOCCL raised the money to purchase and renovate a building, which they now own and provide to Mendocino County for the Coast Library at no charge. The building is historic: it was erected in 1928 and is at least the third building on that site. The previous buildings were all lost to natural disaster (earthquake) and unnatural disaster (fire in in mid-1920s). Our building is approaching its centennial and we hope it will still be here and open for library patrons during its bicentennial.

We have recently raised and spent close to \$500,000 for a seismic retrofit that we hope will preclude any future earthquake damage. We have also been discussing the possibility of installing an expensive fire suppression system and are currently scheduled to spend about \$30,000

to replace the roof on our annex, which is where the library workroom is located. All of this has been and/or is being done entirely through the support of the community.

FOCCL Board and members are fervent advocates for the library. They have been indefatigable in their willingness to pitch in and do whatever work needs to be done. FOCCL is alert to the needs of the community and continuously seeks ways that it can most appropriately help to meet those needs.

The Fort Bragg Branch Library by Janice Marcell, FOFBL and District 4 LAB representative

Both the Friends of the Fort Bragg Library and the Finance and Fundraising Committee meet monthly via ZOOM or in a hybrid format, following pandemic restrictions. Over the last several years, we have successfully fundraised and purchased the lot adjacent to the library in order to construct an expansion. Fundraising was suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic. However, other means of fundraising outreach were implemented, including an online book sale, appeals for donations, and the marketing of a \$1,000 Club whose total approaches \$80,000. The Fundraising Committee created Financial Advisor brochures that were distributed locally to asset management firms so that their clients have the option of donating to our library or its expansion. The FOFBL received a substantial bequest of \$475,000 from a former dedicated library volunteer in January, 2021.

A current endeavor is the creation of a Features List. This bilingual questionnaire will be published in the local newspaper and invites community input on features that citizens would like to see in the new, expanded library. Once community responses are received, the FOL and

Finance Committees will present them to the architectural firm. They will then develop a cost estimate and create a fundraising package for the expansion endeavor. Both the Friends and the Finance and Fundraising Committee collaboratively enhance the goals for improving the library.

The Working Group to Improve the Ft. Bragg Library also meets monthly. Information on how to improve the various aspects of the library expansion project are shared from the groups mentioned above, the Library Advisory Board, and the Measure A 2022 campaign. A service map was obtained by Branch Librarian Dan Hess from Russell Ford of the Planning and Building Department. It shows the designated service areas of each library in the County.

The Long Valley Satellite Library by Shawn Haven, President, LVFOL and District 3 LAB

Construction has begun on the library store front. We are so excited and thank everyone who has supported this project. We continue our collaboration with Healthy Start with monthly Grab-N-Go craft bags for kids and participation in their Summer Program, providing reading and literacy materials to approximately 60 elementary and middle school students. Book loans, a weekly Book Club, and provision of internet access to some students and writers are on-going. Traffic at the Book Room has not yet returned to pre-COVID levels, but we are seeing more customers taking home more books.

The Round Valley Branch Library by Lew Chichester, Vice President, FORVL

Despite the library facilities here in Round Valley being closed to the public for the majority of the past year, branch staff have found ways to serve the public and have remained visible on social media, with COVID-safe programming on ZOOM and local radio station KYBU 96.9. Highlights this year include a weekly ZOOM story time for preschool-aged kids, a weekly radio program for tweens, teens, and adults (“Reading Radio”), a writing workshop facilitated by

local poet Michelle Peñaloza, and a presentation on wildfire preparedness by the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council and Sherwood Firewise Communities. Additionally, the Seed Library distributed over 3,000 packets of seeds to our community in 2020 during a national seed shortage caused by panic-buying during the pandemic and has distributed an additional 2000+ seed packets so far in 2021. The Seed Library resumed their open air “Planting Parties” in March and is looking forward to its Seed and Seedling swap in mid-May. Finally, branch staff have served library regulars and new patrons alike with curbside service, which has included an impressive variety of new books and movies, as well as board games and seeds.

The major capital improvement on our library facility this last year has been the purchase and installation of our backup generator which was primarily financed with two grants from the United Way of the Wine Country and the Community Foundation of Mendocino County, plus generous contributions from the local organization, WARM Foundation, and numerous community members.

The Friends of the Round Valley Public Library also provided much needed Wi-Fi to the library. While our organization has supplemented the connectivity provided by the County Library, technology and communication infrastructure remains vulnerable and at times insufficient compared with that offered at other library branches in the County. For example, for the entire month of February 2021, staff at the Round Valley Branch struggled to provide programs and services without internet connection to the County network in Ukiah. For this period, staff members worked without access to shared files, including documents used for administration of the branch. Staff were also cut off from timesheets, branch statistics, and program files. During this time, branch staff relied on the Wi-Fi provided by the Friends in order to provide basic services to the community.

The Ukiah Branch Library by Michele Savoy, UVFOL President and Lynn Zimmermann, District 2 LAB

The Ukiah Valley Friends of the Library had its first meeting in over a year on April 21, 2021, due to the pandemic restrictions. Prior to the pandemic, the UVFOL collaborated with the Working Group to Improve the Ukiah Library to raise funds for a needs assessment of the library building. Funding for the cost of the needs assessment, \$20,000, was made possible with a \$10,000 donation from the UVFOL and \$2500 contributions from each of the following: County of Mendocino; City of Ukiah; Mendocino County Sheriff; Mendocino County District Attorney's Office (asset forfeiture funds from the latter two.)

In January, 2021, the Friends of the Ukiah Library Branch contracted with Arch/Nexus to provide a needs assessment of the building, built in 1970. The needs assessment includes an analysis, recommendations, and a cost estimate. Two ZOOM meetings have taken place with the Arch/Nexus team; data has been collected and a written analysis will be presented upon completion at the second quarter, or mid-summer.

In the last three years, The UVFOL has raised funds totaling \$48,000. This revenue has augmented the reserve and supported a wide range of pre-pandemic programs including: children's programs, teen programs, Library Teen Leadership Council, family programs, and adult programs including The Yokayo Seed Project, which provides educational seminars and a growing collection of local heirloom seeds. An outdoor Book Sale will take place June 5th.

The Willits Branch Library by Olga O'Neill, WFOL and City of Willits LAB representative

The Willits Library Branch Working Group's first meeting was on 1/11/20 and since that time we have not formally met. We had identified many needs, some of which the County had planned to address, but thus far only the HVAC system has been improved. During 2020 the branch was awarded a grant for Maximizing Learning Spaces and the Willits Friends Group supplemented the grant funding for the architect. Willits Library has implemented what they could at this time including purchasing furniture paid for by The Friends of the Willits Library. The Working group had also identified possible partners and collaborative efforts to pursue. The list of improvements includes: a new roof, HVAC, painting, and carpet, among many others.

The Bookmobile by Michael Schaeffer, District 5 LAB member

The Bookmobile coped well with the COVID emergency. Dave and Hunter were able to get back on the road and deliver holds and a selection of other materials early and safely. All service was outside and masked. Bookmobile circulation was high. We look forward to the restoration of full services and being able to go on board again.

In Conclusion

All branches of the Mendocino County Library System served as an anchor in their communities during the year of library closures. During this period, library staff provided innovative programs and services to patrons, and emergency services to citizens, as re-directed by the County.

During this period of time, the Library Advisory Board and the Renew Measure A 2022 Planning Committee continued to meet on ZOOM. The Friends and Working Groups of the Library met on ZOOM, as members were able, and planned for programs for patrons and ambitious capital improvements for facilities, for the time when the libraries would re-open.

The library budget shows a significant decrease in reserves. Allocations for library collections have also decreased in recent years. At the same time, A-87 charges to the library budget have increased significantly. To address these concerns, we advise the Board of Supervisors to recommend the formation of an ad hoc committee, composed of members of the Board of Supervisors, the Library Advisory Board, and County staff.

As both citizens and Library Advisory Board members, we are planning for a community-driven effort to renew Measure A in 2022. If adopted, the revised Measure A will dedicate 80% of the new revenue, or 40% of total revenue, to capital improvement expenses.

On behalf of the Library Advisory Board, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the Library staff in extraordinary times, and the impressive volunteer efforts throughout Mendocino County, to build, maintain, and enhance free public libraries in their communities.

Submitted by Lynn Zimmermann, Chair of the Mendocino County Library Advisory Board