SAN MATEO COUNTY LIBRARY

2006-2007 Annual Report

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Library Users Inspire New Models of Service

Imagine the library as you will want it to be five or ten years from now. That is one important task that San Mateo County Library staff spent time on during fiscal year 2006-2007. Observing the success of the newest branch libraries in the system, Millbrae and Belmont, it was noted that certain elements in these libraries attracted more users and resulted in higher levels of use of materials and resources than previously experienced. Building on these observations and successes the library began defining a new model of service which identifies how we will respond to the increasing use of libraries and design spaces to meet the evolving needs of community members. Key elements of the new model include:

Customer driven service
Be responsive to the needs of the diverse customer base and develop service methods that best meet those needs.

Intuitive systems and layouts
Take the mystery out of the library by making it easier to figure out.

Defined spaces
Make the library a destination and provide environments that surprise, delight and accommodate the customer.

In order to address these issues several service responses were identified:

- Design flexible service desks to allow staff to assist at point of need and teach users to maximize the resources of the library
- Use automation and smart design to create a highly efficient operation
  - Automated materials handling return systems
  - 95% self checkout
- Maximize customer time and reduce wait time to complete simple tasks
- Create spaces that serve customer needs
  Marketplace – a browsing section for popular, high demand materials
  Kids & Family Place – a place that accommodates children of all ages and is comfortable and welcoming for the whole family
  Teen Zone – a place to study and engage with other teens in a space designed specifically for them
  Community Living Room – a quiet, comfortable space to read and think
  Café – a place to enjoy refreshments and the company of friends and neighbors
  Computer & Homework Centers – active learning spaces for independent or group learning
- Improve the library's web presence to serve even those who never enter a library

Although we have a long way to go before each of our twelve libraries can offer all the physical features mentioned here and despite the fact that our Strategic Plan will cover a seven year period, there are signs that the steps we have taken so far are welcomed by library users. 2006-07 was a record breaking year.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results FY 2006-2007

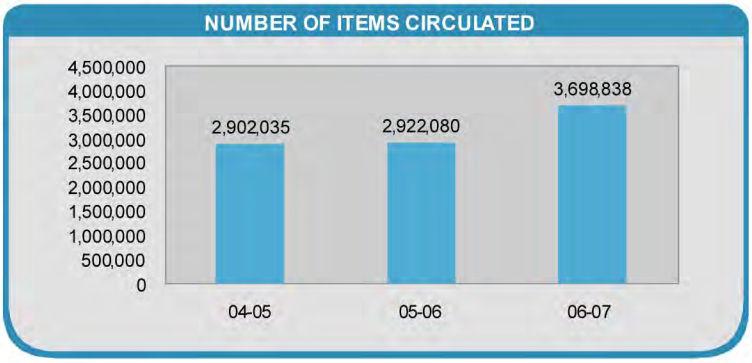
The County Library received 412 surveys with 94% of respondents rating overall satisfaction as good or excellent. Compared to the prior year overall satisfaction increased by one percentage point and the number of responses increased by 151.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive particularly in the area of programs and events offered. Additionally, 96% of respondents gave a rating of good or excellent for knowledge of staff assisting them, and a rating of 95% for staff availability.

The County Library also conducted an additional survey in conjunction with development of its new Strategic Plan. In this survey, 93% of the 1,114 respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with library services.

Borrowing and Visits

San Mateo County Library experienced its most successful year ever by a number of measures in Fiscal Year 2006-2007. For the first time in our history library users borrowed over three million items. The record was not only broken but smashed with a total figure of 3,698,838 books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs checked out! This represents a 27% increase over the previous fiscal year. Visits to the libraries increased by 11% to over 2,255,000.



eCommerce

All Peninsula Library System libraries began offering a new service called eCommerce that provides an easy way for patrons to pay fines and fees online from home, work, or at the library. The convenience of paying online appeals to many of the library's customers and the library also benefits by saving staff time previously spent on manual credit card transactions.

One Book One Community

During October 2006, San Mateo County Library invited the other PLS libraries to partner with us to offer our first county-wide reading event, "One Book, One Community: San Mateo County Reads *The Kite Runner*. We organized twelve programs related to the history and culture of Afghanistan that were offered in a variety of libraries throughout the county for a total of over 60 programs. The main event was an evening with Khaled Hosseini that attracted 1,800 people. Many residents contacted us the day after that event to say that is was the best community program they'd ever attended.

FKI Checkin Machine

The first automated materials handling system at the Belmont library is checking in about 55% of the approximately 28,000 items returned each month. This saves staff time spent on repetitive motion tasks and allows material to return to the public area more quickly.

Floating Collections

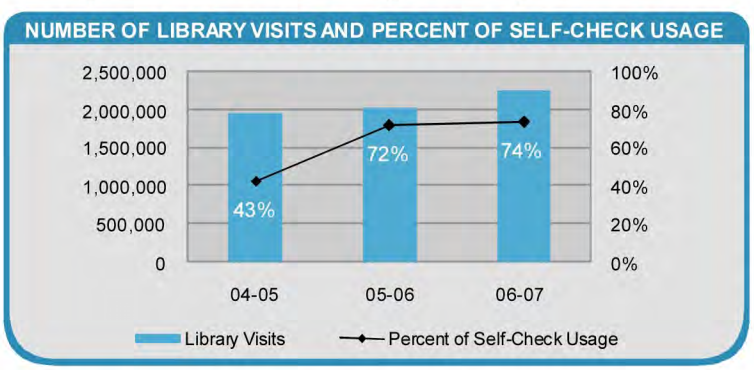
The floating collection software allows us to circulate popular material such as DVDs and Books on CD easily around all of our branches. The collections are constantly refreshed and patrons get the benefit of seeing new items on a continuing basis.

El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros

The County Library presented its first El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros (Children's Day/Book). The goal of Día, which is held nationally every year on April 30, is to honor children, their languages and cultures, and to encourage reading and literacy. All 12 Libraries hosted award winning children's author and illustrator, Yuyi Morales, entertainer and singer, Victor Hugo Santos, or a special bilingual storytime and crafts program. A total of 595 children and families attended these events.

PIN at Checkout

In order to improve security for patron's library cards, users now enter their PIN numbers when checking out at the self-check machines. This has stopped the fraudulent use of library cards and subsequent losses to the library and the patron.



READS Adult Literacy

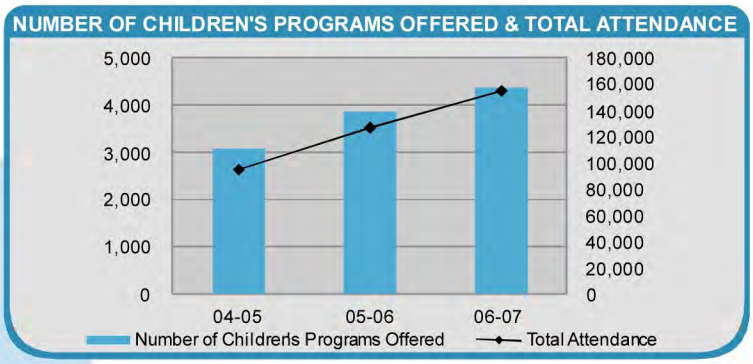
Three San Mateo County READS students in Half Moon Bay received their GED's, one student was named "Employee of the Year" at his new job, and five students began attending community college classes. East Palo Alto READS students and their families attended a field trip to the San Jose Children's Discovery Museum, and completed a literacy reinforcing writing/scrap booking activity following the trip.

Online Homework Help

The County Library successfully applied for a multi-year grant from the California State Library to provide Live Homework Help student tutoring service, an online chat system staffed by highly qualified tutors. Designed to assist students in grades 4 through 12, Live Homework Help served 3,485 SMCL users in its first year.

Outreach to Kids and Families

This year the community reading van staff served over 8,000 kids and 4,000 parents with our various outreach programs to low-income families throughout the county. Part of the regular outreach includes an incentive of free book coupons redeemable at San Mateo County Libraries. As a result of these coupons 198 young users began taking advantage of library services in their communities.



Collections and Cataloging Services

In January of 2007 the Collections and Cataloging Services Department was created by uniting two departments, Acquisitions & Cataloging and Collections & Programming. Combining these departments into one creates greater efficiency in ordering and processing books, DVD's, and other materials for public use. Over 130,000 items were added to the libraries' collections this year. Materials of all types were added with special emphasis on online databases for use in the library and remotely, world language materials, and media - DVDs and CDs.

Information Online

Fifteen new online resources were lunched for the public this year. A few examples of new resources include Auto Repair Reference Center offering step by step repair instructions for vehicles back to 1945, Salud Para Todos offering health and medical information for Spanish speakers, Novelist which offer readers advisory for readers of fiction and more, and Ancestry Reference Center and Heritage Quest for genealogy research.

Library Award

The San Mateo County Library was recognized recently by the American Library Association. The Library won first prize in the Marketing and Public Relations Web Pages competition for its special holiday webpage that staff members created last December. The award was presented at the American Library Association's Annual Conference. We are very excited that our library has won this prestigious award and proud of the staff that helped us do so!

Its been a busy and productive year throughout the San Mateo County Library system this year. We look forward to continuing to move ahead with the implementation of our new service model and other new initiatives this year in order to continuously improve our ability to serve the information and recreation needs of San Mateo County Library users.

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