



SAN MATEO COUNTY LIBRARY

2008-2009 Annual Report



Connect  
Discover  
Evolve

## Vision

Connect. Discover. Evolve.

## Mission

The San Mateo County Library provides innovative, dynamic services that connect our diverse community with opportunities for individual growth and enrichment.

## Strategic Goals

### Destination Libraries

Create welcoming spaces that promote a sense of community pride and facilitate customer-centered services.

### Collections and Services

Develop and deliver outstanding library collections and services that reflect the interests and needs of our diverse customer base.

### Community Engagement

Raise awareness and visibility of San Mateo County Library services and increase recognition of the Library as an essential community asset.

### Organizational Culture

Become a learning organization that continuously assesses community needs and develops staff to provide excellent customer service.



Over the past year, San Mateo County Library has provided an array of services that encourage personal growth by offering literacy services, materials in a variety of formats and languages, programs and events that educate and inspire, and places for people to connect with their neighbors in a safe and enriching environment.

In fiscal year 2008-09, our twelve community libraries received 2.3 million visits, circulated 4.1 million items, responded to over 220,000 customer questions and provided over 328,000 hours of computer access.

As an organization that supports innovation and creative approaches to library service, we piloted several technology programs including the introduction of toddler early-learning computers and wireless laptops for checkout. Both programs have proved highly successful and will be duplicated in other libraries in the future.

In partnership with our local member cities, we continued to make facility improvements that employ elements of our service model and create welcoming spaces. Most notably, the new Portola Valley Library which opened in September drew over 1,000 people to opening events.

Libraries are dynamic, evolving institutions and staff must keep their skills current in order to meet changing needs. This year an emphasis on leadership and staff development resulted in the completion of over 3,400 hours of staff training.

As we look back at our successes, it is important to thank the Library JPA, our Friends' groups, donors, volunteers and library staff for their outstanding contributions and dedication to providing quality library services to our communities.

I am pleased to present the Library's 2008-09 Annual Report. Although the facts and figures in this report are meaningful, they cannot tell the whole story, so this report also includes some of the faces and stories we see every day that illustrate how libraries change lives.

Anne-Marie Despain  
Director of Library Services

## Positive Impact

There have been many success stories associated with Quest, East Palo Alto Library's after school homework program. One of these is Emily. Emily is a fourth grade student and at the time she began working in the program, was reading at the kindergarten level. After just seven months in the Quest program, Emily's reading scores increased two grade levels. This dramatic progress had a tremendous effect on Emily's self-esteem and her success at school.

Children who struggle in school may not have many opportunities to receive academic assistance. The Quest program continues to fill a need in the East Palo Alto community. And while not all of the participants see such dramatic improvement as Emily, the East Palo Alto Library's Quest program is making a difference, a few children at a time.



# San Mateo County Library At-A-Glance

## Destination Libraries

San Mateo County Library strives to establish each of our libraries as the hub of community engagement and places that facilitate lifelong learning opportunities for all ages. One way this is done is by offering a variety of programs and events.

This year's programs continued this tradition by offering something for everyone on various topics and interests. In June alone, several libraries held workshops on learning to knit, tango dancing, life coaching, resume writing, family law, and talks on King Tutankhamun and artist Georgia O'Keefe. Programs targeted for children and teens included film nights, interactive music for toddlers, Chinese acrobat demonstrations, comic illustration classes, computer gaming nights, and much more. From July 2008 through June 2009, more than 180,000 people attended 5,302 programs.



Just as books inspire and delight, so do library programs and events. For a complete listing of upcoming activities, refer to the San Mateo County Library website at [smcl.org](http://smcl.org) and make a date soon at your local library.

## Collections Make The Difference

With over 4,100,000 checkouts in fiscal year 2008-2009, use of the library collection remains the center of library activity. Library users want a collection that supports their diverse educational, informational and recreational needs. The 124,000 items added to the collection this year reflect emphasis in these areas. Items are collected in a variety of formats with focus placed on popular fiction and nonfiction bestsellers, works which receive high reviews in the professional literature, and materials requested by patrons through direct and indirect feedback.

Library staff work to ensure that materials get into the hands of library users as quickly as possible. Materials are frequently ordered from distributors before their publication date and library users are able to place holds on these pre-published titles so that they can enjoy them as soon as they are released. Most new materials are received, processed, and sent to branches within a 24-hour period from the time shipments arrive. This means that library users often enjoy books, DVDs, and music CDs at the same time as they are released to bookstores and other retail outlets.



In addition to traditional print books, works of fiction and nonfiction are also available from the library as audio books on CD and downloadable electronic audio and text files. This year a new format, the Playaway, debuted in the collection. Playaways are small, portable MP3 players that contain the entire contents of an audio book. An initial pilot project has proven popular and this new format will continue to expand throughout the system. By adding new formats and monitoring user needs, the library will continue supporting the strategic objective of providing our communities with up-to-date, dynamic collections.



## Number of Service Outlets

12

## Population of the Service Area

281,246

## Number of Registered Borrowers

169,042

## Borrowers as a % of Population

60%

## Annual Circulation \*

4,166,905

## Circulation per Capita

14.8

## Number of Library Visits

2,370,517

## Visits per Capita

8.4

## Number of Public Computers

325

## Percent of Self-Check Usage

79%

## Number of Events Offered

5,302

## Program & Event Attendance

180,286

## Number of Collection Volumes

829,695

\*Does not include loans of electronic/digital books or "hits" on electronic databases.

## Customer Satisfaction

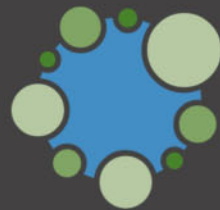
Critical to the success of the system is feedback from the public. In order to gauge effectiveness, SMCL regularly solicits customer feedback. In fiscal year 2008-09, 384 surveys were received with 92% of respondents rating overall satisfaction as good or excellent. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Written comments frequently highlighted staff responsiveness and a feeling of pride for their local library. Additionally, 93% of respondents gave a rating of good or excellent for knowledge of staff assisting them. These high ratings suggest that strategies aimed at providing timely assistance to library users, materials and collections that respond to customers' needs, and a range of innovative programming are being well received.

# Measuring Performance

The figures below represent just some of the data collected by the San Mateo County Library. This information helps us understand where we are and which way we are going. It also assists in making sound decisions on issues that affect future service delivery.

Branch	Items Circulated	Library Card Holders	Library Visitors	Program Attendance
Atherton Library	123,998	7,798	77,447	7,901
Belmont Library	567,820	18,736	314,141	21,124
Brisbane Library	91,013	3,537	69,203	5,549
East Palo Alto Library	100,666	16,330	172,301	6,887
Foster City Library	979,853	27,919	426,325	26,630
Half Moon Bay Library	407,048	16,706	232,316	20,082
Millbrae Library	616,145	17,224	399,035	23,261
Pacifica Libraries	397,816	23,525	205,717	25,327
Portola Valley Library	88,115	4,544	60,300	6,645
San Carlos Library	628,379	22,329	320,840	19,804
Woodside Library	114,788	8,525	92,892	13,268
Other *	51,264	1,869	---	9,656
Total	4,166,905	169,042	2,370,517	186,134

\* Bookmobile and Other Literacy Programs



## San Mateo County Library

The San Mateo County Library (SMCL) is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) comprised of the cities of Atherton, Belmont, Brisbane, East Palo Alto, Foster City, Half Moon Bay, Millbrae, Pacifica, Portola Valley, San Carlos, Woodside, and the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County.



## Generous Support

San Mateo County Library is fortunate to have strong support from its communities. Last year, Friends of the Library groups contributed over \$160,000, helping to pay for collections, homework help centers, children's programs, special events, and library furnishings. The Library also benefited from other funding support including \$385,000 in grants and donations. The work of volunteers is also invaluable. To help with events, collection maintenance, and literacy support, volunteers contributed over 114,000 hours of service.

The many monetary contributions and donated time and energy of Friends' groups and volunteers make a tremendous difference in the lives of San Mateo County community members. Thank you!

## Foster City Library Service Improvement Project

An exciting project is underway at the Foster City Library designed to improve the user experience. As a result of collaborative working sessions with community members and support from the City of Foster City, San Mateo County Library, and Friends of the Foster City Library, the project focuses on creating a more functional and welcoming environment.

The five areas targeted for improvement include: 1) Creating a "Marketplace Zone" that will enhance the browsing experience; 2) Relocating the service desk and self-check equipment to improve functionality, and installing an automated materials handling system; 3) Improving the layout of the children's room by introducing flexible shelving and creating a playful, age appropriate space that encourages exploration and excitement for reading and learning; 4) Creating a zone for teens to read, learn and study with their peers; and 5) Increasing flexibility and enhancing the user experience by relocating public access computers.

It is estimated that the project will be completed by January 2010 and include a short closure between October - December 2009. Refer to the SMCL website at [smcl.org](http://smcl.org) for information regarding the Foster City Library grand re-opening in January!



San Mateo County Library  
125 Lessingia Court  
San Mateo, CA 94402

T: 650.312.5258  
F: 650.312.5382  
W: [www.smcl.org](http://www.smcl.org)

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