LIBRARIES FOR ALL

The Seattle Public Library

Library Levy Fact Sheet

The Challenge

As a result of constraints on the city's general fund in recent years, The Seattle Public Library has been closed for one week each year since 2009, 15 of the 26 branch libraries are currently closed two days a week, and the Library's collections budget has been cut by more than 13 percent since 2009. The Library has cut 190 hours a week of service system-wide - the equivalent of closing four branches.

In 2013, we face additional cuts. The city Budget Office has told the Library to prepare for an estimated $5 million cut to the 2013 Library budget. A reduction of that size will impact patron services. For example, the current (2012) Library budget for books is $5 million, and the annual cost of operating a large, heavily used branch library open seven days a week is approximately $1.2 million.

In 2011, there were nearly 7 million patron visits to the Central Library and branch libraries. There were another 7.6 million virtual visits.

The Process

Over the last two years, the Library has involved over 39,000 residents in strategic planning for the Library's future and setting priorities for Library services. In community surveys, focus groups, panel discussions, five open houses, and three community meetings, the people of Seattle came together to identify the priorities for Library services: hours, collections, computers and online services, and maintenance.

The Levy

The Library, in collaboration with the City Council and Mayor Mike McGinn, has developed a Library levy that will provide $17 million annually over seven years to stabilize funding and address the four areas identified by the community. The levy will:

- Add Sunday hours at 15 branches
- Restore seven-day-a-week service at the Columbia and Northgate branches
- Restore on-site reference staff at eight branches that lost it in 2010
- Increase the number of new titles by 14% and expand e-content by 45%
- Increase number of items a person may place on hold to 50
- Provide regular replacements for computers, software, printers and copiers
- Provide high-speed Internet access and network reliability in every neighborhood
- Make it easier to use Library digital materials and resources by creating a true "virtual library" with improved website design, functionality, integration and accessibility
- Fully fund a program of repairs to extend the life of all libraries in Seattle by addressing ongoing care of roofs, heating, cooling and plumbing systems, restrooms and equipment such as book sorting machines
- Keep libraries clean and functional by providing specialized cleaning, repairing and replacing furniture as needed and providing regular service to core building systems

In addition, the levy will provide $5 million to address the city Budget Office's estimated $5 million cut to the 2013 Library budget.

The $122.6 million levy will be on the Aug. 7 ballot. The cost to a median home owner would be approximately $52 per year or 15 cents per $1,000 of assessed value.

For more information, visit www.spl.org and select "Libraries for All" or call 206-386-4636.