

Riverside City and County Public Libraries

Background

The City of Riverside originally established a tax-supported public library in 1888. In 1911, Riverside County entered into an agreement with the City of Riverside to operate libraries throughout the county. The system prospered and was able to maintain a level of service serving 7,000 square miles of the county and approximately eighty square miles of the city for many years.

Library operations funding decreased during the 1990's due to the overall downturn in the economy, and the state mandate to shift property taxes to the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund.

Library Systems and Services, a professional management corporation, was contracted in 1997 to reorganize and manage the county's twenty-four libraries and two mobile units. The cities of Murrieta, Moreno Valley, Palm Springs and Riverside decided not to participate in the Library Systems and Services contract.

The Library Administrative Center, a two-story, 42,000 square foot building on Franklin Street, was purchased in 1993. The library administration anticipated it would occupy the entire building in five to ten years. The Library Administrative Center debt service (principle and interest) is \$614,000 per year.

Findings

1. The Riverside City Library Director has been able to operate the city libraries within budget using sound management practices and a professional grant writer on staff.
2. Parts of the Library Administrative Center have been subleased, lowering the debt on the county library system.
3. After reorganization, employees were guaranteed no loss in base salary, and maintained their seniority for vacation accrual.
4. Management of the county libraries and the Riverside City Libraries report significant increase in library usage due to:
 - a. Availability of more bilingual books, publications and books on tape.
 - b. Rescheduling the operational hours.
 - c. Having management of local libraries under local control.
 - d. Personal computer upgrades at library sites with access to other libraries in the system.

5.The homeless individuals in the downtown Riverside area are using the library’s public restrooms for bathing and laundry purposes. There are no public restrooms near the downtown library area.

Recommendations

1.County Librarian and Library Director for the City of Riverside continue working on library hours of operation to accommodate a larger segment of the population.

2.City of Riverside to provide additional accessible public restrooms in the downtown area.