

Organizational Assessment Project  
Report of Findings and Recommendations  
to the Fresno County Library

Jeanne Goodrich



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## BACKGROUND

### THE LIBRARY

The Fresno County Public Library, founded originally to serve the City of Fresno in 1891, has grown over the years to become a county-wide library system that now serves approximately 890,000 people through a Central library, thirty-one branches and stations, and six other service outlets, including bookmobiles and specialized service points for seniors, those requiring talking book materials, and those seeking literacy services. The library's service area is slightly more than 5,000 square miles. The library serves all of Fresno County except for the area served by the Coalinga Huron Library District.

The library system is challenged to provide library services to urban, suburban, and rural populations who possess a wide range of interests and desire library materials and services in a variety of formats and languages. The population served by the library is young (36% children and youth, 0-19) and this segment of the population is growing faster than the population as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Hispanic residents made up 43% of the population in 2000 and Asian residents (speaking a wide variety of languages, from Chinese to Hmong to Punjabi) made up 8%. It is highly likely that both of these population segments will have grown by the 2010 census. Many K-12 students and their families are English language learners, with county schools identifying 51 languages other than English spoken in students' homes.

Fresno County's population is marked by lower income levels and higher unemployment when compared to both state and national averages. According to the 2000 census, over twice as many families were living below the poverty level than the statewide average. Household and personal incomes are significantly lower than state and national averages. Per capita income is 47% lower in Fresno County than in the state, and median household income is 37% lower than for the state as a whole.

Educational attainment is also lower, with 18% of the adult population having less than a ninth grade education and 68% having a high school or higher education level (as compared to 77% for California as a whole and 80% for the nation as a whole).

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<sup>1</sup> Demographic information cited is based on the community needs assessment performed in 2005 as part of the planning for the new Central library.

At the same time, the county population and workforce is continuing to diversify with newcomers with a variety of demographic characteristics moving in. An effort, which appears to be successful, has been launched to bring new jobs to the county.

## THE PROJECT

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### PROJECT SCOPE AND GOALS

The goal of this project is to provide a broad assessment of the Fresno County Library's organization, services, work load and work processes and to provide recommendations regarding how the library organizes, allocates and configures staff and how it carries out the work necessary to provide its services. The library has chosen to undertake this assessment at this time because it is at a key juncture: its service population continues to grow and diversify, the population it serves is asking for traditional library services, as well as new services, new service delivery modes, and new types and formats of library materials, and it is in the midst of a comprehensive building program. During the time of the study, revenue from sales tax began to fall below projections. Property tax revenues may also decline. These downward spirals made the study and make the implementation urgent.

Since the passage of Measure B in 1998 (renewed in 2004 to extend through March 2013), library usage and services have doubled and tripled in many service areas and locations. Measure B provides funds for more hours, more library materials and services, more services for children and seniors, and improved literacy services and facilities. The lowest priority was for new library buildings. With increased provision and use of library services, materials, and facilities has come the need to be sure that resources are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

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### PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The consultant reviewed background information provided by the library, including reports, planning studies and documents, budgets, staffing allocations, job descriptions, facilities planning documents, and service and output statistics. Seven days were spent on-site, interviewing administrators, managers, supervisors, and key program staff members, touring sixteen branches and the Central library, and visiting the Senior Resource Center Library and the Talking Book Library for the Blind. These interviews and the opportunity to view work locations and observe work processes expanded the consultant's understanding of how work is done at the Fresno County Library (FCL).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The consultant was impressed with the openness and positive approach to the project evinced by the managers and staff members encountered. Library employees were aware of the project, eager to benefit from the findings and recommendations that would come out of it, well versed in their job duties, knowledgeable about their communities and service populations, and proud of their contributions to the library's mission. Requested background and statistical data was provided in a timely and thorough manner, which contributed greatly to the consultant's ability to grasp context and work environment.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

#### STABLE LEADERSHIP AND FUNDING

The Fresno County Library has had stable, experienced leadership over many years and, with the voter passage of Measure B (a one-eighth of one percent sales tax) in 1998 and again in 2004, additional funding with which to improve and expand library services throughout the county.

Although issues around communication between administration and other staff always arise in studies of this type, they were mentioned far less during this study. The library's director and associate director have many years' experience in the system, in a variety of positions, and are widely respected by other managers and staff. They are viewed as engaged in the operations of the library, county government, and the communities served.

#### USAGE TRENDS

Usage trends in all major categories are up significantly. The people of Fresno County have responded positively to the increased number of service points, hours of service, expanded collections of library materials, and improvements in the number and size of library facilities provided since the passage of Measure B. The table below illustrates the positive trending of several usage categories. During this same time period, the service population increased 16%.

	FY 1998	FY 2008	% increase
<b>Circulation</b>	1,489,812	3,222,473	116%
<b>Circulation per Capita</b>	2.02	3.62	79%
<b>Reference Transactions</b>	537,276	823,014	53%
<b>Reference Transactions per Capita</b>	0.51	0.93	82%
<b>Registered Borrowers as % of Population</b>	29%	36%	24%
<b>Holdings per Square Mile</b>	183	261	43%

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## COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

Library administrators, managers, and staff members are knowledgeable about the communities they serve. The library has demonstrated a continuous desire to make decisions and develop services and facilities based on a strong combination of professional judgment, data analysis, and community input, gathered through surveys, focus groups, community meetings, and conversations with knowledgeable community members. The bounty of information provided as background for this project was unique in the consultant's experience and is a very positive reflection on the library's interest in making sound, community-based decisions.

Library managers and staff encountered during visits to branches and interviews were also strikingly informed about and dedicated to the communities they work in. The library system covers a remarkable array of communities and has clearly taken the time to develop an understanding of their individual needs.

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## DATA DRIVEN

The library is also noteworthy in terms of the extent to which it collects and analyzes data to make decisions, to develop a clear picture of the services it provides, and to provide rationales for changes in services or methodologies. Organizational assessments and work process reviews usually include recommendations for substantial improvements in data gathering and use to make informed operational decisions. While some suggestions will be made to FCL in areas where data collection and presentation refinements could be made, the library is light years ahead of most public libraries in its use of data driven decision-making.

The library has invested in a "data coordinator", a creative, skilled employee who is responsible for gathering, analyzing, and presenting statistical data that managers can then use to analyze problem areas and make management decisions. While it is essential that these skills be developed or acquired in other employees, it is very helpful to have one person act as a point of coordination and collection, to ensure consistency in data definition and collection.

The librarian who serves as the data coordinator is also responsible for developing and implementing a number of special projects, which involves seeking out innovative solutions, investigating best practices, and conceptualizing and implementing specific projects. This is an essential skill set for a library to possess and should, in fact, be replicated, through staff development activities and assignments, and expanded, through developing competency requirements to use in hiring new employees.

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## USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The library is significantly ahead of many others in its embrace of technology. While not willing to be on what is often the costly “bleeding edge” of technology, the library has shown a willingness to investigate and adopt those technologically enabled solutions that, after analysis, make sense and appear to provide a positive return on investment. The library was an early leader in working with other libraries to collaboratively share resources and technology and participates with nine other member libraries in the shared online catalog, ValleyCat. The Fresno County Library hosts and acts as fiscal agent for the San Joaquin Valley Library System, which manages and operates the integrated library system which provides ValleyCat and other ILS functions to members libraries and coordinates the sharing of library materials, the provision of second level reference, staff development, and other cooperative activities among system members.

The library has adopted library customer self-sufficiency techniques, such as customer self-check out and self-pickup of holds and has successfully designed and implemented equipment and furniture so that library customers can help themselves or easily ask for staff assistance. FCL has followed the lead of library innovators by rethinking how customer assistance is provided, through its configuration of public service and accounts desks and the thoughtful redefinition of staff duties and staffing configurations.

The library has implemented the use of RFID labels in its largest locations (which represent about 60% of the library’s circulation) so that materials can be checked out more quickly. In addition, computer PC reservation software and program and event management, meeting room scheduling, and summer reading program management software has been implemented.

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## LIBRARY FACILITIES

Despite the structural and space deficiencies of many of the library’s facilities, the facilities visited appeared to be well maintained and made to be as attractive and inviting as possible, within the limitations of the facilities’ size and condition. Newly constructed or renovated facilities reflect current thinking in library design and allow innovations to be implemented (such as customer self-check out and self-pickup of holds, all purpose information desks, and separate accounts desks). In all but the smallest facilities (and the library system has small facilities, with the branches ranging from 22,050 square feet to 375 square feet), library users have a choice of type of seating and work space. If space allows, library materials are merchandised on stack end panels or display furniture.

The library has done considerable work on identifying current and future facilities needs. The mention of facilities as a positive is meant to convey that the library has done the best it can to make the facilities it has work for library users and is not meant to mean that there are not serious issues with many of the facilities.

## AREAS TO ADDRESS

### CONTEXT

The library undertook this organizational assessment to find out where it could make changes or adjustments to ensure its continued operation as both an effective and efficient organization. It wants to use its resources (staff, library materials, technology and facilities) in ways that meet the needs and wants of the communities it serves, as efficiently as possible. As described in the previous section, it has made many decisions that ensure that it is doing the right things (the effectiveness dimension) in the right ways (the efficiency dimension). But the continued growth in population and library usage coupled with flat, decreasing, and fluctuating revenue means that additional ideas must be considered.

Despite the significant infusion of revenue provided by Measure B, the library is still below the state per capita operating expenditure average. According to data published by the California State Library, the average per capita expenditure level for FY 2007 was \$31.74, whereas the FCL expenditure per capita was \$23.37. This places the library at about the 37<sup>th</sup> percentile. Materials expenditures per capita are also less than the state average, with FCL at \$ 2.88 as compared to the state average of \$3.41. This places FCL at about the 42<sup>nd</sup> percentile.

Measure B funds provide over 50% of the library's operating revenue (and nearly all of its capital revenue). Both sales tax revenue (Measure B) and property tax revenue (the other major source of funding) are subject to fluctuations due to external economic pressures. The third major source of revenue, various state funding sources, are also subject to external economic and budgetary forces. State aid through the Public Library Fund (PLF) and California Library Services Act decreased 5% in 2008-09. In general, Public Library Fund revenues have mirrored state revenues. The library is realistic about the very real possibility that accelerating operating costs, driven by contractually required wage increases, escalating health care costs and retirement costs, increases in costs for library materials, fuel, and many other operating expenses, will overtake flat or modest increases in revenue available.

The library serves the ninth largest service population in California with the fourth largest square mileage. It is third in the number of outlets, with only the enormous Los Angeles Public Library and Los Angeles County Library having more than FCL's thirty-eight. This requires staffing, stocking, and maintaining a number of facilities in the City of Fresno, other cities and towns in the County, and small communities and rural locations. This reality brings challenges that are not easily or conventionally met.

## STAFFING

Libraries deliver their books and other library materials, programs, and services through their staff. Salaries and benefits are a major portion of any public library budget and account for 69% of FCL's operating budget. Making sure that staff are used effectively and carry out work processes as efficiently as possible is a key goal of library management.

Unfortunately, there are no professional standards against which to compare FCL's staffing. Although the question of what is the correct level of staffing is always asked, there is no standard answer because there are so many variables that can affect the answer: population size and community demographics, number of facilities, size and configuration of buildings, utilization of technology, service models, in-house use of materials, types and number of programs provided, number of computers provided, proximity to schools and community centers, etc.

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## STATISTICS AND COMPARISONS

Workload is measured by dividing outputs (the measurable results of an activity, product or service delivered) by effort (the employee time it takes to produce or deliver the product or service). An accurate assessment of workload requires an accurate measurement of both the output and the effort. In order to make comparisons among branches or between FCL and other libraries, the largest and most consistently defined and measured transaction output to use is circulation. This measure is not perfect because circulation can be affected by local rules regarding renewals, limits, fines and fees, but it is the best we have at this time. Reference transactions (which include a variety of types of question answering and customer assistance) can also be analyzed, but these numbers are less accurate, due to major differences in definition and counting methodologies and accuracy.

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## INTERNAL COMPARISONS

As the table on the following page shows, the circulation and reference per staff FTE (full time equivalent) and for identified circulation and reference staff (this breakout is done only for the larger libraries where there is clearer differentiation of these functions) varies widely across the FCL system and widely among libraries of different types and sizes.

Central libraries typically have lower workload figures because of their size, the multiplicity of service desks, and the specialized nature of many of their services. At the other end of the spectrum, the smaller libraries are in small communities, open limited hours (although there is considerable range in the circulation per hour open figure, also), have much less space for programs, and may serve communities that have fewer readers. One-third of the branches are staffed with 1.25 or fewer FTEs. While workload varies considerably among these branches (as it does throughout the system), the reality is that staffing relates more to providing basic coverage so that the facility can be open rather than actual workload.

As the table on the next page indicates, actual work done by staff members varies widely. With the variances so wide (Circulation per FTE of 69,884 at the high end to 3,551 at the low end), it is difficult to come up with any meaningful conclusions. It appears that there is tremendous capacity and that many branches are far from reaching even the middle of the range. The challenge will be to apply this data to develop standards and to assist branches to meet those standards, while remaining sensitive to the differences among branches that could account for staff perceptions of workload. The colors on the table are designed to show branch groupings by staff size (number of FTEs).

### Workload Comparisons

Branch	FTEs	Hrs/Wk	Circ/Hr Open	Circ/Circ FTE	Ref/Ref FTE	Circ/FTE	Ref/FTE	Type	Self-Check
Fresno Central	37	71	82	11,917	10,744	7,891	3,630	Central	
Woodward Park	11.8	69	181	75,392	36,303	53,030	10,768	Regional	✓
Clovis	11.35	69	121	49,663	14,157	36,668	3,742	Regional	✓
Sunnyside	10.5	69	51	24,924	11,849	16,616	3,950	Regional	✓
Fig Garden	10.4	69	95	44,271	18,699	31,500	5,394	Regional	✓
Cedar Clinton	7.25	50	52	22,778	20,644	18,065	4,271	Metro CL	✓
Gillis	7	50	60	27,232	12,038	21,396	2,580	Metro CL	
Politi	6.75	50	64	27,850	60,060	23,724	8,898	Metro CL	✓
Sanger	5.9	62	34	26,774	35,464	17,698	12,022	Branch	
Selma	5.9	62	29	30,605	20,488	15,043	6,945	Branch	
Reedley	5.5	62	39	34,863	19,611	22,186	7,131	Branch	
Mendota	4	33	22			9,014	1,723	West CL	✓
Auberry	3.5	40	35			20,021	3,269	Mtn CL	
Fowler	3.5	32	8			3,551	4,182	East CL	✓
Kingsburg	3.5	40	34			19,590	3,257	East CL	✓
Bear Mtn	1.8	44	16			19,793	5,583	East CL	
Caruthers	1.65	32	16			15,124	4,617	West CL	
Mosqueda	1.30	32	16			19,468	4,190	Metro CL	
San Joaquin	1.25	40	10			16,346	8,601	West CL	
Parlier	1.2	32	11			14,184	5,969	Branch	
Kerman	1	40	35			69,884	13,182	West CL	
Tranquility	1	16	6			4,846	3,757	West CL	
Easton	.9	32	14			24,248	8,017	Branch	
Firebaugh	.9	40	8			17,897	3,394	West CL	
Orange Cove	.9	32	12			21,170	18,821	East CL	
Riverdale	.9	32	9			16,722	7,569	West CL	
Ivy	.85	28	2			3,622	1,025	East CL	
Pinedale	.85	28	14			23,194	15,508	East CL	
Big Creek	.5	16	5			8,378	7,592	Mtn CL	
Laton	.5	16	14			22,252	5,694	West CL	
Piedra	.5	16	16			4,070	1,212	Branch	
Shaver Lake	.5	18	18			10,966	2,912	Mtn CL	

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## EXTERNAL COMPARISONS

General comparisons can also be made with all other public libraries in California and with public libraries nationally in the same population grouping as FCL (500,000-999,999). Aggregate statistics can be used for California. The Public Library Data Service, which annually collects statistical data from over 900 public libraries in the United States and Canada computes median averages for staffing levels and for circulation. These averages have been used to come up with comparative workload figures.

Comparison with California and National Libraries			
	California	PLDS	FCL FY 08
Circ/FTE	16,850	17,181	10,299
Ref/FTE	2,788	2,468	2,782

It appears, from making these comparisons, that the average FCL circulation workload is below that of comparable libraries, although some branches far exceed the averages of other libraries.

All comparisons must be made with the understanding that local circumstances can vary substantially and that libraries are staffed in many different ways (for example, some libraries have their own facilities, ground and security employees, while others contract out for these services), which can influence these averages. The comparisons, both internally and externally, should be used to ask questions: Why are there differences? Can branches or libraries learn best practices from each other? Do we feel confident in the output and effort data we're using?

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## WORKLOAD SHIFT

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### HOLDS

Circulation and reference work has increased substantially since the passage of Measure B. The kind of work done in each area has also changed. With the online catalog, library customers throughout the system have access to all of the library's holdings and can make requests for materials not in their home library. These are delivered to the customer's pickup location of choice. These requests or holds make up 50% or more of the delivery

at most branches. This is a popular service, which has increased in use over 100% in the last five years, a much faster rate of increase than circulation as a whole (which has increased about 11%). Strong customer desire for DVDs, particularly DVD sets of television programs, has contributed to the volume of holds and to additional circulation workload, since the DVD cases must be opened to be sure that the correct disk has been returned. In some branches, DVDs and CDs are kept behind the desk, which requires additional handling during both check out and check in.

Comparison of Increase in Circulation and Holds					
	Circulation	% Change	Holds Resolved	% Change	Holds as % of Circ
<b>2005</b>	2,991,108		285,440		10%
<b>2006</b>	2,992,108	<1%	368,109	29%	12%
<b>2007</b>	3,038,170	2%	452,311	23%	15%
<b>2008</b>	3,222,473	6%	522,804	16%	16%
<b>2009*</b>	3,310,171	5%	575,084	10%	17%

\* Estimated

Figures provided by FCL. May differ from figures from other published sources.

## CENTRAL AND BRANCH PROPORTIONS

Another major change has been the shift in workload from Central to the branches during the last ten years. As the table below shows, there has been a substantial shift in where circulation and reference work is done since the passage of Measure B in 1998.

	FY 1998	FY 2008
<b>Circulation at Central</b>	22%	9%
<b>Circulation at Branches</b>	78%	91%
<b>Reference at Central</b>	46%	16%
<b>Reference at Branches</b>	54%	84%

It doesn't appear that current staffing allocations have taken this shift into account. The branches, particularly the large regionals (Clovis, Fig Garden, Sunnyside, and Woodward Park), are handling a substantial portion of the library's business and should be staffed accordingly. The table below shows the discrepancy: while Central has 23% of the public service staffing in the system, it handles 9% of the circulation and 14% of the reference work. Woodward Park has 7% of the staffing and handles 20% of the circulation work and 10% of the reference work.

	FY 2008 Staffing	FY 2007 Circulation	FY 2007 Reference
<b>Central</b>	23%	9%	14%
<b>Woodward Park</b>	7%	20%	10%
<b>Other Regionals</b>	20%	28%	21%
<b>All Regionals</b>	28%	47%	31%

At the same time as the work has shifted, the composition of the reference work has also changed. Many people now use the Internet at home, work or school to answer information questions and to gather data. Many library users come to the library with questions about using the PCs in the library and other general, information questions about services, procedures, policies, etc. The definitions of “reference” and “readers’ aid transactions” (RATs) have changed over the years, as has the methodology for gathering these statistics. RATs are now comprised of “reference” and “other” questions.

For the current fiscal year, 51% of the questions asked were categorized as “reference” (questions requiring specialized knowledge and the use of library resources to answer) and 49% were “other” (questions about the physical location of an item or service, rules, policies, procedures, or a customer’s library account). This is down from 53% reference in the previous fiscal year. Most public libraries have seen a decline in traditional reference questions. The California State Library reports that reference is down 14% over the past five years (FY 2003-FY2007).

While traditional question answering is declining, branch staff report that many other kinds of interactions take their time: assisting customers with PCs, making PC reservations for customers over the phone or in person, booking meeting rooms, and dealing with behavioral problems (which are often associated with PC usage). Statistics that reflect these interactions must also be collected (many of them are) and analyzed to get a complete picture of the workload at each facility.

The proportions between reference and other vary considerably (for example, Sunnyside reports that 71% of their RATs are reference, whereas Woodward Park reports that only 30% of theirs are). This may well be a discrepancy in the application of definitions, but further investigation should be done to see how these statistics are being defined and gathered. It is common for staff members to forget or confuse the definitions of the types of questions they are handling and to make estimates rather than keep precise tallies.

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## STAFFING FORMULAE

In an effort to allocate staff equitably and objectively, a number of libraries have developed staffing formulae. These are made up of agreed upon elements, representative

of major work components. Libraries typically use the formulae in conjunction with professional judgment to distribute budgeted positions and make adjustments periodically as workload shifts to ensure that staffing inequities are rectified.

Key to the development of a staffing formula is the identification of key workload elements (such as check in, check out, holds processing, questions answered, etc.). The elements should be easily, accurately, and consistently measured (statistics generated by the library's integrated library system are usually used when possible), applicable across the library system, and limited in number. Most libraries selected three to five elements and develop formulae for circulation, reference, and sometimes paging or shelving staff. Libraries may decide to weight elements to reflect their sense of relative work impact. Some libraries develop formulae for different groupings of libraries, based on staff size.

A sample formula has been developed for FCL and will be discussed with library managers. The sample is only for demonstration purposes, to show how such a formula works. If FCL wishes to develop formulae, they would need to identify the elements, decide upon weighting, and determine which facilities they would want to include in the formulae and in what groupings. It may make no sense, for example, to include the smallest libraries, since their staffing is predicated more on basic coverage than on workload. The library must maintain an accurate picture of the actual staffing at each facility so that fair workload assessments are made. Statistics not generated by the ILS must be kept as consistently and accurately as possible, with everyone applying definitions and collection methodologies uniformly, so that the work unit measures are correct.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Experiment with staffing formulae, using sample calculator provided. Use the formulae, in combination with professional judgment and knowledge of the work environment of each facility to make staffing allocations. Review annually as part of the budget preparation process and involve branch managers and supervisors in the review so that everyone understands how “rebalancing” staffing based on objective criteria works.
- Extract from the many statistics kept significant service and workload factors and prepare a branch matrix annually, so that an overall view of workload and services can be seen. Sample service indicator matrices have been developed for the system as a whole and size groupings. Information in this kind of compilation is easier to read and comprehend than the information in multiple individual reports.

- Identify competencies and skill sets related to project development and management and the ability to seek out and adopt best practices and innovative solutions to process or service delivery problems to use in hiring new librarians and managers, setting expectations for current librarians and managers, and developing staff development activities and assignments.
- Use the coverage calculator provided to ensure that basic desk and workload coverage is provided for each facility. Review leave utilization trends and use Workform 2 from *Staffing for Results* to determine actual productive time available for each facility.
- Develop guidelines for using extra help, substitutes, and floaters so that branches know when it is appropriate to use these forms of staff supplementation. Provide training and set performance expectations related to effectively managing the use of various categories of staff to provide basic coverage.
- Centralize substitute recruitment and training to provide support for local branches. Implement the use of scheduling software to automate much of the substitute calling and scheduling process.
- Develop a metric to quantify time to hire, broken down by classification. If the time seems unreasonable, work collaboratively with County Personnel to devise ways to streamline the process. Streamline internal processes by developing a bank of approved exam and hiring interview questions and train staff who serve on hiring boards or committees to be sure that behavioral and performance based questions are used and that these questions link to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies the library needs to accomplish its strategic goals. Libraries using various streamlined hiring techniques include the Multnomah County Library (OR), the District of Columbia Public Library, the Carroll County Library (MD), and the Queens Public Library (NY).

## WORK PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Everyone at every level of the library must be involved in reviewing and reconsidering work practices and routines. The library wants to be as efficient as possible and must enlist the experience and creativity of staff who are doing the work to devise new methods and adapt best practices from other libraries. A key way to deal with increased workload is to continuously look for ways to streamline and simplify workflow and eliminate steps in work processes. This involves studying all the steps and tasks involved in various work activities and asking “why” about each. Every step should add identifiable value. If the step is done because it has always been done that way or the employee was

trained to do it that way, it is a candidate for reconsideration. The impact on the end user (usually the library customer; sometimes an internal customer) should be the measure of success.

The following are ideas the library could consider to streamline work practices.

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## CHECKING IN MATERIALS

High transaction libraries do not stop to inspect materials for damage. Materials that are obviously damaged can be set aside (and decisions about discarding or replacing should be made quickly without multiple handling and decision-making steps). Less obvious damage either does not matter or will be reported by a library customer. Uniform mending and repair guidelines (which should provide for very little mending) should be developed to guide staff in making mend/discard decisions. If a title is popular and well-used it should be replaced. Buying a new copy usually costs less, in the long run, than all the handling involved in repairing an item.

Batching the quick inspection of audiovisual materials can also speed the check-in process. These formats typically do need to be quickly examined to be sure that the right item is in the right container. Some libraries batch this process (one person does inspection only for a period of time) so that the person checking the items in does not have to open the container. If there are multiple check-in stations, one person can “stage” inspected items for several clerks.

Other processes can also benefit from batching. The idea is to reduce interruptions to an activity stream so that volume can be produced. If an item is an exception for some reason, it is set aside and all set aside items are then dealt with at a later time, in another batch process.

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## SHELVING MATERIALS

Many libraries are rethinking how shelving is done and have set standards to have all returned materials reshelfed within x amount of time (2 hours, the end of the day, 24 hours, etc.). The goal is accomplished by tracking the time each step of the shelving activity takes, eliminating intermediate shelving and rough sorting steps, placing checked-in materials directly on carts in broad categories, and by setting priorities to shelve high circ materials first.

Newly acquired materials should be shelved immediately without a review period. The goal should be to get new materials to the library customers as quickly as possible.

Taking time to examine new items delays this process and is not demonstrably tied to improved reference service.

Besides ensuring that customers get materials quickly, streamlining the shelving process also means that holds list searching will go faster because there will be fewer extra places to search for items.

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## ROTATING COLLECTIONS

FCL still rotates materials among twenty-four of its thirty-six outlets. This is an old-fashioned practice, originally designed to spread scarce resources among a number of outlets. It predates online catalogs, which allow library customers to see all of the system's holdings and easily request desired items to be delivered to their branch. The library materials budget is now nearly five times larger than it was before Measure B. Many more new materials are now being bought. The effort it takes to rotate materials among system branches should be reconsidered in light of these developments. If floating can be implemented (see later section), many materials will naturally move among a number of the branches.

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## NON-PRINT MATERIALS

The popularity of non-print materials, particularly DVDs and CDs is now a fact of life for most public libraries. In FY 08, 32% of FCL's total circulation was non-print and of this 69% was video (adult video made up 50%). In many cases, libraries are still in a form of denial about this reality. Best methods for acquiring, processing, housing, and circulating these materials should be proactively investigated. DVDs are now often less expensive than hardback books. They may need to be protected in some circumstances, but this protection should not cost more than the item being protected. Some libraries use a thin plastic sleeve to hold DVDs and CDs in containers kept behind the desk and simply place the DVD, sleeve and all, in the case when the item is circulated. This saves time in refiling the returned item and causes less bulk in the storage container.

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## MAGAZINE PROCESSING

Many branches reported that magazine processing takes a lot of time. It may make sense to review the level of processing that is done and the kind of material magazines are considered to be. If they are seen as ephemeral materials with a short life span, provided primarily for leisure reading, then processing could be simplified. Another idea to consider is the centralized checking in of magazines. The Columbus Metropolitan Library (OH) has adopted this strategy for all branch periodicals except for a few daily

newspapers that are handled locally by branch staff. The magazines are delivered to branches within one day of receipt at the centralized check in/processing location.

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## DONATED MATERIALS

Donated materials can be time-consuming to handle and process. Several branches mentioned the time dealing with gift materials takes and the consultant observed the space and clutter that these materials can cause. Dealing with donated materials can be a delicate issue, especially if Friends groups use them for book sales. The library should review its gift policy to be sure that it works under present realities and work collaboratively with the various Friends groups that may hold the sales to ensure that the time, effort and space involved results in positive gains for both the library and the Friends group. The Friends of some other libraries rent space or containers to store donated materials, which gives both them and the library better work space.

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## LOAN PERIODS

The library still has a fairly conservative loan period and renewal policy. Because automated systems make renewing and finding and retrieving wanted items so easy, libraries have begun to relax loan and renewal policies which date back to manual circulation systems. Many libraries have one loan period (often three weeks) for all types of materials and allow many more than two renewals (FCL's current policy). The advantage of this sort of approach to the library user is that he or she does not have to remember that some items (DVDs, for example) are loaned for one week while others are loaned for three weeks. Although there can be concerns about the demand for video materials, libraries that have made this change have not experienced it as a problem. It might be worth trying the expanded loan period for 6-12 months to see what the impact is.

Allowing additional renewals means that people can keep books longer, unless someone else has put a hold on a title, in which case it would not renew. This is a convenience for many users. Again, a number of libraries have made this change without adverse consequences. It would be another way to provide more convenience to users and reduce handling of returned materials.

Because most renewals take little or no staff time, circulation statistics should reflect circulation minus renewals (sometimes called "first checkout") so that staffing calculations are based not on total circulation but on the transactions actually handled. If more renewals are allowed, the portion of total circulation that is renewals will increase.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish cross-organizational teams to review the ideas offered and examine work processes in order to streamline and simplify them. Use the techniques and forms in *Staffing for Results* to carry out these process improvements. Electronic versions of the forms can be downloaded from <http://www.elearnlibraries.com/workforms/>.

## LIBRARY SERVICES

Libraries are adopting new service models and approaches to provide more responsive, convenient services to their customers and to manage their growing and changing workload. The Fresno County Library must consider these changes for the same reasons.

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## REFERENCE AND CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

As mentioned earlier, the nature of reference work has changed in most public libraries and FCL is no exception. Reference figures are notoriously hard to gather in a consistent, accurate manner. The Readers Aid Transactions (RATs) statistics collected show wild fluctuations, many of which are probably due to erratic data capture during the sampling periods rather than true swings in questions asked. As noted above, the makeup of these transactions is moving away from true reference to more information and procedural inquiries. The importance of the accuracy of these statistics will be even greater if formulae are used to allocate staff. A true picture of work load and composition of this work load is necessary to understanding what level and how many staff are needed to assist users.

Fewer MLS degreed librarians will be needed as customer assistance moves towards basic information, direction, and instruction. In response to this change in user needs, libraries are redefining the best and highest use of their most highly educated and experienced staff members. Public service desks are increasingly staffed with trained paraprofessionals and PC assistance personnel. Librarians are used to develop standards and specifications for internal and external service providers, provide training and coaching to other staff, evaluate services, develop collaborative relationships with community partners, and develop and manage projects that require a professional librarian's background and experience.

Public service staff have other assignments as well, but it is often unclear how the time is being used. As a continuation of this project, a workload study should be conducted, using Workform 7 in *Staffing for Results*, to get a complete picture of what percentages of a librarian's time (Central and larger branches) are spent on desks, selection, program preparation, program presentation, community work, professional development workshops, etc. The starting place for making decisions about the most effective allocation of time is a more focused picture of how time is currently being spent.

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## PROACTIVE REFERENCE

Many public libraries are experimenting with a different approach to reference services, known by a variety of terms such as “roving”, “deskless”, or “proactive reference”. There are a number of ways to modify reference and information services to include moving out from behind the desk to more actively engage with library users. Many staff are not naturally comfortable with changing the way they provide this service and libraries that have adopted this service model are continuing to experiment and refine its implementation.<sup>2</sup> However, a number of libraries are moving in this direction in response to a number of realities:

- most library users do not ask for assistance even though their visit would be more successful if they did
- libraries want to meet or exceed contemporary concepts of proactive customer service by initiating interactions and meeting users where they are rather than expecting them to come to staff members
- some users are reluctant to leave a PC or table area to ask for help fearing that they will lose their place or have to move their materials

In addition to providing more direct public service, this model facilitates greater overall security, since library staff are purposefully walking around the public areas. They can assist people, enforce the rules of behavior, intercede more quickly to refocus inappropriate behaviors or to summon a guard, and so on.

Library work has changed and will continue to change considerably. The traditional definition of public service by desk location must be reexamined in light of these changes. The library must continue to track and analyze the nature of the transactions and

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<sup>2</sup> The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library and the Columbus Metropolitan Library are two Ohio libraries that have become deeply involved with this service model, with the Cuyahoga County Public Library beginning to experiment with this approach. The Hennepin County Library (Minnesota) has used this model for several years and reports that reference statistics have gone up because people are being assisted who were not reached under the previous, desk-based model.

interactions with library users to determine the appropriate staffing level. Reference statistics should be reviewed by type of question, location of service interaction, and facility to see what differences there might be.

Some library staff still regard answering reference and readers' advisory questions as their "real work" and all other interactions as lesser work or interruptions that prevent them from doing the real work. The reality is that library users around the world have different needs and wants than they have had in the past. Interactions will continue to be dominated by "non-reference" requests for assistance.

The basic identifying feature of proactive reference is that library staff expand their public service repertoire to include moving out from behind the reference desk and proactively determining from customers out on the public service floor or in the stacks whether they need assistance.

A recent article in *Public Libraries* attempted to define roving reference this way:

What exactly is "it"? Besides being a two-letter word, "it" is offering help in the nonfiction stacks to a dad trying to juggle three separate homework assignments. "It" is bringing a basket to the children's area for a grandmother selecting picture books for her grandchildren. "It" is finding a line at the print release station and fixing the balky printer. "It" is meeting our patrons wherever and whenever they need help in our buildings.<sup>3</sup>

The King County Library System (WA) and other libraries that have adopted this service model have found that there are numerous library users who, when approached as they are using the library, have both basic and more advanced reference questions, as well as informational, directional, and machine assistance questions. They have also found that this additional "presence" on the public floors has provided more opportunities to deal with security and behavioral issues.

This service model involves what for some staff feels like a major change in service behavior and to others seems like a minor modification. The authors of the article cited acknowledge the behavioral changes that must accompany such a change and provide numerous common sense suggestions for developing a roving approach to public service and for assisting staff members in making the transition to it. There are a number of ways to implement roving service and it may well be that FCL would devise different approaches at Central and the Regionals and larger

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Pitney and Nancy Slote, "Going Mobile: The KCLS Roving Reference Model," *Public Libraries*, January-February, 2007, 54.

branches or even different approaches in the Children’s and Adult areas of Central. The main point is to consider the benefits of this approach (King County reports that thousands of additional questions were answered) and that there are a number of viable ways to implement this service approach.

A second, equally important point is that increased staff presence can be an important factor in dealing with security and behavior issues. Public service staff are the “eyes and ears” on the floor and must be part of a collaborative approach to dealing with behavioral and safety issues.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to collect and analyze in greater detail the types of questions asked at public service desks. Remind staff of definitions of types of questions and services provided and the importance of keeping statistics accurately and consistently.
- Analyze the statistics collected to determine types and volume of questions and other public service interactions in order to identify the most effective staffing patterns and number of desks to staff throughout the day and week. For example, less busy times could require fewer staffed desks and fewer staff on desks.
- Staff appropriately for the questions asked, replacing some librarian positions with paraprofessionals.
- Experiment with “proactive” reference, trying different approaches and talking with libraries that have adopted this approach (the article cited has an extensive bibliography).
- Analyze the on-desk and off-desk work that public service librarians perform. Set expectations for the appropriate use of time that clearly relate to the library’s service goals.

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## FLOATING COLLECTIONS

A number of libraries have begun to “float” their collections. Items in collections that float are not owned by a specific location. Instead, the materials stay where they are returned, unless routed to another location to fill a hold request. This means, as a librarian from the Columbus Metropolitan Library said in a presentation to Cuyahoga County Public Library staff, that customers create their own collections at the library’s locations. That can be a jarring concept to librarians brought up on the notion of carefully developing collections for a specific location. It makes sense, though, in the highly collaborative, interactive world we now live in and has worked out very well for the libraries that have tried it.

The key concept is that the library is one system with one collection. Items float freely among locations and stay where they are returned. Materials movement is generated by holds requests and the occasional rebalancing that must be done in the few instances where there are too many or too few materials. Libraries choose to float selected parts of their collection (large print, audiovisual materials, for example) or their entire collection. The most recent adopters of this idea seem to be going the whole collection route.

This is an idea that has been growing over the years. A couple of early adopters (Fraser Valley Regional Library, BC and the Pikes Peak Library District, CO) have been floating collections for over twenty-five years. Among large public libraries that are floating collections:

- Hennepin County Library (MN)
- Gwinnett County Public Library (GA)
- Multnomah County Library (OR)
- Jefferson County Public Library (CO)
- Timberland Regional Library (WA)
- San Diego County Library (CA)
- A number of major urban public libraries in Canada, including Vancouver Public Library, Toronto Public Library, and the Edmonton Public Library.
- A number of public library systems in New Zealand and Australia have also begun floating their collections.

Why do libraries do it? It's a technique that puts more materials in the hands of library customers with less effort for the library. Benefits to the customers and library include:

- Collections are more readily available to customers
  - Gwinnett County and Jefferson County report that their customers are very positive about encountering more materials in their branches
- Collections are constantly being refreshed
- Floating can raise the quality and presentation of materials stock
- Titles move to where customers want them
- Fewer repetitive tasks/less manual handling
- Reduction in courier costs
  - Jefferson County saw delivery volume decrease 66% in the first year after they began floating their entire collection
  - Gwinnett County was able to reduce the number of drivers and trucks needed
- Reduces the amount of time for items in transit

- Items are available to customers at point of check in
  - Jefferson County reports that 30,000 more items per month were available to their customers because they weren't in transit
- Reduces the physical wear and tear on items
- Can reduce the amount of copies per title purchased
- Gives library ability to monitor customer borrowing patterns
- Can save staff time (e.g., double check in, handling crates)
  - Multnomah reports a 40% decrease in the number of crates of materials that needed to be reshelfed at the Central library
  - Gwinnett County reported an average decrease of 160 items a day that had to be checked in at branches (10% decrease system wide)
- Reduces the risk of smaller sites being “read out”
- Reduces injuries related to repetitive motions
  - Jefferson and Gwinnett report a significant reduction in workers' comp injuries
- Reduces processing costs for libraries that apply location labels
- Provides additional tools for managing costs

This could be an idea that could help FCL save on delivery costs (both the delivery itself and handling materials in the libraries) and provide easy refreshment of collections.

It appears that this idea cannot be implemented with the current ILS (the vendor has declined to provide custom programming to make it work in the consortial environment in which FCL circulation operates). However, the idea should be kept in mind and pursued in whatever way is appropriate.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider floating all or part of the library's collection or floating the collection in part of the library's service area (the Timberland Regional Library in Washington floats regionally). Investigate how item codes could be customized for FCL materials to facilitate floating when the ILS is able to support it.

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## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Selection and collection development is a large, fragmented process. Adult non-fiction print materials are selected by approximately thirty-two staff members, who are assigned areas of the collection by Dewey classification. These selectors use a variety of review materials, catalogs, and other selection tools to build carts with the two major adult

materials vendors. These carts are then reviewed by a five-person selection committee that meets weekly for nearly a full day. Children's print materials are selected by a seven-person committee and young adult materials are selected by a four-person committee. Other staff members select media, foreign language materials, and materials for special collections. These materials are basically selected directly by the individuals responsible for them.

The adult non-fiction selectors have collection development responsibilities, but it is unclear how consistently or thoroughly the selectors carry out these responsibilities. It seems that it would be nearly impossible for thirty-two selectors to truly assist with local collection assessment and development, let alone provide a consistent approach to collection development throughout the library system. The adult services selectors select materials, while local branch staffs weed their collections. In addition to these branch collection issues, there is the perception among some that the circulating collection at Central has not been developed systematically and that there are now holes in the collection.

Vendor lists of hot and high demand items are used, as well as standing order plans. The adult selection committee members make decisions about the titles and numbers of copies to purchase and where the copies will go. High demand titles are purchased to fill holds (5:1 ratio for books and non-print other than DVDs and 8:1 for DVDs) and the librarian who assists the manager in charge of adult materials selection coordinates much of the high demand and non-print purchasing, as well as the process of responding to customer purchase requests. The manager reviews all selections to find the best price and availability before the carts are finalized. An office assistant populates the order grids with one vendor and the manager does it with the other. Reportedly, data transfer is slowed by the library's poor bandwidth, so the manager does this work at home on her own computer. The carts are then released to acquisitions where the orders are placed.

As part of the Balanced Score Card, a staff task force has been established to streamline the selection and acquisition processes for all committees.

Many libraries have taken steps to streamline the process by centralizing selection. With fewer people involved, a more unified approach to collection development can be achieved. Vendor services can be exploited to minimize the effort that goes into selecting popular titles, authors and subjects, allowing librarians to focus on those areas that require more judgment and experience. Various techniques can be used to solicit and receive staff and customer input. Centralized selection and centralized coordination of collection assessment, weeding and replacement activities can ensure that collections are built and maintained consistently. Interested librarians can continue to read reviews, if

they wish, and provide suggestions to the selectors. Most libraries that have centralized this activity have found that they can increase circulation and turnover rate significantly by managing the collections from an overall perspective.

There are a variety of ways to implement centralized selection and collection management, from several selectors centrally located who select all materials for the whole system to a more distributed model where a collections coordinator works with a number (much smaller than thirty-two) of selectors who are responsible for selected subject areas or formats.

Three libraries with centralized models include: the Multnomah County Library with a library materials budget of over \$10 million and three selectors, the Fort Worth Public Library with a materials budget of \$2.4 million and three selectors, and the Columbus Metropolitan Library with a materials budget of \$6.7 million and five selectors. These selectors meet with small advisory committees (three are on the adult non-fiction committee at Multnomah, for example) at various intervals (the Multnomah non-fiction committee meets for half a day twice a month; the video committee meets just once a year to provide overall guidance). Subject specialists at the Multnomah Central library generate orders that are reviewed by the adult non-fiction committee for branch purchase. The adult non-fiction selector selects popular non-fiction based on professional knowledge, the collection development policy, and an allocation grid that is reviewed periodically. In each of these libraries, staff and customer purchase requests are also reviewed and selection decisions made by the selectors.

FCL has taken the right steps towards centralization with simplifying the selection of children's and YA materials and centralizing the selection of DVDs, fiction, and popular materials. It is time to take the next step and centralize the selection of adult non-fiction, reducing the amount of time and number of people involved.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus or redirect the task force to come up with solid recommendations that move the system towards a much more centralized selection process, involving far fewer selectors. Selectors should coordinate all aspects of collection development and maintenance, so that there is a consistent approach throughout the library system and collections are built and maintained according to a plan that supports the library's service goals and objectives.

- Review the customer purchase request process to identify ways that it can be streamlined if the current process requires staff intervention. Many libraries receive and review requests, but do not communicate back to the requester or place holds on purchased items for the requester because of the number of requests and the time involved. This decision represents a trade-off in customer service: titles can be acquired and made available more quickly but customers have to take the initiative themselves to see whether or not a requested title has been ordered and then place the hold themselves.
- Review the item to title ratio of acquisitions and move towards buying more copies of popular titles. Scrutinize carefully any single item purchase or gift acceptance. These titles are the most costly to add to the system (it costs as much to catalog one copy as it does to catalog fifty) and are often found to be shelf-sitters. Every title has to add value to the collection.<sup>4</sup>
- Utilize standing orders as much as possible. This saves time and allows intellectual effort to be focused on collection areas that are unique to Fresno County. Little effort should be put into buying mass-market paperbacks, graphic novels, popular authors and series, bestsellers, fotonovelas, audio books, award winners, popular DVDs, etc. On the other hand, balance the number of different vendors used so that tracking fulfillment doesn't become onerous.
- Utilize vendor provided services to the maximum, developing specifications for vendor selected materials. Accept that it will take a couple of years to fine-tune these services. The selectors at the Phoenix Public Library are now "contract administrators" who work closely with staff and vendors to ensure that the selection specifications are accurately developed and that materials provided comply with the specifications.
- Assess collection relevance by analyzing turnover rates by material type and location. Set a goal of a turnover rate of at least 4 for every branch.<sup>5</sup> Work with branch managers, supervisors and staff to find ways to reach this goal.

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<sup>4</sup> According to California State Library statistics, the FCL ratio of items to titles in FY 2007 was 5 to 1. This is even less than San Francisco's (6 to 1), a library with an arguably larger research role. The ratio for the County of Los Angeles is 10 to 1. Columbus Metropolitan Library has a ratio of 14 to 1, with a Holds/Buy ratio of 2 to 1 for books. During the five year period that CML has been focusing on centralizing all selection and streamlining Technical Services operations including increasing the item to title ratio, the circulation of books has increased 30% and turnover has increased 15%. These statistics are regarded as proof of the effectiveness of these changes.

<sup>5</sup> This may seem ambitious, even impossible, but the Fort Worth Public Library was able to increase circulation substantially, including in branches serving populations with lower education levels and lower English language skills, by changing the emphasis of its collection development efforts. The Columbus Metropolitan Library closely monitors turnover rate and reports that the turnover rate in 2007 was 7.96.

- Use ILS system reports to identify slow or none moving titles.<sup>6</sup> Provide basic guidelines for weeding for condition or age. Schedule regular weeding and utilize weeding teams so that collections are weeded quickly and regularly.
- Review materials selection and collection development policies to be sure that they are in alignment with current priorities and goals.

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## PROGRAMMING

The library promised more programs under Measure B and it has delivered! Program attendance has grown from 54,563 in FY 99 to 157,688 in FY 07, a 189% increase. Programs of all kinds are offered to all age groups: lapsits and story hours for babies and toddlers, special programs for school age children, tours, programs for adults, presentations at community meetings, school visits, summer reading program, programs for teens, book talks...the list goes on and on.

Programs are developed and planned pursuant to written program plans, which set goals for the number and types of programs to be presented. Detailed statistics are kept of the number of programs and the number of attendees. Many of the children's programs are presented by the centralized youth services staff, who work throughout the system to provide programs, services, and children's collection development support to branches.

It may be time, however, in light of other workload, to rethink the quantity and types of programs delivered. The programs presented should align with the library's priorities and be part of the process of it accomplishing its goals. Focus should be applied to the programming effort and basic guidelines developed that address the cost of preparing and presenting a program with the benefit to the recipients. Every use of time is a matter of choice and the decisions about how to use time for programs, presentations, school visits, community contacts, etc. should be deliberate and within the general guidelines and program philosophy developed by the system.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the program plans to include a general program philosophy (the adult program policy does this to an extent) so that staff have guidance about the purpose of programs.
- Develop guidelines for program planners to help them assess the cost/benefit and/or outcomes of various programs. Identify target populations for programs

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<sup>6</sup> The Columbus Metropolitan Library developed a no-circulation report that listed items that had not circulated in four or fewer years. They found only 7,000 items (only .4% of their total collection) that fell into this category.

and set goals for those programs deemed the most important (for example, Summer Reading Program participant goals).

- Conduct an annual program review meeting, allowing wide participation among system staff members, to assess what has worked, what has not, impediments to effective publicity and implementation, etc. A tremendous investment is made in programming. A concomitant review of the value of this investment should be made on a regular basis.

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## TECHNOLOGY UTILIZATION

The library has a history of investing in technology to deliver services and extend staff resources. It should continue to actively seek out technology-based solutions to the issues it is trying to resolve. It must require of employees, as a basic competency, that they be proficient in the technologies appropriate to their job and that they be willing to seek out technologies to improve the service they deliver and the way they carry out their job duties.

Innovative libraries are using a variety of technologies to communicate with their users: Instant Messaging to let users know that books are due or a hold is ready and to communicate with teachers and students; podcasting to make story times, programs, and library information available; interactive websites which allow people to sign up for library events, sample library programs, provide feedback on library services, or participate in an online book discussion group; chat, blogs and other types of social networking software which allows the library to interact with users and community partners.

Technology also provides communication tools that can save time and allow library staff to interact with customers, community members, and each other more efficiently. Libraries that are experimenting with proactive reference often utilize communications devices so that they can easily communicate with each other while on the floor. Video conferencing and Skype can be used to communicate internally. Instant Messaging, email, wikis, and other software allow collaborative project work and fast communication and reduce the need for face-to-face meetings.

Libraries that are successfully dealing with their workload utilize technology in as many ways as possible and are continuously looking for new technology to aid them. Vendors have developed an array of new, technology-based services. They should be proactively approached to partner with the library to find solutions that meet the library's needs. Technological solutions can support the centralization of some services, such as providing basic information on library hours and services, answering questions, booking

meeting rooms and PCs, and scheduling staff and substitutes. The library has investigated many of these solutions but is encouraged to continue to do so and develop the internal capacity to negotiate with and challenge vendors to help develop solutions.

The concept of “outsourcing” has a number of reactions within the library profession. However, it should be investigated as another form of using technology, since many of the services vendors now provide are based on various technologies. Vendors can pre-select, using customized profiles. High demand materials and popular formats, authors, and subjects can be easily acquired this way. The Phoenix Public Library, one of the most efficient, cost-conscious public libraries in the country, partners proactively with its vendors. The library’s centralized selectors now function as contract managers, working closely with vendors to ensure that the library receives the right materials in the right amounts.

There are a variety of vendor provided cataloging options from which to choose. Some libraries acquire as much as possible cataloged by their vendors, others identify certain materials, such as adult fiction or children’s picture books, as candidates for vendor-supplied cataloging. Other libraries contract to have all cataloging and processing done by their vendor (for selected categories of materials) and have the materials drop-shipped to their branches so that there is no handling of the materials by the local technical services department and minimal handling at the receiving location.

Vendors can also provide a number of pre-processing services. Libraries, like Phoenix, that have a firm handle on their in-house costs, can choose to outsource those activities that the vendor can provide more inexpensively. The Cuyahoga County Public Library, for example, has just completed a rigorous workload analysis of its technical services functions and can now consider vendor-provided services with this knowledge base. Some libraries elect to have basic preprocessing done, such as removing cellophane packaging from DVDs and CDs and having security targets or RFID labels attached.

Any use of vendor-provided services requires the library to be willing to minimize special requirements (unique cataloging, special labels, designations, etc.) to keep costs and the chance of errors to a minimum. If libraries enter into such arrangements with a positive attitude and an understanding that it takes some time to fine tune the service specifications, the results can save money and get materials out to library users more quickly.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to proactively seek out technologies that can expand ways the library can interact with users, make the finding and use of library materials and services more convenient for users, and manage its workload.
- Develop competency expectations around the use and adoption of technological services and solutions. Develop existing staff to meet expectations. Hire new staff with these skills and competencies.
- Assign staff members to keep up with emerging library technologies through monitoring blogs, subscribing to RSS feeds, reading, conference attendance, visiting other libraries, etc.
- Collaborate with vendors by asking them to help identify solutions. Develop the ability to develop specifications and negotiate contracts for vendor provided services. Acquire additional training on vendor products or services, if required.
- Quantify work activities and cost out activities that could be provided by vendors so that sound decisions can be made about whether outsourcing a particular activity is cost effective.
- Develop a technology investment approach that includes a systematic way to research and evaluate innovative strategies, manage procurement and implementation processes, develop and deliver needed training, and prepare for operationalizing the technology once initial implementation is completed. A few people in the system have these skills. A cadre of people with these skills must be developed.

## DELIVERY SYSTEM

Library materials handling and movement among FCL branches and SJVLS members is a complex and growing area of library operations. With the advent of online catalogs and integrated library systems, library customers have the opportunity to see all of the library's holdings (rather than just the holdings of the branch they are visiting) and to request that desired items be delivered to their pickup location of choice. As mentioned earlier in this report, this is a very popular service and its use has grown dramatically. The number of holds, as previously noted, has grown over 100% in just the last five years, while circulation has grown about 11%.

This movement of materials around the FCL system and among members of the SJVLS consortium impacts the library's delivery system and Central and branch circulation staff, who are required to sort, pack, unpack, and distribute materials that are delivered to and from their facilities. In addition to requested materials and returning materials, delivery

also handles the distribution of new materials, intersystem mail, supplies and equipment, and cash deposits.

FCL has taken a step that many other multi-branch systems have taken by creating a sort center at the Sunnyside branch library. This sort center provides a centralized location where in-coming materials are dropped off by delivery van drivers, sorted and repacked to be picked up for out-going deliveries.

Delivery drivers make deliveries and sort materials. They also work in the Technical Services area unpacking deliveries of new library materials. Because of the growth in workload, library aides also work on sorting and repacking in the sort center.

Many libraries are feeling the crunch of heavy materials handling workload and are beginning to focus on this operational area. Work flow analyses and the development of shared and best practices are just emerging as libraries become more familiar with the topic of materials handling logistics and the various issues involved with making the staffing, equipment, work process, and work and materials flow decisions required for an effective, efficient process.

While work has been done to find ways to handle this growing workload, the current approach is reflective of the incremental decisions that have been made to deal with backlogs and the crush of materials that must be dealt with on a daily basis. The time has come to step back and conduct a systematic study to identify ways to streamline all aspects of the materials handling process and identify the optimal approaches to staffing various functions within the processes. This must be done sooner rather than later because circulation and holds are likely to increase under normal circumstances and are expected to increase even more during times of economic duress, as people look to the library as a source of free information and leisure materials.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct a comprehensive study of all aspects of the materials handling/delivery process in order to identify who does what, how long each step and task takes, the number of items and crates handled at each facility and at the sort center and options and best practices for staffing, equipment, work processes, lending policies, and materials routing.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Under the current organizational structure seven high level managers report to the County Librarian. She reports that this number of direct reports is not unwieldy because of the experience and high level of competency that each of these managers possesses. She is able to carry out her leadership roles of providing the overall vision and sense of direction for the organization and interacting with community and organizational partners to extend and expand the library's role in the county.

The Associate County Librarian is responsible for all aspects of the branch library system, including facilities development and maintenance. She has eleven direct reports, who are also experienced, competent managers. However, because the system is comprised of thirty-one branches, serving a large, diverse geographic area, the span of control is large and the Associate County Librarian has numerous operational and service issues which require her administrative direction. The challenge is to avoid becoming immersed in operational issues but rather to work with the direct reports to ensure that larger, system wide support issues are addressed and resolved. The work that is currently being done on assessing the use of extra help and substitutes and establishing clear guidelines on their use is an example of the kind of work that the Associate County Librarian should lead.

Unlike most libraries, FCL does not have a manager of the Central library. Instead, Central is managed by the Adult Services and Reference Services Managers. A cleaner, less fragmented structure would be to have a Central Manager, with subordinate managers reporting to that position. This is a structural change that is not urgent but could be considered in the future when the opportunity presents itself.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- As circumstances warrant, review the library's organizational structure to ensure that the structure supports the accomplishment of the library's strategic goals and ensures unfettered communication up, down, and across the organization.

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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### CHANGE CONTEXT

As noted earlier in this report, the work that the Fresno County Library is doing is changing, both in composition and quantity. The library's experience is mirrored by most

other libraries in the country and the rapid velocity and transformative quality of change is being experienced by virtually every type of enterprise, whether public, private, non-profit or not for profit.

Most commentators agree that the major drivers of the changes being experienced are demographics, technology, and economics. Certainly FCL can relate to the impact of these drivers:

- Demographics – growing population, populations in urban, suburban, and rural communities (both farming and mountain resort), aging population in some areas, families with young children in others, teens and young adults who find and use information and communicate in new ways, populations that speak a variety of languages and come from a variety of cultures and life experiences, many families headed up by a single mother, many families below the poverty level, etc.
- Technology – changes and developments in technology drive user expectations and have multiplied the variety of ways that people communicate, acquire and use information, spend leisure time, share opinions and creatively express themselves.
- Economics – the amount of money people have influences everything from the choices they make about where and how to spend it (do I buy, rent or borrow a book or DVD?), the level of treats and luxury they indulge in (there are premium versions of everything from marshmallows to golf clubs), whether they feel they can cover the basics (housing, food, gas, transportation, broadband, cell and cable bills [these have become basics for many]), and the amount of money they feel they can pay in taxes. The downturn in the economy is now causing even more disruption, as job losses, credit constriction, and foreclosures cause reductions in property, sales, and income tax revenues, primary sources of income for public libraries, while increasing the need for free entertainment, family activities, and information on jobs, developing new skills, and coping with changes in income level.

Astute library directors realize that this is an urgent situation: that, in fact, the very continued existence of the public library may depend upon their being able to continuously adapt to ensure that their library remains a relevant, responsive provider of materials and services. They must be both adroit in anticipating and observing changes in their customer base and in their customers' wants and needs and nimble in responding to these changes.

The authors of *Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service* argue that libraries must adopt a service model of constant and purposeful change, involving evaluation and updating of library services and user and staff participation, because of these truths:

- We are losing the interest of our users.
- We no longer consistently offer the services our users want.
- We are resistant to changing services that we consider traditional or fundamental to library service.
- We are no longer the first place many of our current and potential customers look for information.<sup>7</sup>

The Fresno County Library has already made a number of changes. The reality is that there will need to be many more. In fact, the current reality is that change is now a constant. Casey and Savastinuk note that “Nothing, except for the process of change, is constant, and everything is open to evaluation. Change must be acceptable for all levels within the organization; nothing is sacred. ...Your organization should continually evaluate everything, looking for ways to update and improve.”<sup>8</sup>

This environment of constant change is not unique to libraries. Virtually every business, government, agency, institution, and organization is facing the same situation. It’s no wonder, then, that a search of books on Amazon using the key words “change management” yields 55,640 books and that a Google search, using the same phrase, results in nearly 9 million hits!

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## APPROACHES TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The phrase “change management” can mean a number of different things.<sup>9</sup> Two major approaches are:

1. change management as managing the making of changes in a systematic way
2. change management as managing the process of change, which can include techniques and methodologies from the fields of psychology, sociology, business administration, and engineering, among others

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## MANAGING MAKING CHANGES

Change is about both doing things differently and thinking about things differently. Managing the making of change in a systematic way requires a number of skills, strategies, techniques, and competencies. Sandra Nelson, in her forthcoming book,

<sup>7</sup> Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk, *Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service* (Medford, New Jersey: Information Today, Inc., 2007), xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Nickols has written an instructive paper, “Change Management 101: A Primer”, that provides a succinct overview of various aspects of and approaches to change management. It can be found at <http://home.att.net/~nickols/change.htm>.

*Implementing for Results: From Ideas to Action*, notes that libraries, in many cases, have been responding *reactively* to change. The successful libraries of the future, she argues, will be led by managers and boards who are willing and able to respond *proactively* to change.<sup>10</sup> She goes on to itemize the attributes of libraries that are thriving in today's rapidly changing environment:

Most importantly, they have strong leaders. They have management teams that understand the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. Decisions are made based on data and not emotion. These libraries are market-driven in the true sense of marketing: they develop products that the people they serve want and they provide those products at the most convenient times and in the most convenient places. These libraries are 'early adopters.' They experiment with new technologies and new service models before others. They create and support an environment that encourages taking risks and they reward risk-takers.

The most effective libraries are utilizing a number of systems, approaches and techniques to ensure that they understand what needs to change, how to make changes, how to evaluate the changes made, and how to move into the next change cycle. If the Fresno County Library adopted these techniques (and many are in place to varying degrees), developed the skills and competencies required to use these techniques, and set expectations that this is how things would be done throughout the system, change could be managed in a smooth, constant (as opposed to sporadic) way. This would be "the Fresno way" of managing ongoing operations and anticipating and implementing needed changes.

## THE FRESNO WAY

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The following provides an outline of the key components of The Fresno Way.

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<sup>10</sup> Sandra Nelson, *Implementing for Results: From Ideas to Action* (Chicago: American Library Association, in press).

## Strategic goals and objectives

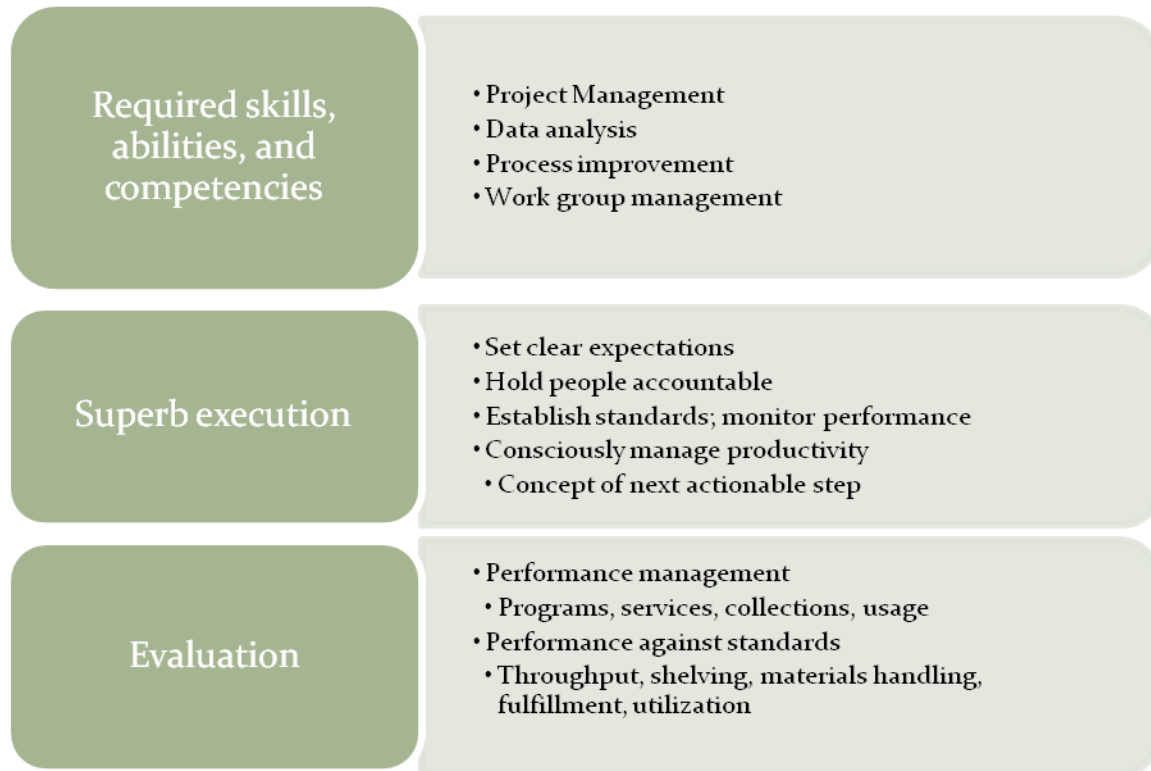
- Strategic Service Plan
- Where are we trying to go?
- Balanced Scorecard
- Are we getting where we want to go?

## Community Analysis

- Demographics
- Who are our users and non-users?
- Surveys
- Users
- Nonusers
- Staff
- Focus Groups
- Data Mining

## Process for identifying issues, problems, processes to address

- What, How and Why questions
- Possible areas:
  - Public services
  - Collections
  - Technology
  - Support Services
  - Business Services




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## MANAGING THE CHANGE PROCESS

People carry out the changes the library makes and they can have a variety of responses to them. For any given change or set of changes, typically there will be some who enthusiastically embrace the change, some who are actively resistant to it, and a large middle group who want to have their questions answered, see how it goes, get more used to it, or learn more about it before feeling comfortable with it.

Experts on managing change provide the following guidelines:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate. Often perceived resistance comes from people not knowing why something is being changed, how the actual change will be carried out, or what training or other support they will receive. As the former director of the Vigo County (Indiana) Library once said, “People are down on what they’re not up on.”
- Involve staff every step of the way. They are closest to the work and the library customers. They will also be more comfortable with a change they helped design.

- Form teams or task forces made up of staff members from a variety of classifications and places in the library. Vertical teams serve to flatten the organization and provide for greater staff input.
- Identify desired outcomes rather than prescribed methodologies.
- Acknowledge that people will have emotional reactions when faced with change. There can be feelings of loss, grief, anger, denial, etc.
- Acknowledge, also, that when changes are made to programs or services this doesn't mean that they didn't have value. Find ways to express appreciation for past successes as you realign services and collections to meet current and future service priorities.
- Pilot the change if possible. This provides a chance to try things, make adjustments, identify needed training, and plan communications before rolling out a change system wide.
- Identify major issues but don't become paralyzed by ongoing analysis or answering hypothetical "what if" questions. Perfection is probably unattainable; the last few increments towards perfection are the most costly and time-consuming. One manager cited by Michael Hammer in his article "Making Operational Innovation Work" has adopted the principle of "70% and go": develop a solution that provides most but not all desired capabilities, get into the field quickly, and then enhance it over time. "This approach," writes Hammer, "allows concepts to be tested, builds momentum and credibility, and delivers early benefits that silence critics and sway doubters."<sup>11</sup>
- Model confidence, enthusiasm, and a can do attitude at the senior manager level. Staff will be looking to see if top managers really embrace change or are resistant or beaten down by it.
- Accept the fact that change is usually a messy, chaotic, unmanageable process.

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## RESOURCES

There are numerous books, articles, people, organizations, and websites available to use as resources for managing making changes and the change process. Here are a recommended few among the many available:

### Understanding, planning for and managing change:

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Hammer, "Making Operational Innovation Work", reprinted in the Harvard Business Online newsletter, *Harvard Management Update*. <http://discussionleader.hbsp.com/hmu/2008/09/making-operational-innovation.php>.

- Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk, *Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service* (Medford, New Jersey: Information Today, Inc., 2007). Library 2.0 is much more than technology. The authors present a model for continuously evaluating library services to meet the ever-changing needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century library user.
- Sandra Nelson, *Implementing for Results: From Ideas to Action* (Chicago: American Library Association, in press). The first chapter is about change and change management. Communication issues are also covered.
- Sandra Nelson, *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2001). The entire book is about creating a strategic plan. A valuable tool kit section covers working effectively with groups, communication, and presenting data.
- Fred Nickols, “Change Management 101: A Primer”, <http://home.att.net/~nickols/change.htm>. As the title of the paper suggests, basic ideas and concepts of change management. Nickols’ website contains numerous papers on a variety of organizational development and management issues.

### Project Management Techniques

- Jeff Crow, *Applying Project Management in the Workplace*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2003. This very practical book on project management is now available only as a pdf download. Besides providing a step by step process for developing and managing projects, the book provides a number of forms, checklists, process improvement tools, etc. Available through Project Kickstart: [http://www.projectkickstart.com/products/applying\\_project\\_management.cfm](http://www.projectkickstart.com/products/applying_project_management.cfm)
- David Allen, *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001). Contains excellent chapters on project planning and project implementation.

### Process Improvement

- Sara Laughlin, Denise Sisco Shockley, and Ray Wilson, *The Library’s Continuous Improvement Fieldbook: 29 Ready-to-Use Tools* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2003). Excellent introduction to concepts and methodologies of continuous process improvement, using library examples and context.
- Sara Laughlin and Ray W. Wilson, *The Quality Library: A Guide to Staff-Driven Improvement, Better Efficiency, and Happier Customers* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2008). Companion book to the *Fieldbook*, this one delves deeper into the system required to ensure that library services are relevant to customers and efficiently provided.

- Diane Mayo and Jeanne Goodrich, *Staffing for Results: A Guide to Working Smarter* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002). This book provides the tools and methodologies needed to analyze in a systematic way what work is done, how long it takes, and who does it in order to gauge performance and output and redesign work processes and improve productivity.

### Execution

- David Allen, *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001). One of the best techniques for ensuring stress-free, high personal and group productivity. Allen explains concept of “the next actionable step.”
- Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York: Crown Business, 2002). Practical advice on how to put an execution culture in place to get the job done and deliver results.
- Jeanne Goodrich, *Getting Things Done*, a synthesis of ideas obtained from many of these sources and others.
- Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable...About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004). This book uses a fable approach to get at the hard truths about meetings: most people don’t like them because they are often ineffective and dissatisfying. Lencioni recommends different types of meetings (there are four basic types) for different purposes and describes how and when to use each type.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clearly articulate the library’s strategic service goals. A full-blown planning process isn’t necessary because of community needs analysis and survey work that has been done, coupled with the demographic and user data that the library has already gathered. The service priorities and goals must be clearly stated so that the Balanced Scorecard process, staffing, collection development, programming and other services can be aligned to them.
- Review the elements of “the Fresno Way” described and begin the process of adopting a coherent, unified way to manage on-going operations and change initiatives.
- Identify required skills, abilities, and competencies needed by library staff and managers to implement the Fresno Way.
- Develop training and staff development plans to ensure the development and acquisition of the required skills, abilities, and competencies required.