

FOREWORD



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Library Advocates Soften the Blow

Some severe cuts to Palo Alto libraries were averted this spring after FOPAL members and other residents spoke out for library services.

Libraries were slated for devastating cuts when the city budget process began in March, some temporary and some permanent. City staff proposals included closing Terman Library, reducing hours of operation at College Terrace and Downtown libraries from six to four days a week, freezing the positions of Library Director and a staff librarian until late 2005 and eliminating a library associate. Purchase of books and other materials would be reduced. Total spending reductions would have been 7 percent, compared with a goal of 5 percent reduction citywide. Not only were library services slated to take funding cuts 40 percent higher than the citywide average, but the cuts taken together would have reduced available libraries and library hours by more than 25 percent. These proposals were even more damaging because libraries have been underfunded and understaffed for decades. Palo Alto circulates more items with fewer staff than any other comparable library system in the entire state.

The proposed cuts were particularly surprising in light of a February 2003 survey in which more than 600 residents ranked the values of 50 city services. Book/media acquisition and lending ranked 7th, with 35 percent saying it was essential. This was just below police patrol at 38 percent essential. Public facilities such as libraries ranked 9th with 34 percent saying they were essential. Branch neighborhood libraries ranked 15th with 24 percent saying they are essential. These three library-related services ranked higher than building inspections, traffic enforcement, affordable housing, tree trimming, community information publications, and animal control, among others.

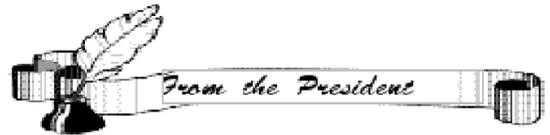
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**Fernando Vescia, M.D. will speak on Leonardo da Vinci At FOPAL's Annual Meeting
October 30, 7:30 p.m., at the
Palo Alto Art Center**

This promises to be a very special evening. Dr. Vescia, a former Stanford lecturer on the history of medicine, is a very engaging speaker. He spoke to us several years ago on the Alexandrian Library and we enjoyed that talk very much. Save the date!



A Children's Haven for Books, Dreams and 'Chipmunk Chess'

Treat yourself to a visit to the Children's Library. I went recently, and it really pumped me up. What a scene! What fun!

It's summer, so the place was jumpin'. Three—yes, three—four or five year olds were totally absorbed in a chess game for probably half an hour. Fascinated to hear that it was "chipmunk chess," I asked the rules, only to be told "there are no rules; it's just playing chess the way a chipmunk would." Of course.

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(A Children's Haven continued from page 1)

I move on to the computer aisle where four elementary-age children, one wearing a very official-looking safari hat, are intent on their screens. A father and an eight year old enter and head straight for the mystery section, where she eagerly fingers each title. A quite solemn three year old stands very erect as he carefully ponders each magazine on a full vertical display rack; two toddlers play train on the floor while a little girl carries on an animated conversation with the pictorial fireplace tiles. A mother and toddler share a book on the couch.

At the other end of the room four patrons barely tall enough to rest their chins on the counter wait their turns to check out the books clutched to their chests. You place your feet carefully as you pass through the picture book area, as several toddlers sit spread eagle on the floor, "reading" their selections. A child, pacifier in mouth, happily pushes a stroller full of books and videos. Two parents are in deep discussion about book choices for their nine year old.

One young boy, clutching three Hardy Boys books, tells the librarian in an urgent tone, "We really, really need these." Another small patron enthusiastically rides the fixed-position wooden horse, ponytail bobbing up and down wildly. A serious looking boy lugs a shopping bag of carefully selected books all around, never letting it out of his hand even as he shops for additional titles. One girl lying on her stomach in the grass in the Secret Garden laughs aloud as she turns the pages of her book.

So it goes at the Children's Library, and when all is said and done our little patrons check out some 800 books a day.

— **Ellen Wyman**
President

"... When I read constantly about the way in which library funds are being cut and cut, I can only think that the door is closing and that American society has found one more way to destroy itself."

— **Isaac Asimov (1920-1992)**
Author

(Library Advocates continued from page 1)

FOPAL was alarmed at these proposed library funding cuts and took action. We asked our members and residents to send in postcards urging that the Library Director position be unfrozen. We testified at Finance Committee and City Council meetings against most of the proposed budget and staffing cuts, and in favor of restoring funds and hiring a Library Director by December 1, 2003. The results were gratifying. Over 330 postcards, letters and e-mails representing almost 350 individuals were sent to the City Council asking that the Library Director position be

unfrozen. The Library Commission also took a strong stand on this issue. The Finance Committee agreed, and voted to restore the position no later than December 1, 2003. The full Council agreed, and the position now is unfrozen. This was the largest single expense item that was restored in the budget. We should be quite proud of our effectiveness in changing funding and priorities in the budget to more closely match the clearly expressed desires and rankings of service importance by Palo Altans.

The City Council also voted to restore the hours at College Terrace, at a cost of less than \$13,000 a year. Terman, on the other hand, has been permanently closed.

Cuts in library services in the final budget were 3 percent of 2002-03 funding, significantly less than the citywide 5 percent cuts, and the initially proposed 7 percent cut.

— **Bob Moss**

Downtown Library at Risk

The Library Advisory Commission is expected to recommend closing Downtown as a branch library as part of a strategy to provide more space for patrons at Main Library. Under the LAC proposal, the Downtown site would be retained and office and support staff would be moved there from Main, freeing up space at Main for a teen facility, more books, or some combination. Downtown library is heavily used. In fact, when adjusted for size and hours, Downtown has a higher number of users per square foot than does Main. It serves a part of town that is undergoing significant increases in density and adding many new residents as hundreds of housing units are built to replace the old Palo Alto Medical Foundation facilities. Closure of the Downtown branch would be a significant loss for the local neighborhoods, for people who work downtown and for businesses in the downtown area who historically have been major users of downtown library resources.



Thanks to all Library Heroes

We did it! We really did it! Even the press and city staff agreed that the Library Director position was unfrozen because of the outcry from some 350 people (read Friends, primarily) who sent our little green postcards, letters and e-mails to our City Council. After the outpouring, no council member could doubt this community's support for libraries. We thank the Library Advisory Commission, the Finance Committee and the entire Council for assuring continuity in library administration. Having a permanent Library Director

in place as the community rethinks library services is essential to the survival and success of our libraries.

The city promises to resume recruitment for this position immediately so that the new director can be on the job by year's end. However, plans call for only a very limited, local, Peninsula-area search. Some months ago, FOPAL promised up to \$10,000 for interview expenses (travel, lodging) if the position is advertised nationally in the *American Library Journal*. The city does not normally cover such costs. We, and the Library Advisory Commission, see value in a wider search. Obviously, our system is slated for major restructuring so we do want the advantage of the best possible leadership.

Thank you for your help. We couldn't have done it without you and together we made a big difference. What a lot of library heroes! What wonderful Friends!

— Ellen Wyman



A “Win-Win” at Cubberley

The City Council Sept. 15 will consider a proposal to allocate space in the main Cubberley Community Center complex to the Friends of the Palo Alto Library Book Sale.

This is not a new proposal. It all began 15 months ago in March 2002 when it became apparent that FOPAL would lose its book sale space at Terman. At that time, Friends wrote the City Manager requesting that approximately 5,000 square feet of space at Cubberley be re-designated for use by Friends in conducting book sales. Although Friends repeatedly emphasized that it needed at least that much space for receiving and storing donations, sorting, pricing and for selling activities, the city installed portable units providing only 3,600 square feet of space.

FOPAL moved into the portables during the downpour months of November and December 2002, and for six months has been conducting book sales both at Cubberley and Terman. Now, with the closure of Terman Library and the anticipated loss of our remaining space there, Friends has applied to the city for space in the main Cubberley Community Center complex where we can consolidate all of our sales and have 45 to 50 percent more space.

Our application for more space was in response to the city's solicitation of proposals from the public for use in selecting those to whom the artist studio space at Cubberley could be leased. At this time, 22 artists occupy three wings at Cubberley. FOPAL requests that slightly over a third of this space be allocated to Friends for book sales.

As a volunteer, nonprofit 501 {c} 3 organization providing substantial financial support to Palo Alto libraries and having a long record of serving thousands of community residents, we believe that FOPAL merits priority consideration in the allocation of space within city facilities. The additional space Friends is requesting will allow us to accept more donations than otherwise would be possible and to do a better job in sponsoring this very popular community event. In turn, this will allow us to increase our sales and generate additional much-needed income for Palo Alto libraries.

This is how we got to where we are now. We sincerely hope that our request does not become a highly contentious *cause celebre*. In our view, fewer than two dozen artists have enjoyed the use of three wings at Cubberley for some 12 years and, with the increasing pressure for space in public facilities, it comes time to share this largess of low-cost, city-subsidized rental space with the community. Hundreds of buyers, including many families and children, regularly enjoy Friends monthly sales. Once Friends is established in the Cubberley Community Center, our sales will create a new sense of vitality, which also should serve artists well. Moreover, artists and book lovers share a common interest in the sense of seeking to further cultural development and expand people's horizons. This proposal should not be viewed as an “either-or” situation but rather as a “win-win.” It's an opportunity for the two groups to work together cooperatively to advance their respective interest and to serve community interests as well.

Depending on developments, we may need the help of our many members, volunteers and customers to help persuade the Council that not only do Palo Altans value both our libraries and book sales but also that our proposal is entirely consistent with the city's own policies and procedures involving leased use of city facilities, the stated purpose of which is:

“ . . . to ensure that decisions regarding use of city property are made in the best interests of the citizens and taxpayers of Palo Alto . . . The development and operation of facilities by others on city-owned property is appropriate only when such development and operation will further public use or provide a public benefit.”

— Marty Paddock
Book Sale Manager

We have abbreviated this summer issue of the Foreword to make room for the special insert you will find on the important work of the Children's Library Fund. We'll return to our normal eight-page size with the fall edition.

— The Editors

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Web Page: <http://www.friendspaloaltolib.org/>

Email: info@friendspaloaltolib.org

Monthly Book Sales: Second Saturday

Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Rd.
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Library Commission: Fourth Thursday

Council Conference Room, 250 Hamilton Ave. 7 p.m.
See <http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/clerk/schedule.html>
to confirm meeting date and time.

Board of Directors Meeting: First Wednesday

Cubberley Book Sale Room
4000 Middlefield Road 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Book Discussion Group: Second Thursday

Lucie Stern Community Center Fireside Room
1305 Middlefield Road 7:30 to 9 p.m.

For information, call Crystal 961-1528
*For a list of the books reviewed in the past, driving directions, and
other information,
please visit our web page:*
<http://www.fopalbookgroup.homestead.com>

Great Books: Second Wednesday

Oak Creek Apartments Club House
1600 Sand Hill Road, Palo Alto. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
For more information, call Oak Creek Apartments Club House at
321-9920 or Great Books coordinator Elsie Taboroff at 493-8629

Friends of the Palo Alto Library (FOPAL) Board of Directors: Ellen Wyman, President; Shantha Mohan, Vice-President; Wendy Akers-Ghose, Secretary; John Burt, Treasurer and Bob Otnes, Assistant Treasurer; Marty Paddock, Book Sale Manager. Members: Althea Andersen, Gretchen Emmons, Chris Kenrick, Jeff Levinsky, Gerry Masteller, Bob Moss, Barbara Silberling, Steve Staiger, Ann Shelby Valentine, Karen White. Library Representatives to the Board: Diane Jennings, Acting Director of Libraries; Coordinator, Downtown Library: Barbara Geibel. Foreword Staff: Chris Kenrick, Shantha Mohan; Webmaster: Jeff Levinsky; Circulation: Post Haste Direct Mail Service.