



# **CITIZEN REVIEW COMMITTEE IDAHO FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY**

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**(Amended)**

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Amendments to original report dated June 9, 2014, based on CRC additional consideration of the report content:

- a. Page 4, #5 – deleted sentence, no change to report basis
- b. Page 10, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – changed the wording.
- c. Page 14, 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph – deleted sentence, no change to report basis.
- d. Page 15, #5 – deleted sentence, no change to report basis.

## **Executive Summary**

The Citizen Review Committee (CRC) for the Idaho Falls Public Library (IFPL) has examined the operations, processes, budgets, and perceptions of the IFPL. All parties have been helpful in answering our questions and in their disclosure of operations. Comprised of Idaho Falls residents passionate about helping to build a better community and a better library, the CRC has identified several strengths of the IFPL, as well as some areas where, to borrow Mayor Casper's metaphor, the "apple" could shine a little brighter. The CRC recognizes the abilities, difficult decisions, and successes of the IFPL as a whole and believes it is important that the public recognize them as well. The IFPL is a public entity which has managed to do more than *survive* the recent and unforgiving economic conditions – it has *thrived*.

## **Review Methodology**

The CRC met twice weekly for two-hour meetings during the initial stages of committee work. This stage included gathering a high-level overview of information related to the IFPL including operations, management, and the yearly budget. The CRC then split into sub-committees to give individualized attention to specific topics. The CRC as a whole drafted, revised, and finalized the Library Citizen Review Committee Report as indicated by committee majority vote. The CRC's review of the library was based on only a snapshot of what we saw and learned during our review.

Committee members attended the March 16, 2014 meeting of the IFPL Board of Trustees (Board), expressly invited Board members to attend our meetings, streamlined question-submissions to Director Robert Wright through the CRC Chair, Emily Milton, visited other southeast Idaho libraries, shadowed IFPL staff, and consulted various online and other resources.

## **Library Leadership**

1. The IFPL Board of Trustees should develop and maintain an over-arching strategic plan describing goals and objectives, and specific strategies and activities for accomplishing each over a 3-5 year period.
2. The strategic plan should be developed with public input and disseminated through the IFPL website and other media to stakeholders, ensuring transparency and publicly holding the Board accountable to achieve its goals and objectives. Stakeholders are defined as patrons, the County Library Board; partner and potential partner libraries, community groups and organizations, and the State Library Commission.
3. The Board should collect and use benchmark data from other library organizations as examples of strategic planning and inspiration.
4. To better serve the public, the Board should make itself more accessible to the public. Some meetings should be held at a more favorable time than weekdays at 4:00 pm and publicized on the Library website.

## Management and Operations

1. Although a safe facility, the library should address two safety issues: acquiring a public address system and connecting security cameras to appropriate monitoring software.
2. There should be comprehensive written operating procedures, including succession plans for key library staff. (A blog by the two library supervisors is hardly a true procedure manual.) There should also be a more complete set of policies.
3. The Mayor, City Council, and Board of Trustees should discuss policies regarding how the library meets the needs of the Spanish-speaking population and of those English-speaking patrons wishing to improve their foreign language skills.
4. The Mayor, City Council, and Board of Trustees should discuss policies relating to how the IFPL interacts with interlibrary loans, other libraries for idea exchange, the Library Consortium of Eastern Idaho (LCEI), and the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL). The committee believes these are underutilized. (We do not understand the distinction the Director attempts to make between “practice” and “policy.”)
5. The IFPL should consider increasing utilization of other city departments such as the Public Information Officer services, maintenance of lawn with the Parks and Recreation Department and IT services through the IT Department.

## Community Relations

1. Expand the outreach program to reach all residents, through talks to service organizations and reaching out to groups that may not be currently served by the library.
2. Increase use of volunteers to support library services and urge reorganization and expansion of the role Friends of the Library plays. This organization can be utilized for volunteer programs, and increasing awareness in the community.
3. Continue expansion of social media programs to advertise programs in the library and increase awareness of services.
4. The Library should consider redesign to their website and blogs.
5. The library should also include a section on the website for users to request a book that is not currently in the collection.

## Budget

1. Small dollar procurements need to have greater advertisement to allow local bidders opportunities offered by the IFPL Board.
2. The CRC suggests putting into practice an adequate check and balance of large bids. The CRC remains unclear how the recent RFID bid process went astray. An accountability statement should be submitted to explain any cost increase, and why implementation is taking so long. A review of the process should be done to help prevent future mistakes of this nature.
3. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles should be followed. A budget can be a living document. If changes occur, such as in the case of the money for the parking lot improvement being taken for the cost overrun of the RFID system, a process should be in place to correctly identify and label the change and reasons for it. The Board should approve and document these changes for complete transparency. It appears that greater budget specific involvement from the Board of Trustees is needed.

4. The Board of Trustees, Director and Library staff should seek after and apply for available grants that are appropriate and suitable for items needed for the Library. There are citizens in the City of Idaho Falls who are experienced grant writers and may be willing to volunteer their expertise.
5. The city IT Department should have greater access and involvement in the maintenance, upkeep, backups, and care of the IT equipment and services.
6. On-line and other venues are available for training and educational credits; these could be better utilized.
7. Accountability and transparency are vital to the role of the Director and Board of Trustees. The CRC recommends that the council representative continue to take an active role in questioning whether taxpayer monies are being wisely spent and require regular reports from the Director and IFPL Board.

## **Fiscal Impact**

1. A preliminary review by the Library Director estimates a one-time cost of \$30,000 to 60,000 depending on the depth of implementation. In addition, possible ongoing costs of \$30,000 to 50,000 per year for personnel to accomplish the recommended tasks outlined in the report.
2. The CRC is not suggesting immediate adoption of all recommendations and feels that if the Board of Trustees, the City Council and the Director choose to implement recommendations, changes could be phased in as a result of the recommended 3-5 year strategic plan.
3. Costs to implement could be minimized using current staff, Board of Trustee actions, and volunteers.
4. Major capital outlays can be allocated through carryover funds prioritized by the Board of Trustees or increased city funds.
5. It is anticipated the PA system will be the greatest cost of the CRC's recommendations and could cost up to \$10,000.
6. There are web based systems that are inexpensive (or free) for cameras. The CRC does not suggest hiring personnel to monitor cameras, but rather deter theft and for use in the event of theft or other unlawful activity.
7. Web redesign could be assigned to the Director who has IT expertise, interns, or other city personnel. The IT Department should be consulted for pricing and server space solutions.
8. These and other additional costs could be offset through state, federal, and foundation grants.

# DETAILED REPORT

## Review Methodology

The Library Committee of the Mayor's Citizen's Review Panels met 12 times between February 22, 2014 and May 31, 2014. Early in the process, the Committee identified the following areas for focus of the review: Library Leadership, Mission, Management and Operations, Community Relations, and Budget. Committee members then chose the area in which they wished to focus to serve on sub-committees. The CRC's review of the library was based on only a snapshot of what we saw and learned during our review.

Between meetings, CRC members independently collected data in a variety of ways: submittal of questions to the Library Director; attendance at a Library Board meeting; visits to the Library itself to use its services; visits to other libraries; review of pertinent laws, regulations, and policies; brief questions and interviews with library stakeholders; and internet searches for a variety of related information.

Observations and potential recommendations were discussed at each meeting. Ultimately, the Committee reached consensus on the observations and recommendations that would be included in our report's main body.

Our detailed report is organized to summarize our observations and recommendations under each of the main focus areas identified above. Our Committee members assembled a wealth of data in the course of their reviews; which they presented at our meetings.

## Library Leadership

The IFPL Board of Trustees is made up of volunteer citizens of the Idaho Falls area appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Idaho Falls City Council. These volunteers get together at public, monthly meetings to discuss the general policies of the library using generally accepted parliamentary procedures, the current meeting schedule is generally at 4:00pm once a month.

The current policies approved by the board are identified here as follows:

- Circulation Policy – Revised September 27, 2012*
- Interlibrary Loan Policy - Approved February 22, 2007*
- Bulletin Board Display Policy - Approved September 28, 2006*
- Internet Use Policy - Last Review Date September 27, 2012*
- Patron Code of Conduct - Revised March 24, 2009*
- Meeting Room Policy - Adopted December 6, 2012*

The Board needs to follow its published policies. We found that although the policy states the library encourages inter-library loans, in reality they are discouraged and normally rejected in favor of buying a book rather than borrowing one.

The library Trustees are listed on the web page as follows:

- Mary Lund (2009-2014)
- Hal Peterson, Chair (2010-2015)
- Rodd Rapp (2011-2016)

Kristin Hague (2012-2017)  
Claire Pace (2008-2013)

There is a five (5) year rolling wave membership which allows for a high degree of stability within the Trustees policy process, the fact the policies shown above have not been updated for at least two years leads to a lack of real world conditions with respect to the operation of the library and keeping up to date with the changing technical world today. While the Library may not want to be on the cutting edge there needs to be awareness by the Board of what is working and what is not at other libraries and at the IFPL. One way to accomplish this is to hold quarterly open meetings to invite community members to offer insight as to new or different services the library could offer or discuss areas the library is considering to improve or change. These meetings should be held at a time that is more convenient for the public not the current 4:00pm timeslot.

### **Recommendations**

1. The IFPL Board of Trustees should develop and maintain an over-arching strategic plan describing goals and objectives, and specific strategies and activities for accomplishing each over a 3-5 year period.
2. The strategic plan should be developed with public input and disseminated through the IFPL website and other media to stakeholders, ensuring transparency and publicly holding the Board accountable to achieve its goals and objectives. Stakeholders are defined as patrons, the County Library Board; partner and potential partner libraries, community groups and organizations, and the State Library Commission.
3. The Board should collect and use benchmark data from other library organizations as examples of strategic planning and inspiration.
4. To better serve the public, the Board should make itself more accessible to the public. Some meetings should be held at a more favorable time than weekdays at 4:00 pm and publicized on the Library website.

### **Mission of Library**

“The Idaho Falls Public Library provides materials of popular interest to the community, emphasizes and encourages reading by children, supplements the learning and educational needs of the community, and furnishes timely, accurate information.”<sup>1</sup>

While this statement is not identified as the official “Mission Statement” it does appear to represent what the Board of Trustees is being guided by in the administration of the Idaho Falls Public Library.

There seems to be a presentence to provide the community with materials of popular books in both the established printed form and the e-version books. The amount of books being offered is a function of the available budget. The function of the Library Web site does not offer the ease of obtaining e-books since the web site operates at a slow pace and requires multiple steps to obtain the e-book. Three services are connected to the library – tumble-books for children’s books, Overdrive for e-Books and downloadable audiobooks and one-click-digital for audiobooks. This committee has received feedback from users that the website is dated, not user friendly and has too many steps in order to check out e-books. Another source of conflict is the internet speed itself while in the library and the sporadic Wi-Fi connections.

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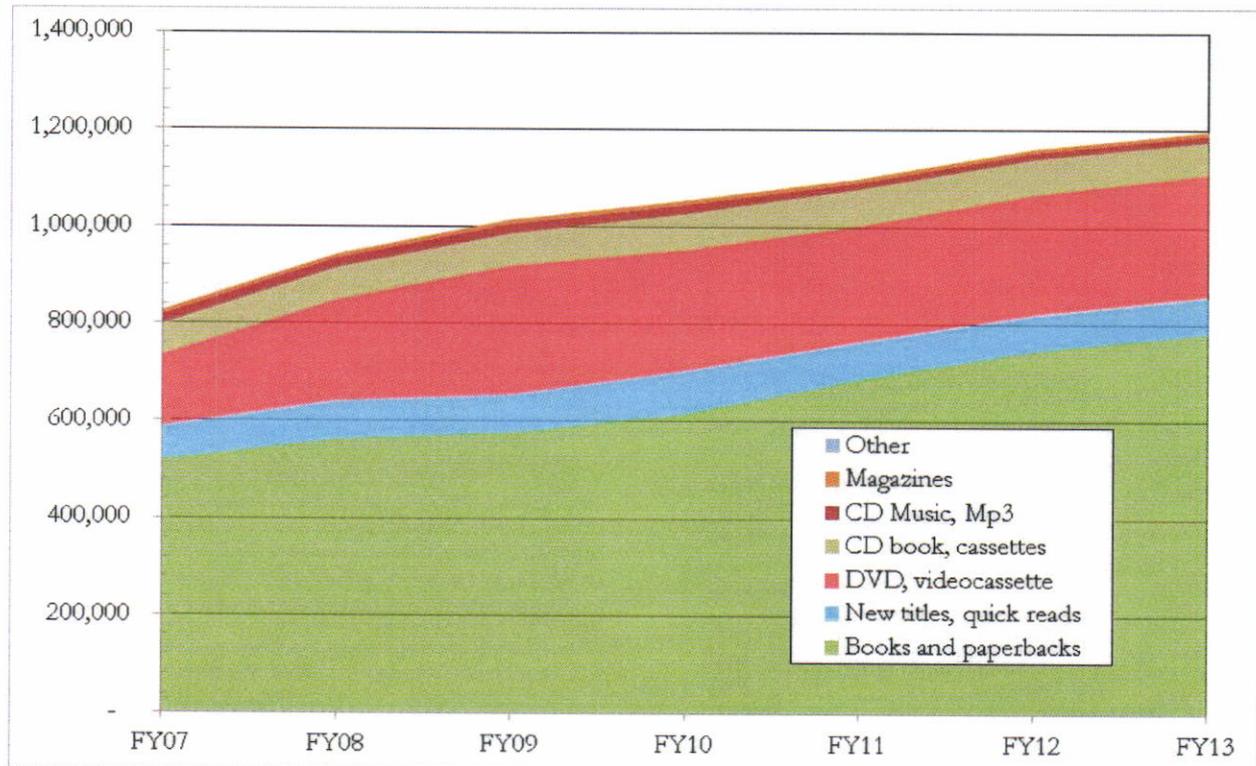
<sup>1</sup> Pre-Packaged binder distributed to the Committee by the Idaho Falls Public Library

Other media methods to announce the public library offering these “Story Time” hours could spread the word about this outstanding offering to the community and county. Taking advantage of free public service time on the radio and television stations would be an idea way to spread to word about this offering by the library. The “Friends of the Library” organization may be one way to support the outreach to the radio and TV stations and not create\_a drain on the existing library staff. This would also be a visibility method for the community to know about the functions of the “Friends of the Library” organization to improve the library – a win-win situation.

Overall the committee has observed that answers to outreach subcommittee’s questions indicate the library staff are seeking, interpreting and fulfilling the community’s needs well as they presently understand them. Library board and staff appear to be thinking and acting strategically, but this information came to light only through the committee’s formal written request for information. Rationale and justification goals, objectives, and strategies for meeting them are not formally documented, nor are they disseminated to the public. This recommendation is that they should be.

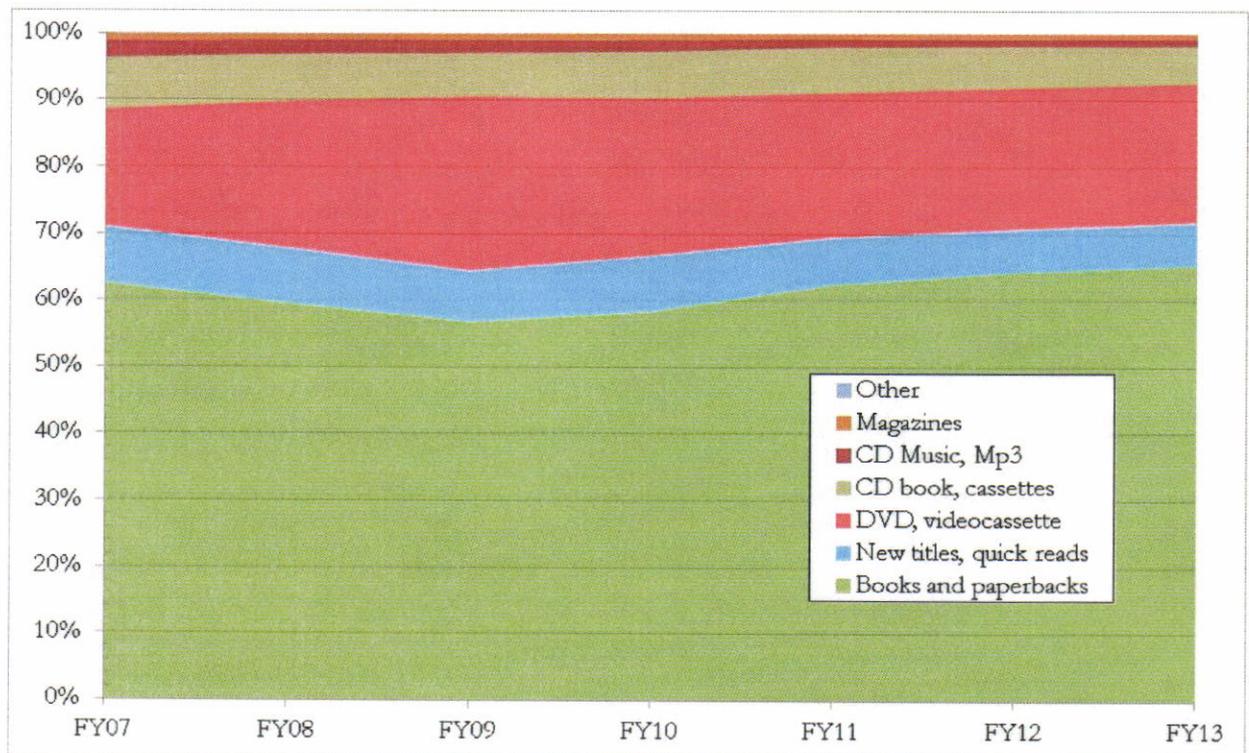
## Management and Operations

This figure shows the total circulation each fiscal year. In the past five years, the circulation has been growing at an average of 5% per year, with a low of 3% (FY12→FY13) and a high of 8% (FY08-FY09).



The next figure shows the same data but as yearly percent of total, rather than absolute numbers. It shows, somewhat counter-intuitively, the percent of video circulation has declined in the last five years. In those five years, the distribution of circulation has averaged as follows:

- 69% books, paperbacks, new titles, quick reads, etc.
  - 23% video (DVD, video cassettes)
  - 7% books on tape (CD, cassettes)
  - 2% music
  - 1% magazines
- (Totals to more than 100% due to rounding)



Idaho Falls residents and non-residents (who buy a library card) comprise two-thirds of the Library's circulation; Bonneville County is one-third. This 2:1 city/county ratio matches the relative funding contributions. Circulation by county residents is growing at double the rate of city residents.

The most recent Census Bureau estimates show that Idaho Falls has 54% of the population of Bonneville County.

Of the 2014 \$2,831,415 Library Revenue:

- 61% comes from the city
- 30% comes from the county and rural registration
- 9% comes from all other sources such as fines, meeting rooms, donations, Mae Neuber Foundation, etc.

The percent of the Library's circulation via the "Latino collection" has dropped steadily from 0.49% in FY07 to 0.10% in FY13. We do not know the percent of the Latino collection to the total library collection, but visually it is just as small. The Director has informed us that the Latino collection was the result of an external grant.

The Census Bureau estimates that the Hispanic or Latino population is 12.9% of Idaho Falls (2012 estimate) and 12.1% for Bonneville County (2013 estimate), slightly above the Idaho average of 11.2% (2013 and 11.6% (2013). (Their website does not provide a 2013 estimate for Idaho Falls.)

The Census Bureau estimates that the percentage of the population (age 5+) in which a language other than English is spoken at home (2008-2012) exceeds 10%. The estimates are 10.9% Idaho Falls, 10.3% Bonneville County, and 10.4% Idaho. Given the population demographics, we assume that most of these are speaking Spanish.

It is beyond the Committee's scope to address the societal questions of how to best to encourage young children reading at home, non-English speakers learning English, etc. Nonetheless, four factors lead us to recommend that the Mayor, City Council, and Library Board of Trustees (i.e. the policy makers) discuss these language matters.

1. Spanish-language circulation is ~0.1% versus ~10% Spanish-speaking population.
2. There is no full time Library staff member that speaks Spanish.
3. There are no Spanish-language reading programs.
4. Many English-speakers would like to learn other languages. (The library does have basic language-learning CDs, but to truly learn and appreciate another language and its culture, there must be books in the other language.)

#### **Recommendation**

1. The Mayor, City Council, and Board of Trustees should discuss policies regarding how the library meets the needs of the Spanish-speaking population and of those English-speaking patrons wishing to improve their foreign language skills.

#### **Safety**

There are two urgent safety issues:

1. There is no PA system and hence no way to quickly explain to patrons the nature of an emergency.
2. The existing security cameras are not connected, monitored, nor recording.

The layout of the library considers safety and security. The most notable example is that the book shelves for the youngest patrons are oriented so that staff at the children's circulation desk can see down those aisles.

The library has fire sprinklers and fire extinguishers. The library conducts fire drills. The Library Director informs us, however, that many patrons ignore the fire alarms and therefore library staff has to go through the library to get people to leave. A public address (PA) system is advisable. The Director notes that people who do not easily decide to evacuate with direct verbal instruction by staff may not decide to evacuate by PA; however, the PA can operate sooner, instantly create awareness of the seriousness of the situation, serve as a diverse method of notification, and create more urgency.

Not only is more urgent egress during fire/fire drills desirable, but in other abnormal situations other patron action should be directed. For example, during an earthquake, standard advice is to avoid stairwells, books, and areas subject to falling glass; only a PA system could convey such advice – rapid egress from the building could be undesirable. During other types of incidents, “take shelter” (rather than egress) might be the best course of action. Emergency procedures should be written, including clear lines of authority and responsibility.

The library has an automatic defibrillator. There are staff members employed by the IFPL that are trained in first aid/CPR, however none that have current certification. Section 031.03.e of the Building Safety Division of the Idaho Industrial Commission’s standards recommends that there be adequate staff trained in first aid/CPR. This is yet another reason to have a PA system to find trained on-site personnel during an emergency.

The library has security cameras. However, the Library Director informs us that these are not hooked up because of budget constraints. Thus, no one is monitoring the cameras and there are no recordings. This can provide a false sense of security for patrons; of course, it is also true that the mere presence of cameras could dissuade inappropriate behavior.

### **Recommendation**

1. Although a safe facility, the library must address two safety issues: acquiring a public address system and connecting security cameras to appropriate monitoring software.

### **Technological**

Analogous to the Board’s justification for spending significant funding to ensure the physical structure of the building and grounds is well-maintained and professional-looking, so too should the Library’s website reflect the same level of professionalism displayed on premises. A Google search for the Library populates information only generated after thresholds for search volume and click-through rate are reached, indicating members of the public go to the website often enough to make its appearance and usability a concern.

1. The Committee does not understand why a fixed width was used for the layout, but not utilized to prevent awkward, unprofessional graphic design flaws in margins, leading, and kerning;
2. Links between parts of the site(s) are inconsistent in name and destination;
3. Pages within the main site, and especially so on the blog sites, do not have consistent link menus;
4. Many pages do not provide a link to return to the main .org site, or to other main pages;
5. Many links are broken;
6. At least one link should probably include a disclaimer about the webpage it leads to;
7. Links that go to the same page are often not named the same thing;
8. Search engine on the website does not work on the IFPL library website.; and
9. Names of links appear to reflect how librarians or staff views the library rather than patrons (for example: “Next Reads” would not be clear to someone lacking inside or general “library” knowledge. Likewise, the committee is still not sure what “Print Agent” is, as the link appears to be broken.).

The website’s set-up is awkward to navigate because links named the same thing do not go to the same place, or 2/3 of blogs don’t link back to main .org site, or, etc., all of which may be greater than many user’s –

especially elderly users' – thresholds for frustration) and at best makes the IFPL look like a group of amateurs (which it is clear they are not).

## **Recommendations**

1. The Library should very seriously consider various levels of redesign to their website and blogs. The current core website could likely easily be used but with the subpages and links having more consistency to the core. Maintenance is important because a website that isn't kept up-to-date reflects poorly on the website owner. There are several collaboration tools available to help automate various tasks throughout websites as well as social media sites (for example, regular blog or status updates, pulls from external websites of frequently used elements, etc.).
2. The library should also include a section on the website for users to request a book that is not currently in the collection. At the moment a patron has to go into the library and fill out a form for a book request, an electronic option should also be made available for convenience. This system of physically going in to the library and filling out a form is a deterrent for some and an easier option would be to just do it on line for those who have internet access.
3. One additional recommendation would be to look at the recent changes that have been made to the City's Parks and Recreation section of the City of Idaho Falls website. The recent changes have made the site more user friendly and esthetically appealing, such changes could be made for the Idaho Falls Public Library. This conclusion is drawn from the feedback received of the site looking too cluttered, not being able to find necessary information and having links that are out of date or simply do not work. This can be done through collaboration with the City's IT department.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are only used for unscheduled activities such as shelving books. They are not used for reading programs or other programs in which the absence of the scheduled volunteer would be disruptive. Since other organizations manage to use volunteers for scheduled activities, we do not understand why their solutions would not work for the IFPL. Although we understand the issue of volunteers not being present when scheduled, there are ways to address issues surrounding volunteers (or other labor options where a paycheck is not the motivation for participation).

Setting aside scheduled activities, there are many unscheduled activities for which volunteers could be used.

1. Reading lists
2. Fix website problems
3. Enhance website graphic design and functionality
4. Request donations of books to enhance the library's collection
5. Write proposals for grants to enhance the library's collection

Idaho Falls and the surrounding area have many potential sources for volunteers or low-cost enhancements to the staff: INL, EITC, ISU/U Idaho at University Place, BYU-Idaho. In all cases, both current and retired employees could be sought. Student interns and federally-funded work/study programs could be sought.

We have noted that the library seems at many times to operate as an island. They have undertaken all tasks by themselves (everything from lawn maintenance to website maintenance) we feel the library should take advantage of other city departments for instance their IT Department and the Purchasing/Procurement department for large purchases. Thus they would be able to utilize the expertise of others in many areas rather than "going at it alone and trying to reinvent the wheel".

## **Recommendation**

1. The IFPL should consider distribution of information through the public information officer services, maintenance of lawn with the Parks and Recreation Department and IT services through the IT Department.

## **Community Relations**

The library enjoys a very good reputation among most Idaho Falls residents and representatives of minority groups indicate they are satisfied with the current level of service. When asked, "what more could the library be doing for your group" most had few recommendations. However, it was interesting to note that most responded either 'hadn't been to the library in a long time", or "didn't know the status of the collections aimed toward their groups." This feedback was conducted independently by the committee through Facebook polling, and interviewing individuals seen as representing the community.

It would also be of benefit for the library to create a system for feedback such as a survey sent to current users (suggested method would be through email that is collected at the time a user signs up for a library card). These surveys can be a simple feedback tool and are free to create through websites such as surveymonkey.com.

Continued rise in circulation in the past several years indicates usage of the facility seems to be meeting perceived demands for those who already use the library although more could be done to better market the library to all residents.

On the surface the library appears to respond well to its perception of overall community needs, for example, it has increased the number of large print books. Upon further reflection, there is room for improvement. It does a good job of marketing itself within the library building but as with any business, the goal is to increase the customer traffic and we recommend the Board look at outside marketing efforts to expand its visibility to residents through a variety of activities. The Board needs to reach out to people within the Hispanic community and identify movers and shakers within that group who can take the lead in marketing the library to Spanish speakers. Such marketing efforts could include flyers written in both Spanish and English promoting what's available at the library and posted in Hispanic businesses.

Other efforts could range from manning a booth at city-wide festivals (Duck Race, Art in the Park, Freedom Celebration, and Farmers Market etc.) and issuing library cards on the spot, to "Live @ the Library"--a monthly series of musical concerts by local groups held inside the library building. Such programs can reach residents who may have never visited the facility and spark their interest. Physical presence in annual parades and talks to local service clubs gives the library another chance to re-introduce itself to the community.

The Marshall Library in Pocatello has partnered with the Pocatello Regional Transit and offers free rides to and from the library for those 18 and younger and 60 and older with a valid library card. The program is designed to assist those who may find it difficult to get to the library otherwise.

The library should embark on a public relations campaign issuing frequent press releases to area media on happenings at the library and publicize such things as the e-book availability, Wi-Fi, and computer access.

The library's home-page should be revamped and updated monthly by a different department head highlighting latest acquisitions, new events, or publication of things like the NY Times best seller lists etc. The library has an excellent looking Facebook page and some of the information on it should be transferred to the library's Home Page. Its Facebook page currently includes an app for accessing the library catalog without leaving Facebook.

Other current social media plans include providing text messaging service to patrons for overdue, holds, and other library notices, and a growing Pinterest account.

The large collection of old books in the basement should be utilized for more than just a monthly book sale. Examples include taking a cartload of books to the Greenbelt and just giving them to passersby, taking part in the "Alive after Five", Saturday market activities, or stocking places such as the Women's Shelter and City of Refuge with reading materials, and producing a series of newsletters that are aimed at specific businesses. One such idea is "Books & Looks", aimed at women and displayed in hair salons, gyms listing the books available at the library that offer grooming, hair styles tips and other lifestyle selections. A newsletter that is tied in with local (not chain stores) home improvement stores offering books on DIY projects, etc.

The library needs an easily identifiable universal theme for its outreach programs such as: "Check in before you Check out", "Checkout what's new" and all programs must reflect that theme.

We were especially impressed with library marketing ideas we found with a simple Google internet service including putting lawn chairs on the front lawn and inviting people to just stop by, relax, and read a book (an excellent tie-in to the weekly farmers market across the street), and efforts by one library to drive library users to local merchants within the downtown area. These merchants can then be called upon for financial resources for further activities.

The major issue is who does all this? We feel the logical group is the **Friends of the Library**. The library's director's reluctance to use volunteer help because of perceived unreliability needs to be overcome and he needs to take a lead role in increasing the Friends of the Library partnership. Funds raised during the monthly book sales could be earmarked for the Friends outreach programs.

Working with library staff, the Friends can provide the manpower needed for whatever projects are selected. Currently the Friends of the Library have a very low-key visibility and an aging membership. Therefore the first step needs to be increased public awareness of the group, an increased membership drive and utilization of city resources to promote the volunteer aspect of the group. A change in the way people volunteer for service on city commissions is currently underway at City Hall and the Friends of the Library should be included in that change.

## **Recommendations**

1. Expand the outreach program to reach all residents through talks to service organizations and reaching out to groups that are underserved by the library.
2. Increase use of volunteers to support library services and urge reorganization and expansion of the role Friends of the Library plays. This organization can be utilized for volunteer programs and increasing awareness in the community.
3. Continue expansion of social media programs to advertise programs in the library and increase awareness of services.
4. The Library should consider redesign to their website and blogs.

## **Budget**

Some budget items show decreases in costs resulting from improvements made to various areas of the library.

It seems that local city or county contractors are not always used, or given the opportunity to give quotes for small improvements to the Library, or for maintenance items less than \$25,000.

Serious problems with RFID bid and implementation resulted in a cost overrun that was not expected. These funds were to be used for the sidewalk or parking lot repair and replacement. The CRC remains unclear how the recent RFID bid process went astray.

From initial budget submission, or shortly after submission and approval, various items were inaccurately reported to account for expenditures not related to that item. This resulted in what the committee deems as lack of transparency.

Potential grants to increase revenue and opportunities for the Library are not sought after or applied for. An on-line search of available reading program and literacy grants for libraries found that there may be opportunities that the IFPL is missing.

IT functions are not performed by the city IT professionals, except in emergencies. Throughout the committees' review, there were many problems noted to be of concern with the Library IT functions. Wireless internet connectivity and activity is faster than the wired connectivity, website has multiple concerns, funds are allocated to the City of Idaho Falls from the Library for the purpose of IT maintenance, however the service does not seem to be utilized as well as it should be to prevent the problems that are occurring.

Some travel expenditures of Library staff may be unnecessary. Contact with Library Associations found that conference registration costs range from \$35 to \$200; however, up to \$2,500 is budgeted for each staff member to attend a conference. This amount for travel per employee, per conference seems excessive.

According to interviews with past and present city officials, under prior administrations the Council approved yearly library budgets based on the amount of money allocated from the general fund. We understand that those budgets may have been approved by the City Council without detail review, questioning or scrutiny.

## **Recommendations**

1. Small dollar procurements need to have greater advertisement to allow local bidders opportunities offered by the IFPL Board.
2. The CRC suggests putting into practice an adequate check and balance of large bids. The CRC remains unclear how the recent RFID bid process went astray. An accountability statement should be submitted to explain any cost increase, and why implementation is taking so long. A review of the process should be done to help prevent future mistakes of this nature.
3. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles should be followed. A budget can be a living document. If changes occur, such as in the case of the money for the parking lot improvement being taken for

the cost overrun of the RFID system, a process should be in place to correctly identify and label the change and reasons for it. The Board should approve and document these changes for complete transparency. It appears that greater budget specific involvement from the Board of Trustees is needed.

4. The Board of Trustees, Director and Library staff should seek after and apply for available grants that are appropriate and suitable for items needed for the Library. There are citizens in the City of Idaho Falls who are experienced grant writers and may be willing to volunteer their expertise.
5. The city IT Department should have greater access and involvement in the maintenance, upkeep, backups, and care of the IT equipment and services.
6. On-line and other venues are available for training and educational credits; these could be better utilized.
7. Accountability and transparency are vital to the role of the Director and Board of Trustees. The CRC recommends that the council representative continue to take an active role in questioning whether taxpayer monies are being wisely spent and require regular reports from the Director and IFPL Board.

## **Fiscal Impact**

1. A preliminary review by the Library Director estimates a one-time cost of \$30,000 to 60,000 depending on the depth of implementation. In addition, possible ongoing costs of \$30,000 to 50,000 per year for personnel to accomplish the recommended tasks outlined in the report.
2. The CRC is not suggesting immediate adoption of all recommendations and feels that if the Board of Trustees, the City Council and the Director choose to implement recommendations, changes could be phased in as a result of the recommended 3-5 year strategic plan.
3. Costs to implement could be minimized using current staff, Board of Trustee actions, and volunteers.
4. Major capital outlays can be allocated through carryover funds prioritized by the Board of Trustees or increased city funds.
5. It is anticipated the PA system will be the greatest cost of the CRC's recommendations and could cost up to \$10,000.
6. There are web based systems that are inexpensive (or free) for cameras. The CRC does not suggest hiring personnel to monitor cameras, but rather deter theft and for use in the event of theft or other unlawful activity.
7. Web redesign could be assigned to the Director who has IT expertise, interns, or other city personnel. The IT Department should be consulted for pricing and server space solutions.
8. These and other additional costs could be offset through state, federal, and foundation grants.

## **Conclusion**

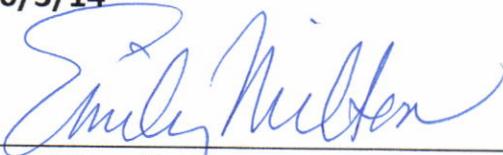
This report presents the results of a review of the Idaho Falls Public Library by a Citizen's Review Committee established for that purpose by Mayor Rebecca Casper. We, the Committee, are grateful to Mayor Casper for providing this opportunity.

We began our review with the assumption that the Idaho Falls Public Library is an invaluable asset to the community, and we continue to hold that assumption as we complete our review. We found many, many reasons to appreciate the library's contributions to our community's quality of life, and a few areas where the library could improve and increase those contributions. With this report we have attempted to acknowledge those strengths, as well as aspects that could be improved.

We are especially grateful to the Library Board of Trustees, Library Director, Robert Wright and all his staff for their patience and cooperation in assembling and presenting information in response to our needs. We are very aware of the time and effort required on their part, and we hope they, and city government, find our recommendations pertinent and useful.

Citizen Review Committee Final Report Signature Page

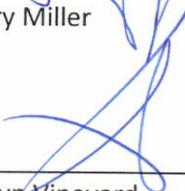
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Emily Milton, Chair



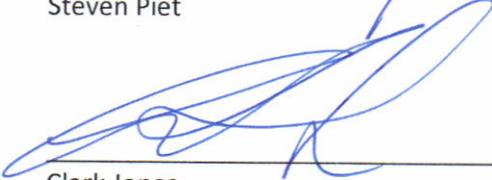
Terry Miller



Robyn Vineyard



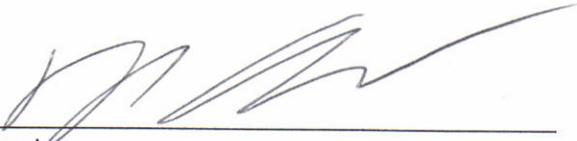
Steven Piet



Clark Jones



Roger Scott



Vana Deschenes



Mesha Hudman